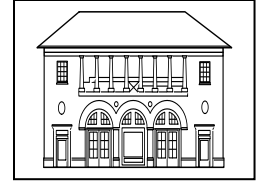


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Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library
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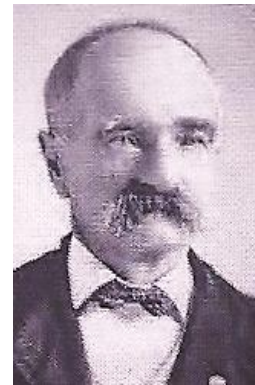
The President's Message

I am proud of this journal and of the people who work voluntarily in the Local History Room: Mike Bursak, Marian Wydo, Shirley Schwoerer, and Jim Clifford. So I have decided to write a book as a fundraiser. It is almost finished and will go to the publisher on the 1st September. The book is on the "vanished communities" of San Mateo County. I have great hopes that this will sell as the royalties will all go directly to the Archives Board of the Redwood City Library. Thank you all for subscribing to this journal and we will look forward to having as many of you as possible to our annual meeting on September 23rd, 6:30 pm, in the Community Room at the library.

John Edmonds

Joseph Ridge

By John Edmonds



Joseph Ridge was born at Sutton-on-Trent, England, on September 3, 1838. The Ridge family moved to America ten years later and settled in Albany, New York, remaining there for but two years. They then moved to a farm in the Genesee Valley, where they lived for four years. The next move was to Aurora, Illinois, where they lived for ten years. In June 1860, the family moved again to Anoka, County, Illinois. There, Ridge worked in Bethel, a nearby town where he taught school. In 1860 he married Sarah while working in Bethel.

Ridge enlisted on May 20, 1861, and was placed in the First Minnesota Infantry. He never missed a day of duty. At Gettysburg, he was detailed at division headquarters, and thus, he missed action on July 2 and 3, when the regiment was badly shot up. He was mustered out on May 5, 1864.

His marriage to Sarah must have ended, because he was married to Grace Mitchell on September 4, 1864, while still living in Bethel. He and Grace eventually had seven children and lived in Anoka County, Illinois.

By 1920 Joseph and Grace had moved to Nevada County, California, with their 42-year-old son Walter. They moved to Redwood City about six years later. Joseph died on February 26, 1928, at 89 years of age. Grace died shortly thereafter at 76 years of age, and she was buried beside Joseph in the Grand Army of the Republic plot in Union Cemetery.

John Poole & Family

By John Edmonds



John Poole was born in Illinois. On September 1, 1861, he enlisted in the 15th Illinois Cavalry. He served three years and was discharged a sergeant at the expiration of his service. John had been wounded, and he was confined in Libby Prison for a period of time. It was one of the Confederacy's more infamous institutions, known for the brutal treatment of Union Army prisoners.

Following his period of service several years later, Poole moved to California and took up residence in Redwood City. While the newspapers do not say, he probably spent a bit of time in the Gold Country before coming south; almost everybody did for varying degrees of time.

John's first efforts in San Mateo County were in ranching and farming. He profited by these efforts, but it was not the kind of work he really wanted to do. He eventually got a job driving stagecoaches for Simon Knights, going from Redwood City to San Gregorio, and then to Pescadero. The route included a stop in La Honda to change horses and get a bit of food and drink for passengers and drivers.

John then became engaged in the express business. This was his own business. Generally, it involved transporting packages and various other mails from Redwood City to San Francisco. Poole enjoyed running his own business.

Poole was appointed postmaster in Redwood City by President Harrison and worked in that position for five years. He married Sarah Louise Thornton, and they made their residence at 159 Jefferson Ave. in Redwood City. Poole joined Charles Swanson and J. J. Bullock and traveled to Alaska during the Gold Rush of 1898. They tried their luck on Seven-Mile Creek and were not terribly successful. Bullock later became a superior court judge in San Mateo County.

Poole passed away in March 1917. He was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic in Redwood City. That organization held his services, as well as the burial in the Grand Army's plot in Union Cemetery.

Mrs. Williamson was a member of the Poole family and the cemetery association will be forever grateful to her for her donation of \$20,000 which we used to build a new and permanent Civil War soldier for the Grand Army of the Republic plot. It is more than a little fitting considering the pioneer of the family is buried there.

William Littlejohn

By John Edmonds

It was unusual for a newspaper to celebrate a birthday even in the early twentieth century. But for William Littlejohn, the Redwood City Democrat did exactly that on October 25, 1906. Three months after his passing, the newspaper praised him in such glowing terms: "Of him, it can be truly said that he lived in harmony with everybody, and never was an unkind word known to pass from his lips." The exception was clearly explained.



The celebration in October '06 was for his ninety-second birthday on October 15. The newspaper told us much about this unusual and highly intelligent inventor. William Littlejohn invented solutions for all sorts of problems. Since he did not believe in patenting them, they were always copied or reproduced. The first example of this was the gold stamp.

Littlejohn traveled to California from his home town of Burlington, Vermont, in 1849 after hearing of the discovery of gold in California. He had actually been born in Devonshire, England, and had come to Vermont as a very small child. He observed the need for a system to break down ore, so that the gold could be extracted. He built the stamp mill for that purpose. He and his wife Emma, who had accompanied him from Vermont, arrived in the San Mateo County area in late 1850 and settled in the town of Searsville. He immediately went to work building sawmills. The first mill was for Charles Brown, who was working with Willard Whipple, on Alambique Creek.

The second mill was for Dennis Martin on San Francisquito Creek. He later built Martin's upper mill on what we know today as Dennis Martin Creek. Both these mills were in the Searsville area.



Littlejohn's Stamp Mill

The Littlejohn family, which was growing as their children came into the world, moved from Searsville to Redwood City in about 1855. Littlejohn built Redwood City's first water system by boring out the hearts of Redwood trees.

While he was off building lumber mills in the redwoods, his wife Emma purchased lots number 61, 62 and 63 from Simon Mezes. When Littlejohn came home, he found he had enough dock space and water depth to build ships, so he began construction on lumber sloops. The following year he constructed the huge schooner, the *B. G. Whiting*, a three-masted schooner that sailed the bay and ocean for many years. It was 250 tons burden, and one of the largest ships to visit Redwood Creek.



B.G. Whiting

Littlejohn also constructed the bridge for pedestrians to use to cross the creek from A Street to Bridge Street. He also helped in the construction of the walls that were used to block the ebbing tide, so that they could dredge the creek with the force of water when the walls were opened.

William and Emma Littlejohn had five children. Chase, the oldest, became famous in his own right as a naturalist. Another son, William Frederick (known as "Fred"), was drowned when the sloop *G. E. Long*, capsized in the bay near Redwood Creek. The third son, George W., became the captain of the schooner *Otter*, which plied the Pacific Coast for many years in the search for otters and seals. Captain Littlejohn was lost at sea. Two daughters, Lorna and Flora, both married and moved to other parts of the state.



Emma Littlejohn

Emma Littlejohn died in Redwood City on December 29, 1878, at 50 years of age. William passed away in 1907. All the local family members are buried in Union Cemetery.

I have long felt that William Littlejohn, more than any other person I am aware of, should be considered the father of Redwood City.

San Mateo County's Northern "Outpost" Notes – 100th Year

By Bunny Gillespie, Daly City historian

Daly City celebrated a unique date on March 22, 2011. It was the municipality's 100th birthday. Old timers and newer residents gathered at the city hall to acknowledge Daly City's 100th anniversary of incorporation. Cake was served, flags were paraded, pioneers were praised, songs were sung, and pleasant people shared memories of the city's past. The party launched a year of recognition and accolades for a city that has proved to be hospitable, progressive and historic over the years. The celebration will continue through March of 2012, as Daly City's ad-hoc, citizen-based Centennial Committee and other local entities host various events in various venues throughout Daly City's sphere of concern in north San Mateo County.

"Why is Daly City celebrating?" asked one inquiring gentleman. "We're celebrating because we're here!" he was told.

Yet to be announced for dates in 2011-2012 are several events to which the public will be invited to participate. Current residents and former residents, of which there are legion, will be urged to take part in the celebrations, share remembrances of earlier days in Daly City and contribute by their presence to the gaiety of any or all of the milestone festivities. Information will be posted on Daly City's website and announced in local media.

Among the activities celebrating Daly City's centennial year was a gala dinner on September 24. As envisioned by the chairperson, the dinner was a reunion and "a wonderful time for mingling with old and dear friends."

A narrated walk on Saturday, September 10 went around the historical "Top of The Hill" area of Daly City, where John Daly's dairy cows roamed for forty years. Historical buildings and landmarks were viewed. The walk is scheduled to be repeated as the Centennial continues. More events are contemplated.

Meanwhile, the first public library (1920-2007) building at 6351 Mission Street, which now houses the Daly City History Museum, displays a myriad of historical memorabilia focusing on the Centennial theme.

The area that became Daly City in 1911 has seen many changes over the past one hundred years. Well over a century ago the vicinity was known as "Township One of San Mateo County." The township was established in 1856, when San Mateo County residents voted to be independent of San Francisco County. The area remained a township until 1911, when county supervisors based in Redwood City gave thoughtful consideration of Township One's petition to hold an election in the spring of that year regarding the formation of an incorporated city.

Representing a population of approximately 2000 people, 274 men cast their ballots on the question of incorporation. Women had not yet been granted the privilege of taking part in elections. The tally was 138 to 136. The proposal to establish a new city won by only two votes. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Founded primarily by people of Irish ancestry, Daly City is now a thriving and diverse city with a rich ethnic mix, amenities of unlimited possibilities, and a past that is both colorful and historic.

Today Daly City's population of more than 103,000 people includes the second largest Asian community in the United States. It embraces the largest Filipino community outside of Manila in the Philippine Islands, and it is the most populated incorporated community in San Mateo County. Descendants of Daly City's pioneer sons and daughters of Erin continue to be part of Daly City's progress and prosperity.

Daly City's historical roots have been traced to the 1700s, when Native Americans pulled fish from the waters of the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay, foraged for edible plants and animals on the gentle slopes of what would be named San Bruno Mountain, and lived peacefully and comfortably in the shadow of the mountain. The land was hospitable.

In 1769, Bruno Hecata and his fellow Spanish explorers glimpsed the first recorded sighting of San Francisco Bay after climbing the slopes of a 1,314-foot-high landmass. Hecata named the mountain for his patron saint. In 1776, pioneers establishing missions along the length of California passed through a land gap between the mountain and coastal hills on their way to claim land on which to construct Mission Dolores in San Francisco. They called the gap "La Portezuela." As they traversed the area, they noticed and recorded an abundance of sand dunes and scrawny vegetation covering the land. The explorers eschewed the area and continued their trek north. Populating the land and cultivation of the terrain around La Portezuela progressed slowly for decades.

In the 1850s, a sparse handful of settlers started to populate the region. At the close of the previous decade, some had tried their luck in the newly discovered and tempting gold fields of California. After packing up their shovels and picks, they looked to other endeavors, possibly more productive and less arduous. The lure of California, however, continued to attract adventurous people from many parts of the United States and from other countries. They shared the common goal of wishing to improve their personal life styles and that of their families.

In 1853, two men of Irish heritage, Robert Sheldon Thornton and Patrick Brooks, ventured south from the population hub of San Francisco to arrive coincidentally on the same day to purchase and develop property. The land had been only recently made available for investment. Reportedly unknown to each other, they considered the possibilities for prosperity that might await them. They stayed and put down roots. The land they purchased had been deemed wasteland after a government survey re-established boundaries of Laguna de la Merced Rancho. The land had become available after the establishment of the Homestead Act of 1853. Buyers were mostly veterans of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, who used their service bonuses as land bounty certificates. Although Brooks and Thornton are credited with being the first settlers in the north county, others quickly followed.

Some of them, although not Brooks nor Thornton, now have streets named after them—Dunks, White, Knowles, and Pierce—among them. The area in which they placed their hopes was to become the twentieth century neighboring north county cities of Daly City and Colma.

In 1858, five years after he had pioneered into the area and two years after San Mateo County had been established, Thornton was chosen to represent his part of the new county administrative structure. He served as a county supervisor and road director for Township One. His area of responsibility extended from the San Francisco County line in the north to Belmont in the south. His duties included maintaining roads, trails, and other avenues of public transit. In those days, El Camino Real was the only public road leading from San Francisco to San Jose. Individual landowners were taxed \$4 annually for establishment and upkeep of the public road.

In later years, former road director Thornton delighted in recalling how he confiscated rails from settlers' fences to use as levers, as he pried stage coaches out of muddy spots and sand traps, and how he filled road holes with willow twigs gathered nearby.

In 1913, when Thornton was ninety-four years young, the Daly City Record printed a bit of the old pioneers' memories. He had written: "In the early days, people in the Redwood City County seat called residents of Township One 'Sandhillers' for short, and we accepted the name, but retaliated by dubbing our neighbors in the far south 'Mudstickers.' But they came out of the mud, and we came out of the sand, so the terms passed into history, and the sand-hillers and mud-stickers are cemented in the bonds of close friendship."

Among the more colorful and historically important happenings in north San Mateo County was the unique Broderick-Terry Duel that pitted United States Senator David Broderick against former California Supreme Court Judge David Terry in 1859. The two faced off on ranch property near Lake Merced on the San Francisco-San Mateo County line. Broderick was killed. The gunfight was recorded as the first in which shots were fired in dispute of issues regarding California's stance in the impending Civil War and was to be the final legal pistol duel in California.

The site is now preserved in a public park marked with State Historical plaque no. 19 in northwest Daly City. Broderick is entombed in Colma.

In 1868 the gentleman for whom Daly City would eventually be named started his San Mateo dairy ranch on a hill near La Portezuela. It would be a landmark and thriving business until 1907. The location became known as "Daly's Hill," denoting an early-day railroad stop. John Donald Daly's (1841-1923) name is the one most closely associated with the city of Daly City. He holds a unique place in the history of both San Francisco and San Mateo counties. Following the disastrous 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, refugees were welcomed to take sanctuary on Daly's property. They flocked to squat on the slopes surrounding Daly's ranch. As many as possible were given food and housing in his barns and outbuildings. Many never returned to San Francisco, choosing to put down roots near the hub of Daly's Hill. Later the area would become known as the "Top of the Hill." Daly's hospitality during that time of uncertainty was unequalled. He supplied free milk and other farm products to San Francisco hospitals. He oversaw the construction of temporary housing on his ranchlands and supplied the shelters with items removed from his own residences. John Daly is one of the legendary contributors to Daly City's quality of life that is celebrated during its Centennial Year. A special memorial program honoring Daly was held at his Woodlawn Memorial Park gravesite in January. A metal bell, previously strapped around the neck of a Daly Ranch cow, was sounded to open the event.

When Daly City achieved incorporation in the election of March 18, 1911, the Daly City Record reported: "There is naught but joy at the result..." The newspaper also noted that celebrations feting the results were reported to be boisterous and plentiful, continuing well into the next evening, and possibly beyond. On March 22, 1911, after the election had been officially recorded in the county seat, there were additional celebrations throughout the new city. Daly City chose to continue to celebrate its new status by hosting a parade on July 4, 1911. It was not the area's first parade.

Before incorporation, residents had paraded informally when people of significance visited the area, when men were campaigning for public township or county offices, when musicians played appropriate tunes while enthusiasts patriotically carried flags to observe national holidays, when ethnic groups celebrated their diversity, and when students obediently strode back to school after summer holidays. A headline in the San Mateo Times (October 1, 1986) noted: "Everybody in DC Loves a Parade."

One hundred years ago, the new municipality linked its joy of incorporation with traditional Independence Day glee and formal acceptance of a unique gift to the city. In recognition of all three, the city sponsored a huge public parade that moved from the county line to the Top of the Hill. Any and all comers were welcome. Groups—civic and fraternal, secret and public—participated. The superintendent of schools walked proudly, as he led hundreds of students along the parade route. Public officials waved to watching crowds as they walked up the gentle hill to their waiting places of honor. Speeches were numerous. Band music filled the air. Bunting, flags, banners and pennants waved in gentle breezes. A reviewing stand had been placed at the end of the line of march. John Daly was among those prominently seated thereon.

Demonstrating his delight at having the city named in his honor, Daly had shown his "concrete appreciation" in the form of an "esplanade" donated by the aging silver-haired gentleman to the city. The platform, to be used as a convenience for people getting on or off streetcars, was built near the Top of the Hill intersection of Mission Street and San Jose Avenue. The raised waiting station was complete with a flagpole, drinking fountain, bubble lights, and a solid bronze plaque that proclaimed: "Gift of John Daly, July 4, 1911." The structure was "so substantial it will last a thousand years," the Daly City Record stated.

Daly's esplanade didn't last a thousand years. With the widening of the intersection and realignment of streets, new platforms replaced Daly's gift. The tablet bearing Daly's name disappeared. After streetcars were discontinued and railroad tracks removed at the Top of the Hill, landscaped median dividers were installed to provide modest safety for pedestrians. The exact location of the original waiting station is somewhat of a current mystery.

Over the years, many parades have been organized for the enjoyment of north county participants and viewers. In 1986, Daly City celebrated its 75th anniversary with a parade from the Top of the Hill to the Westlake section of the city, proceeding west along John Daly Boulevard. Earlier parades, noting 50th, 40th, and 30th anniversaries had trudged from the county line to the Top of the Hill, ending at Jefferson High School on Mission Street or Marchbank Park. At this writing, no parades are planned for Daly City's 100th year celebration.

Famous "firsts" have happened in Daly City, and famous people have roots here. California's first all-woman jury found a guilty verdict here. The first woman to run a mortuary business in California was a lady of local residence. A local teacher was among the first women commissioned to serve during World War II. The United States Navy reconnaissance Blimp L-8 provided Daly City with an ongoing unsolved mystery when it crashed onto a local street in 1942. The unique and world-famous Cow Palace stands as an historic relic that was used as a debarkation base during World War II. A world-class medical center is an unrivaled landmark atop one of Daly City's hills. The site previously produced acres of heather plants. Sports legends, business tycoons and famed musicians have ties to Daly City.

There's talk among Centennial Committee members that John Daly Boulevard, the major thoroughfare connecting the oldest Top of the Hill section of Daly City with the more recently-built (1950s) Westlake section, might be re-named "Centennial Way" during this milestone year.

Thus, Daly City celebrates its 100th birthday, and localites take pride in their history and future.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DALY CITY!!!

Regarding the writer of the above: Bunny Gillespie is a native of Daly City, "born, bred, and educated" in the north county. She has seen the municipality grow from a population of only a few thousand to over 103,000. She is a former Women's Editor of the Daly City Record and Westlake Times newspapers. Bunny and her husband Ken have served as Daly City's Official Historians, designated by the Daly City Council, since September 23, 1987. They produced "The Great Daly City Historical Trivia Book" in 1986. Bunny is the author of "Images of America: Daly City" (2003), "Images of America: Westlake" (2008), and "Then and Now: Daly City" (2011).

Kate's Redwood City "Royal" Wedding

By James O. Clifford, Sr.

London had a royal wedding, and so did Redwood City—and the bride was named Kate!!!

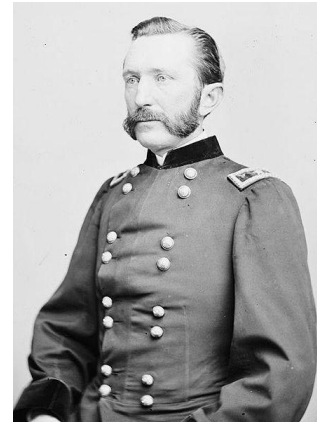
The Kate in this case was 20-year-old Katherine Connor. Her marriage to 29-year-old Bartley Patrick Oliver was about as close to a royal merger as the Peninsula could get in the 19th century. Newspapers treated the Jan. 16, 1884, ceremony as though the bride was a princess, noting that the church filled up "as fast as possible," because she was "a great friend of all who knew her."

School children were given the day off and "packed the rear" of the church. Kate, also called "Katie," recounted the occasion in her memoirs published in 1931. She added that people came "by the trainload from San Francisco." She continued: "A church wedding was a rare event in the little village." According to the 1880 census, Redwood City had a population of 1,383.



Kate as a child

Katie was the daughter of General Patrick Edward Connor, a legendary military figure (more, much more, about him later), while the bridegroom was a successful San Francisco real estate developer.



General Patrick Edward Connor

Like the recent marriage of Kate Middleton and Prince William, there was great interest in what the bride wore for the ceremony at St. Mary's Catholic Church, the forerunner of the present Mount Carmel.

"The bride was dressed in a plain white satin dress, with no ornaments but the customary orange blossoms," wrote the reporter for the Times Gazette, whose apparent disappointment picked up with the descriptions of the four bridesmaids' attire.

Katie was accompanied by "Miss Amelia Masten in blue silk and white lace trimmings, Julie Morrison and Lizzie Buckley in white ottoman silk and white trimmings, and Etta Douglass in pink silk and white lace trimmings," the newspaper account continued. The memoir identified Douglass as the bride's cousin, adding that the women "wore picture hats."

The groom wore "full dress," according to newspaper accounts. There were no other details of Oliver's outfit, lending a note of "who cares?" which was far from appropriate for a man who would go on to care for many. Oliver, who died in 1945, set up a home for unwed mothers and a shelter for the poor, as well as later establishing soup kitchens during the Great Depression. The dining hall at St. Mary's College, from where he was graduated in 1873, bears his name.

The marriage produced eight children. If there is such a thing as "Irish Catholic" royalty, the couple was a West Coast version of what the Kennedys were forming in the East.

The Kennedy connection would grow in the future with Katherine's grandson, Paul "Red" Fay. He served with John Kennedy in the Navy's PT boat fleet during World War II. Kennedy named Fay Secretary of the Navy. Fay was 91 when he died in Woodside in 2009. Fay's obituary in the New York Times said that he was born to "a wealthy Irish Catholic family, not unlike the Kennedys."

Having Archbishop Joseph Alemany perform the ceremony was quite a coup. "He was a great friend of my mother's and Bart's uncle," the memoir said of Alemany, who had been born in Spain and was the first archbishop of San Francisco.

California, which had passed from Mexican to American rule, still contained a large Spanish population with Spanish customs and traditions, so the appointment of Archbishop Alemany was "a providential measure," according to one church history.

"Born in Spain, educated in Rome and long a resident of the United States, his experience and his command of several languages put him in touch and in sympathy with all elements of his diocese," the memoir continued.

The wedding presents included gifts from Miss Connor's former teachers at Notre Dame College, a woman's academy in San Jose, not the present school in Belmont.

At Kate's birth in Utah, an Army officer gave her parents a bottle of champagne to be opened at her wedding. The memoir said the champagne was popped, but that "it had turned to syrup." The officer also gave the new baby "a gold locket, which was stolen off my neck while I was in my baby buggy during infancy."

After the wedding, the couple, along with their relatives and friends, went to the Connor family home to dine. The honeymoon was in Monterey.

Home Still Stands

Today the home is one of Redwood City's historic structures. It's called Lathrop House after the original owner, Benjamin Lathrop, San Mateo County's first clerk and recorder, who built the house in 1863.



In her writings, Connor, who referred to the residence as "a seven gabled" house, recalled falling into a waterway near the home when she was 14. Another recollection involved her mother alerting the sheriff to some suspicious men in the area.

Now on the National Register of Historic Places, the house was described by architectural historian Leslie Merrill as a "magnificent example of Gothic Revival ... with its many gables and graceful arches, pierced by quatrefoil designs." Merrill said the home was "a rare example of the beginnings of 'Steamboat Gothic' that reached such heights of fancy on the Mississippi River boats."

Open to visitors, the Lathrop House attractions include the Connor family's piano as well as Kate's bedroom furniture. The house, presently located on Hamilton Street adjacent to both the old and new courthouses, was built on the site of the present Fox Theater. Interestingly, a newspaper article in 1928 made more of the connection with the Connor family than it did with Lathrop.

The home "was Redwood City's most imposing residence – this house of many gables with its well-kept grounds, its flowers and fruit and shade trees, a place of beauty and comfort, with all that wealth could provide." The writer said the doors of the Connor home were always open "to all with a welcome that was genuine and generous."

The story in the Redwood City Standard was a history feature that accompanied the main story about the demolition of a grammar school constructed on land once occupied by the house. The school was torn down to make way for the movie house and its surrounding office building. The house was moved to its current location in 1905 when it belonged to Sheriff Joel Mansfield.

Family Tree Has New Roots

Archives show that the Connors owned the house from 1870 to 1894, but just what years they lived there themselves is in dispute. Some reports say it was only two years, which Kate's writings seem to knock down. There is little in local archives about the family's years here. Almost nothing was known of the Redwood City stay until the 1931 writings surfaced during the family's descendants' Internet hunt for their roots. The diary was released by Shelby G. Pike, Kate's great granddaughter. Shelby Pike thinks there is another Kate diary somewhere that she would "love to have."

The family lived in Redwood City "many years," Katie, now Mrs. Oliver, wrote. However, she doesn't say exactly how many. She does report that a brother, Hillary, was born during the stay in Redwood City. An older Connor son died at age seven in 1862 while the military family lived in Benicia.

Kate wrote that she was 4 years old when she came from Utah to San Francisco with her mother and two brothers. The San Francisco weather did not agree with her mother, so the Connors moved to a Belmont hotel for six months and then to Redwood City.

She writes much more about her mother than her famous father, who marched her down the aisle at her wedding but was away much of the time because he had "too many irons in the fire." Connor preferred to live at the Walker House Hotel in Utah where Kate visited him in 1872 and 1879, according to one biography of the general, who developed businesses in Utah and christened both a railroad engine and a steamboat after his daughter.

Fred Rogers' 1938 book, "Soldiers of the Overland," said Johanna Connor of Redwood City married Patrick Edward Connor on August 14, 1854 at St. Francis Xavier Church in San Francisco.

Both were natives of Ireland and, despite the same surname, were not related. Patrick Connor was born an O'Connor in County Kerry, Ireland, but dropped the "O" when he became a U.S. citizen. For that matter, to this day Connor's name is sometimes spelled Conner, with an "e."

Besides Redwood City, the Connors developed ties to other California cities, particularly Stockton, and the general always considered California his home, according to Rogers. Eugene Connor was born in San Francisco in 1869 and the aforementioned Hillary at Redwood City in 1873. Another son, Edward, was appointed to West Point in 1883 while a resident of Redwood City. According to Kate's writings, much of the children's time was spent at boarding schools in the area, hers at Notre Dame in San Jose and the boys at Santa Clara.

Mrs. Connor died in Redwood City in 1889. Her husband died in 1891 in Utah, where a monument was erected over his grave that listed the "irons in the fire" noted by his daughter: "Patrick Edward Connor, brigadier general and brevet major general, U.S. Volunteers. Born March 17, 1820, died December 17, 1891, Camped in this vicinity with his California Volunteers Oct. 20, 1862. Established Camp Douglas, Utah, October 26, 1862. Participated in the battles of Buena Vista, Bear River, and Tongue River. The father of Utah mining." The information is only a brief listing of Connor's accomplishments. Connor was given a large military funeral and a grand sendoff when he was buried at Fort Douglas, which is surprising considering he probably had a lot of enemies in the Beehive State. Among other things, Connor, who was born on St. Patrick's Day, wanted to bring non-Mormons to Utah. In a day when "equality in marriage" is a staple of the daily news report, it is surprising that so little – if any – mention is made of Utah's controversial admission to the Union, most of it involving polygamy.

Connor wrote his superiors in Washington about the Mormons, describing them as "traitors, murderers, fanatics," going so far as to label them "whores." He felt that "assuring Mormon loyalty" was as important as preventing Indians raids along mail and telegraph routes. The general, who founded the "Liberal Party" in Utah, was involved in establishing a town called Corrine, a non-Mormon settlement which, for a time, was called Connor City.

While he gets scant notice locally, Connor is huge in books encompassing the West. His name appears in such works as “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee,” “Men to Match My Mountains,” and “American Military History,” a thick volume published by the Army.

Connor fought in the Mexican War and then battled Indian tribes during the Civil War. He found time to find silver in Utah and develop the metal in that state and Nevada, but he lost most of his mines and died relatively poor. He managed to live long enough to see the Mormons renounce polygamy, a practice the Catholic Connor detested.

Indian Legacy

Whatever his other claims on history, it is as a soldier and “Indian fighter” that Connor will be remembered. Some might change the word “fighter” to “slaughterer.” His role in the Battle of Bear River near Franklin, Idaho, on January 29, 1863, is extremely controversial. In 1985, Dr. Brigham Madsen of the University of Utah dubbed the Bear River fight a “massacre.” Soon the wording on the plaque at the site was changed from “battle” to “massacre.”

Brigham Madsen was the author of a biography of Connor called “Glory Hunter,” a title some might consider a sign of bias, particularly when combined with the author’s first name. It is fair, however, to say that glory was sought by many soldiers in the West during the years the Civil War was waged in other parts of the nation. Connor himself asked to be sent east to fight the Confederates. Some of his soldiers petitioned to fight “traitors,” even offering to pay their way to the front.

At Bear River, Connor, then a colonel in charge of the volunteer 3rd California Infantry, led a detachment of 300 men against Chief Bear Hunter’s Shoshones, who had been linked to scattered attacks on settlers. The Indians held a strong defensive position and had about an equal number of warriors. They were so confident, according to one account, one of them “rode up and down in front of the ravine, brandishing his spear in the face of the volunteers and the warriors in front sang out: ‘Four right, four left; come on you California sons of bitches!’”

When the smoke cleared, 21 soldiers and 250 Shoshone were dead. The tribe’s dead included 90 women and children, according to the Utah government history site that added: “Undisciplined soldiers went through the Indian village raping women and using axes to bash in the heads of women and children who were already dying of wounds.”

Slaughter was not unknown in the pioneering days. In her memoir, Kate said her mother “came across a devastated camp where the Indians had killed all. A baby’s head was bashed against a wagon wheel.”

According to the “Indian Wars” segment of The American Heritage Library, the victory at Bear River earned Connor a general’s star. By the autumn of 1863 he could report to his superiors that “all routes of travel through the Utah Territory to Nevada and California, and to the Beaver Head and Boise River gold mines, may now be used with safety.”

Connor’s summation was overly optimistic. The Battle of Tongue River was ahead. On August 29, 1865 Connor and his men, this time including 90 Pawnee Indian allies, faced 500 Arapaho in Wyoming. Many of the warriors were off fighting other Indians at the time, but the remaining braves put up a stiff fight, waging a counter-attack that was beaten back with howitzer fire. The battle went on until dark. Killed or wounded were 63 Indians, a toll that included women and children caught in the crossfire. Capt. H.E. Palmer, who kept a diary, wrote that “our men had no time to direct their aim; bullets from both sides, and murderous arrows filled the air; squaws and children, as well as warriors, fell among the dead and wounded.”

A True Mustang

Connor was an Army “mustang,” a term used for an officer who came up through the ranks, as opposed to a West Pointer. His life, both military and civilian, was an example of the self-made man of the 1800s.

A biography provided by Connor’s descendents said his military career began on November 28, 1839, when he enlisted in the First Dragoons at the age of nineteen. After service on the Iowa frontier where he helped build Fort Des Moines, Connor was honorably discharged in 1844.

He became a naturalized citizen a year later, but was not out of uniform very long. Connor enlisted in the Texas Volunteers in 1846 and was mustered into federal service shortly after. He became a lieutenant in the Mexican War and was badly wounded at the battle of Buena Vista. Discharged in 1847, the future general came to California in 1850 and was briefly a pilot at Humboldt Bay.

As a California Ranger, he took part in the hunt for the nearly mythical figure who became known in folklore as Joaquin Murieta—think Cisco Kid and Zorro, but with a lot of blood on his hands. Some histories credit Connor with shooting “Three-fingered Jack,” Murieta’s sidekick.

After a stint as a surveyor, Connor, now married, settled near Stockton where he bought a ranch and also entered the gravel business after a gravel supply was found on his property. Connor became postmaster, secretary of the state fair, and treasurer of the San Joaquin Agricultural Society. He also established the city water works, according to Rogers’ book. The military was in his blood, however, and he became Captain of the Stockton Blues, which were organized in 1856 and drew the name from the color of the uniforms.

The earlier mentioned 1928 newspaper story about the Connor home in Redwood City quoted from a biography of Connor “written by an old resident of Stockton” that was published in an unnamed Stockton newspaper “several years ago.”

The writer, who was not identified, described Connor as “one of the most enterprising citizens of Stockton,” recalling how he spread the gravel over city streets that were “wallowing in winter mud and summer dust.

“Connor also built himself a residence which was considered quite a swell house,” the account went on. “It was peculiar, as it was octagonal shaped, and with a glass tower, centrally built on a flat roof, presented at a distance the appearance of a fort.” That appearance was appropriate for a man who would soon lead troops in battle. The “old resident” said Connor was very proud of his soldiers, particularly the regimental band which he “called out upon all occasions,” including a parade held in San Francisco while the men were stationed in Benicia.

No Letters

Connors’ descendents have his sword and ceremonial belt, but unlike his daughter, the general apparently did not leave a diary, memoirs, or personal letters, which is unfortunate because Connor lived through two of the best kept secrets of Irish American history: the saga of the San Patricios during the War with Mexico and, later, that of the Fenians.

The San Patricios, meaning Saint Patricks, were a contingent in the Mexican Army that consisted of American Army deserters. Many, but not all, were born in Ireland. There were 200 or so members of the battalion, 35 of whom were killed in action. After the war, the U.S. Army hanged 30 as deserters.

The San Patricios are honored in Mexico and Ireland, and all but forgotten in the United States. “Shamrock and Sword,” written by Robert Miller, said the motives for desertion were many. The religious motive was obvious. The war was waged amid strong nativist, anti-Catholicism in America. In addition, soldiers suffered brutal punishments for the slightest infraction. These included flogging or being spread-eagled in the blazing sun. Miller estimated the desertion rate at 8.3 percent, much higher than other American wars.

The Mexicans noted the strong anti-Catholic sentiments in the United States and preyed on this in their propaganda, luring the Catholic troops as co-religionists and offering them land if they deserted.

Perhaps the real motive had nothing to do with the United States or Mexico. The San Patricios fought under the flag of a nation they did not live to see. It was the green banner of Ireland, the same one the Fenians flew.

The Fenian story was north of the border, not south. An ardent Irish nationalist group, the Fenians, composed of veterans fresh from America’s Civil War, actually invaded Canada. The idea was to force the British to withdraw troops from Ireland where, it was hoped, a revolt would break out. The invading veterans also hoped French Canadians would join them, which didn’t happen.

The ardent nationalist group also put up the seed money for the first practical submarine, which was to be named “The Fenian Ram.”

A force of 1,500 Fenians crossed the Niagara frontier in 1866. Their disciplined fire was too much for the raw Canadians, who retreated. The Fenians then went to Fort Erie, where they captured a small Canadian force. The Irish contingent became cut off when the United States sent a gunboat to prevent reinforcements. Once back on American soil, most of the Fenians were arrested, but were released without trial, according to the book, “The Unguarded Frontier.”

Although the Fenian chapter is little known in United States’ history, it is in Canada’s. During a trip north of the border, the author saw monuments to those who fought the invaders, as well as a military tower built to keep watch for future Fenian efforts.

The Fenians weren’t strangers to San Mateo County. The San Mateo County Gazette reported that the organization held a picnic in May of 1866 in San Mateo that drew 15,000 people.

“To the credit of the Irish, they disappointed many who anticipated a disorderly riotous rabble,” the newspaper reported.

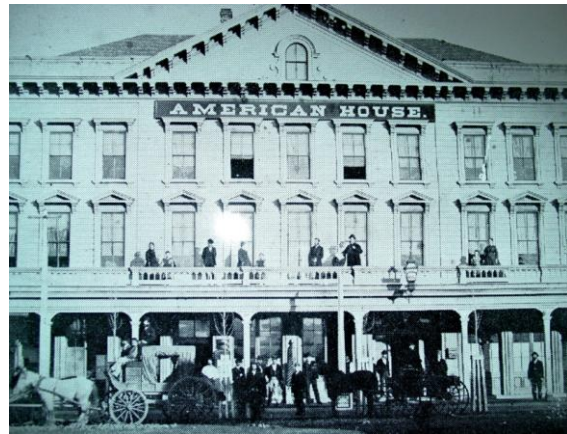
In 1870, 12,000 people attended a Fenian gathering in Redwood City and special trains were needed to bring in supporters from north and south. Redwood City had only 1,000 residents at the time – including the Connors.

It is not known what the family thought about the Fenians, but historian Gary McDonough, who specializes in the history of the Irish in Utah, said Fort Douglas was the headquarters for the Fenian movement west of Chicago.

“No one covered the Fenians better than the Union Vedette, the paper at Fort Douglas,” he told the Journal of Local History. “I am sure Connor was responsible for its publication.”

Whispers from Union Cemetery Knights’ Life and Stagecoach Line

By John Edmonds



The American House stood on Main Street, looking directly west at Bridge Street. It was Redwood City’s finest inn 1867.

It was a bright and beautiful morning on April 1, 1867, when Simon Knights stepped out on the balcony outside the office he had just rented inside the American House. Knights had ridden into Redwood City by horseback from his home in Searsville. He had spent the night at the American House Hotel and was dressed and ready for a day at work. Simon Knights was known affectionately as “Sime,” a nickname he acquired even before he began the stagecoach line that eventually stretched all the way to Pescadero. His home in Searsville was in the hills west of Redwood City, an area that flourished with the lumber industry during this period. It was on the side of a hill that overlooked Sausel Creek, which became a small river in the winter and a large trickle in the summer.

Knights was a man of average height and weight; he usually wore jeans with western-style boots. He needed the larger heel to loop the shoes over the edge of the stagecoach boot. He always wore a cowboy hat and a white duster coat. He also wore a colorful shirt and often a black vest.

He was a handsome man with flashing blue eyes, brown hair that he kept fairly short; he had a great smile, giving the impression that he was enjoying life. He was very observant and easy to get along with; most people who knew him were attracted to him. He had made many friends, as he traveled frequently between Redwood City and the coast. Many of the people he was closest to were people he knew in Redwood City and who often rode from Searsville to Redwood City at the same time he did. Horace Templeton is a good example; he lived just a short distance from Knights in Searsville until he moved to Phelps Street in Redwood City about 1865, some five years after he became San Mateo County's second superior court judge.

But the morning of April 1, 1867, was unusual because it was the day that the petition for incorporation of the City of Redwood City was to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors. Knights knew that one of the first things on the agenda of the new city would be the macadamizing of the roads. This would go far to making the city more livable. Knights had started his stage line in 1865, and by 1867 he was looking forward to extending it from his route from Redwood City to the Summit Springs Hotel near Skyline.

Owen McGarvey, a good friend of the Knights family, had submitted an application to do the macadamizing, using rock from his quarry at Searsville. The McGarvey home was on the Red Woods Road (now Woodside Road), at today's Alameda de las Pulgas, on the property now owned by Menlo Country Club. The gates on Woodside Road were originally built by McGarvey, and one of the buildings was apparently his home, now converted into golf club use.

When Knights rode into Redwood City from his home at Searsville each morning, he stopped first at his stables, which were on Main Street at (Phelps) Middlefield Road. There he observed the stable hands organizing the horses in their braces, which were to be attached to the coaches. He then walked up to his office in the American House, a short three blocks, which was not bad during the spring, summer or fall, but when the rain started and the streets turned to mud, the walk was far more troubling.



Building sidewalks on Stambaugh Street about 1870

Suddenly, a lumber wagon came into view on Mound Street (now Main Street), carrying a second trailer also full of milled lumber. Six horses were pulling it as hard as possible, finally on flat ground following the tedious drive down the steep hills from Skyline. The wheels bumped wildly over the uneven dirt, which was still somewhat soft following the rain about a week before. The dust spiraled in the air and over the freshly built wooden sidewalks and onto the side of the homes and businesses. Everybody recognized the dust problem; they were certainly used to it. The lumber industry had begun a number of years earlier and had only grown since the Hanson and Ackerson Lumber Company had built their docks and warehouses on Redwood Creek on the bay side of town. The dust did not bother the residents as much as the mud during the winter. It was difficult to get across the street during the wet period of the year. It was especially difficult when the creek flooded, and this happened all too regularly when the tide was high and the rain was heavy.

Knights looked farther up Bridge Street, and he could see the businesses along both sides of the street. He was encouraged that this would one day be a bustling town. The bustling had already begun, with the rapidly increasing lumber mills and the expansion of the industry to the north in the development of the town of West Union. Willard Whipple had built a sawmill on West Union Creek and had then built a road to Redwood City. This road, now known as Edgewood Road, was called Whipple's Mill Road.

Among Knights' many friends, Benjamin Fox and his two sons were foremost. Benjamin Fox was the first judge in San Mateo County; he had taken office immediately after the fraudulent election in 1856, and subsequently, in the corrected elections that brought this county into existence. Benjamin's two sons were George and Charles. George had married Sarah Thornton Donald; the couple had purchased a house on Mound Street, a pleasant walk back towards the County Road from the American House. Benjamin, Charles and George were all attorneys. After Benjamin had retired in 1860, Charles and George stayed active in their law firm, Fox and Fox, Attorneys-at-Law. Both brothers were very accomplished, and both became district attorneys of San Mateo County. They always had all the business they could handle. The Fox family was often mentioned in the newspapers, which also did not hurt their business. Charles went on to become a California Supreme Court Justice, while George stayed in town and became known as one of its very best attorneys. George had been a member of the Jefferson Cavalry during the latter part of the Civil War.



Simon Knights driving the stagecoach built by Fisher and Murch

In 1869 the Knights' stagecoach began carrying passengers from Redwood City to Summit Springs and back along primarily Red Woods Road to Summit Springs Road (now King's Mountain Road). The stagecoach was a small vehicle that carried but a small number of passengers. It met the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad when it stopped in Redwood City in the morning. It then travelled down Mound Street to Red Woods Road, then west. Many of the passengers were men interested in work cutting trees. Upon arrival, they booked a room at the Summit Springs Hotel, which was half a mile east of the ridge that we call Skyline today.

Knights had already made an agreement with Leonard Fisher and Samuel Murch, who had recently established a large shop on Cassia Street (between Heller and Mound streets). They had signed a contract to build two very large, full-size stagecoaches so Knights' business could be increased and the trips could be expanded to include Whiskey Hill, Searsville, the Red Barn, Sears at La Honda, the Bell Ranch, the San Gregorio Hotel and on down Stage Road to Pescadero.

The two stagecoaches were exceptionally large. They were built on the second floor of the building; the large ramps were often in motion, as the new wagons built by Fisher and Murch were readied for their customers. Each coach held seventeen passengers, plus the driver. The standard stagecoach of the day held about twelve passengers. Five or six of the passengers, however, had to sit on the roof of the coach. I suppose this could be a bit nerve-rattling as the coaches passed around sharp curves on the way to the coast.

As Knights stood on that balcony looking out over Redwood Creek, he could see the lumber ships coming down the creek and the drawbridge opened by two men on each side of the creek, rapidly turning the wheels. He could hear the lumber creak and moan, as the great wheels were turned, causing the massive timbers to pivot toward the shore on each side of the creek. The ships would come across A Street and sail into the turning basin and then start back toward the lumber docks.



John Poole, Civil War veteran and stagecoach driver

The ships would be loaded with milled lumber, shingles, fence posts and boards, hay, grains and leather goods from the tanneries. They would sink into the loose mud at the bottom. Then, when the tide came back in, they would get underway to their destinations—San Francisco, Sacramento, Napa, San Jose, Stockton and a variety of other locations around the Bay.

Knights thought about the article he had read recently in the San Mateo County Times-Gazette newspaper, which told about the amount of ships and material going through this process each week throughout the year just past. The figures were immense: a typical week in July or August saw the arrival of 24 ships and the export of 50,000 board feet of milled lumber, 1,730,000 shingles, 108,000 fence posts and 152 cords of firewood. These demands required a substantial workforce. The ships also carried out products of the tanneries, vegetables, hay and alfalfa. As the morning wore on, Knights received a visit from John Poole. He was a Civil War veteran who had recently come to California and was looking for a job.

Knights told him about the two stagecoaches he had contracted with Fisher and Murch, and he asked him if he had had any experience in driving very large and heavy coaches. The answer was that Poole had extensive experience driving heavy wagons, because his father had driven them for his dairy business in the East. Knights told Poole that when his coaches were completed in a couple of weeks, he could try driving them.

George Fox then happened to come along on his walk from his home on Main Street to Bridge Street, where he turned across to the bridge and on up A Street to the courthouse. However, on this occasion, he had a few minutes to talk while he waited for his brother Charles before they both walked on to work.



Knights' stagecoach on the way out of town

Knights climbed aboard his stagecoach and drove it to the train station. He waited for the southbound San Francisco and San Jose train to come as close as possible to its stated schedule. When the passengers disembarked from the train, they saw the Redwood City-to-Pescadero Stage, as those words were written on the coach itself. The passengers who were taking the stagecoach bought their tickets and stowed their baggage in the back of the coach. They then went into the train station and relaxed a few minutes before starting out on the long ride to Pescadero. The trip took a full day. Knights spent the night in the Swanton house before he began the journey back to Redwood City.



Eikerencotter Hotel and store at Searsville

The journey began as the coach travelled down Mound Street, which got its name for the prominent Indian burial mound that stood at the corner of today's Beach and Main streets. The trip continued along Red Woods Road (Woodside Road) along the south side of the creek, as it wound its way into the hills. The drop-off along the creek was fairly steep, but the stage was driven carefully, and except for one particular incident, had a perfect record of accident-free travel. It made its first stop at Hadler's Exchange in the town of Whiskey Hill, where often a number of lumber wagons were making their way, carrying milled lumber to the docks on Redwood Creek. Knights often spent a little time talking with these men, who were familiar since they usually stayed in the American House, where he had his office.

The stage then travelled over Shine Road (Whiskey Hill Road) to Searsville, where it stopped at the Eikerencotter Hotel. There, people disembarked briefly. August Eikerencotter and Knights were very good friends. Knights spent some time at the hotel on weekends, just observing the gambling, horse-racing and other activities the lumber men used to let off steam and relax on their very few days off.

I should note here that Knights moved from the town of Searsville up today's Canada Road to the town of West Union, where he reestablished his residence.



Knights Stagecoach at Cavalli's in La Honda

This followed a tragedy that occurred in 1862, when the entire hillside on Sausal Creek came down on the Knights' home, crushing the house and one of the Knights family's small children. The house was rebuilt after several years, but the memories were just too great so a change of scenery was warranted. The move into West Union changed Simon's route to Redwood City, as he then had to travel over Whipple's Mill Road (Edgewood Road), which took him right downtown in Redwood City.

The route from Searsville was along today's Old La Honda Road, which was—and is—very steep and twisty. This took the coach over Skyline (the road did not exist at the time) and down to the big red barn of the Weeks family. This always made a good stop, as the travelers were quite tired following the somewhat harrowing ride from Searsville. There were outhouses, comfortable chairs and good drinks.

The next stop, following a somewhat less twisty road, was La Honda, the Sears Hotel and Restaurant. The horses were changed in La Honda. That took a good bit of time, so it was a good place to have lunch and really relax for a while. Sears was a good friend of Knights. The town of Searsville was named after him, and he was the postmaster for a period of time. He moved to La Honda after he was well established in Searsville with a small hotel and a blacksmith shop. But the competition was substantial and the income not as great as he wished. Sears found blacksmithing more lucrative in La Honda; he built a very nice shop there, which is now known as Applejack's, a saloon.

His move to La Honda was literally the act of establishing that town as we know it today. The original small group of buildings were farther west at the intersection of Pescadero Road.



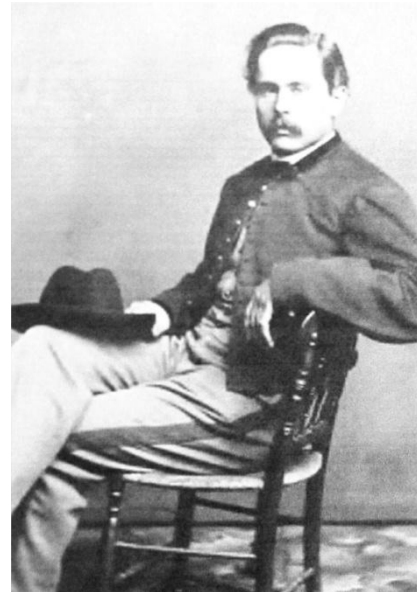
Frank and Rebecca Bell at a family picnic near La Honda

The next stop on the trip west was at the Bell Ranch, or Bellvale, as the small town was called. There, the passengers began to feel the coast, as the fog started to meet them. They pulled their jackets back on, after the warm ride from Redwood City. Frank Bell was a wonderful host, both in the town named after him and at the next stop, where he and Jessie Palmer had constructed a very large hotel in San Gregorio.

Bell had married Rebecca Palmer, the daughter of Jessie Palmer. She was the only child of four who survived the diphtheria epidemic that swept through San Mateo County. Sears had pulled Rebecca out of the Palmer family, at her parents' request, and thus saved her from the disease that killed her twin brothers and her younger sister. Jessie Palmer had been out of house a great deal during this period, as he was the head supervisor for the Hanson-Ackerson Lumber Company at their large mill on Alpine Creek. The stop at Bellvale was relatively brief and the trip to San Gregorio was pleasant, although cooler.

The stop in San Gregorio was also relatively brief since most of the passengers were anxious to get to Pescadero and get settled down. The stage traveled over Stage Road, as we know it today. There were views of the ocean at several points, although they were rather brief, as the stage rattled noisily over the twisting hills.

It finally came down the straighter stretch past the old Hope Cemetery on the left, and then into Pescadero itself and the end of the line. There were two or three hotels of different sizes, but since the stage stopped in front of the Swanton House, most passengers booked rooms there for whatever period of time they intended to stay. Most of the people stayed about a week, which gave them time to fish or to run down in the wagons provided at the Swanton House to Pebble Beach to pick up a jar full of the colorful chert pebbles for their homes in San Francisco or elsewhere.



Charles Benjamin

Knights was very popular in Pescadero; he was almost like a family member since he was in town so often. Poole also became popular, as he drove the same routes and met and talked with the same people as Knights had. Poole had somewhat of an advantage: being a Civil War veteran, he was immediately popular with the similar veterans who resided in Pescadero and the other towns on the journey. Most of the veterans became members of the Grand Army of the Republic Chapter when it was established in Redwood City in 1886. Poole played a large role in increasing the size of that organization, as several men from the coastside joined the group.



First Congregational Church

As a good friend of Charles Benjamin, Knights remembered when Charles Benjamin and Benjamin Fox Jr. enlisted to fight for the North in the California 100 in the Civil War. Fox was refused by Governor Stanford and asked to become a lieutenant for the first California Cavalry. Charles Benjamin went on to fight throughout the war and returned just a year later, and the whole city was glad to see him. He certainly was the local hero. Charles later went on to become a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors while he was living with his son, Dr. Benjamin in San Francisco.

The trip back was along the same route and the horses were changed again in La Honda. They often spent a little more time in La Honda because the northbound train arrived at Redwood City a bit later than the morning run. Besides, Knights usually had a drink with Sears, as they talked about their days in Searsville. Sears had still been living there when the hillside came down on the Knights' house.

While Poole was making the Pescadero run, Knights often walked around town in Redwood City. He crossed the bridge that William Littlejohn had built and then walked down to the Lathrop House, which was on A Street. He often spoke with Benjamin Lathrop before Lathrop went into court, since he was the court recorder.

Lathrop was a very ambitious man; he developed a prize-winning orchard in the hills behind Purisima while he was working at the county and as the court recorder. His handwriting on the court ledgers illustrates how truly talented he was, both mentally and dextrally.



Times and Gazette Building

Knights sometimes walked over to the train station and spoke with the stationmaster. The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad was built during the Civil War, and its progression through the political channels as reported by the San Mateo County Times and Gazette newspaper was a welcome relief from the double columns of news from the East, which was, in turn, pretty gruesome because of the constant battlefield reports of soldiers killed in action or imprisoned in the miserable Southern prisons.

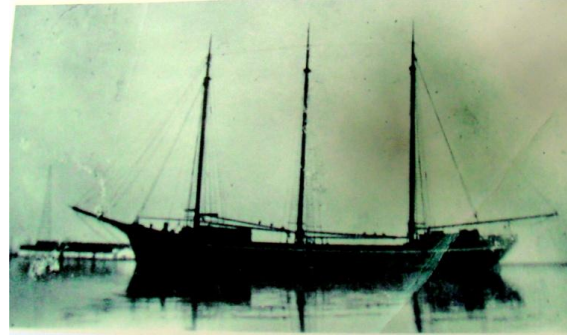
Knights would walk back across the bridges in front of the Congregational Church, where most of the city worshipped and which stood on the northwest corner of Jefferson and Middlefield until the 1960s. Many people still remember it. Knights would also walk to his stables at Main and Middlefield and talk to the stable hands about feed and blacksmithing for the horses and what the needs were as it was his responsibility to make arrangements for those things.

As time went on Knights' oldest son Walter became interested in driving the stages. He took over the route from his father, working opposite Poole, who eventually established his own express business, moving various items from Redwood City to San Francisco. Simon Knights continued as the administrator for the stage line, and he used Poole's express line whenever he needed that service, which was often. Walter continued the stagecoach business travel to the coast until the motor vehicle replaced the favored old system. Favored as it was, the new motor vehicles were a great improvement in terms of comfort.

When Knights walked south from the American House toward his stables, he would first walk past the San Mateo County Times and Gazette newspaper building. This two-story building held Redwood City's first library on the ground floor; the printing presses and newspaper offices were on the second floor. This building stood until about the turn of the nineteenth century. As he looked across the street, he would see the large piece of property that Emma Littlejohn had purchased for her husband William from Simon Mezes, shortly after they arrived in Redwood City back in the early 1850s. They had come from the Gold Country, where William had done well. Emma had used some of the gold to buy the property. It was three large pieces of land that backed onto the creek and fronted onto Mound or Main Street. William was off building sawmills for Dennis Martin on San Francisquito Creek at Searsville. When he returned to Redwood City, he was surprised and pleased at the very good investment his wife had made. He then built docks, warehouses and a home and business facing Mound Street. It was from this property that William designed and built the bridge that spanned Redwood Creek. It was a drawbridge that pivoted; people cranked a turntable on both sides of the creek. Gradually, the bridge separated in the middle and pivoted to the right, allowing ships to pass the relatively deep-water channel into the area that today is the parking lot behind the old post office.

Over a period of time Knights observed, the very creative William Littlejohn invented a dredging system in Redwood Creek that worked similar to the drawbridge.

It consisted of two solid doors that extended down into the creek mud, operated by the same kind of wheels that were turned by two men. The doors would hold the water back during ebb tide and then quickly release the water before the tide came back in. Doing this, they would dredge the creek, which silted up quite often. Knights also watched Littlejohn hollow out a number of redwood logs and place them end to end, developing a clean water-piping system for the city.



B. G. Whiting

But the thing that Littlejohn was probably most proud of, which took more time than anything else, was a three-masted schooner. He built it right in the water in front of his property, all of which was where the apartments now stand behind city hall today. He named the vessel the *B. G. Whiting* and for the rest of his life, he traveled with all sorts of cargo all along the Pacific Coast and across the deep blue sea to foreign lands.

A few more steps toward the stables on his walk, and Knights would be in front of the Alhambra Theater and the Odd Fellows Hall, an organization he was very proud of, but never officially joined.

When he walked north on Mound Street, he walked in front of the Tremont House Hotel, where Deputy Sheriff George Washington Tallman died after he was attacked by four prisoners in the San Mateo County Jail. Tallman became the first peace officer murdered in the line of duty in San Mateo County. Across the street Knights saw the Snug Bar, then the fire station and John Vogan Diller's store, which still stands. Then he came to the lumber docks of the Hanson and Ackerson Lumber Company.

Knights observed the heavy traffic in lumber coming in from Searsville, Summit Springs and West Union. He observed the process of loading milled lumber, shingles by the cord, fence posts and many other wood products. He also saw wagons of hay, other grasses and farm products, leather products from the several tanneries developed following the use of forest products from the lumber mills for tanning the leather. These tanned leather products were in great demand from people in Redwood City and throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. George Wentworth developed a business of hauling the leftover material from the mills and helped clean up the forest. Wentworth became a fairly large landholder from his efforts.

During the late fall and winter months, the rain made the roads wet and muddy. The stagecoaches had to increase from four horses to six horses. The traveling was considerably slower, and the number of people using the coaches shrunk to the people going home or visiting, but not vacationing as during the summer. The single accident that did happen to the Knights' coaches was during the winter; the coach got too close to the edge between Woodside and Redwood City and slipped over the side. A large rock blocked it from going all the way down. Several men with ropes were able to get it back up on the road and on its way home.



San Francisco and San Jose

When the rain was heavy and the tide was high, Redwood City came under major flooding conditions. Sometimes the flooding was heavy enough to keep the coaches from leaving at all until the tide went out. This was rare, but the passengers then took advantage of the great hospitality of the hotels in Redwood City for a more practical stage ride the next day.

The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad ran very smoothly, rain or shine. The water came up pretty high around the railroad tracks on those nasty rainy and high tide days, but the trains seemed to pass through the water without reservation. The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad operated independently for about five years. It was purchased then by the Southern Pacific Railroad, which was part of the great Central Pacific Railroad octopus.

We owe a great deal to these early pioneers, who worked so hard to make a living. Through their efforts, Redwood City is one of the finest towns in California. It is recognized throughout the state for its fine government and great climate.

Simon Knights died in 1896. His wife Elizabeth preceded him in death in 1878, and his son Marshal died in 1880. They are buried in the Odd Fellows plot. Abiel and Fidelia Knights, Simon's parents, are buried in plot 166 in Union Cemetery.

Please give to the Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library and the Historic Union Cemetery Association by filling and cutting out the applications below. Mail to either:

Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library
Redwood City Public Library
1044 Middlefield Rd
Redwood City, CA 94063

Or

Historic Union Cemetery Association
PO Box 610033
Redwood City, CA 94063

**Archives Committee of
The Redwood City Public Library**
1044 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, CA 94063
Federal Exempt Org. 94-2539136

Membership levels:

\$10.00 Individual \$25.00 Business / Corporation

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Historic Union Cemetery Association
PO Box 610033, Redwood City, CA 94063

Membership levels:

\$10.00 Individual \$25.00 Business / Corporation Organization (By donation)

My check is enclosed, payable to The Union Cemetery Association

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State/Zip _____

Editor's Note

Thank you to the Redwood City Civic and Cultural Commission for their monetary and vocal support for this journal.

Hope you enjoyed the new and improved Journal of Local History of the Redwood City Public Library. Please send us a line at gsuarez@redwoodcity.org or call me, Gene Suarez, at 650-780-7098.

We welcome any comments or constructive criticism. Our next issue will appear in the Fall 2011. From all of us at Redwood City Public Library's Archives Committee, we wish you a pleasant Summer.

