

The Journal of Local History

Volume # 4 No. 3

Christmas Issue

Winter 2012

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

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The President's Message

By John Edmonds

The truly great man is he, who would master no one,
And who would be mastered by none.

The Local history room has been kept open by some of the nicest people in this fair city. At a time when the city and the library have been woefully short of money and personnel layoffs have been common, it is because these several people have stepped in, in spite of adversity, to keep it open until the financial situation improves and library can hire a proper archivist.

The Journal of Local History is written by people who care about the subject and people who are willing to spend their valuable time writing things of interest and mailing it out to some 200 people. We would very much like to increase the number of people we mail this to but our financial situation has forced us to reduce the number of publications from 4 a year to 3. The company that publishes this journal is "Star Publishing" now in Redwood City. It pays the printing costs and they are significant. We do not wish to increase the cost of the journal because we believe many of the people we mail to are on fixed incomes. We will probably try to look for a few more advertisers.

We always welcome people who wish to write about the past and would like the opportunity to be published. The process: send your essay in, we will send it to the editor, and you will suddenly be successful. GIVE IT A TRY. Send your essay by e-mail to gsuarez@redwoodcity.org.

Inside This Issue:

The True Saint Nicholas	2	Where's Herbert?	14
Photographs of Christmas Time in Redwood City	3	A Child's Life in the Early Sequoia Hotel	18
The Ghost at Pigeon Point Lighthouse: Chapter Two	4	Redwood City's Oyster Beds	18
Life and Times on the San Francisco Ferry	8	The Undocumented History of Emerald Lake	19
A Day in the Park Gone Very Wrong	9	Alaska Codfish Company of Redwood City	20

THE TRUE SAINT NICHOLAS

By John Edmonds

You'd hardly expect to find old St. Nick in jail. But Saint Nicholas is more than a children's story. He was flesh and blood, a prisoner for Christ, and a bishop of the Mediterranean city of Myra. (1)

The true Saint Nicholas was born about 270 A.D. in the city of Petara, according to ancient biographers. Both his parents were very rich. And both parents died when he was an older teenager, leaving him a fortune. Nicholas learned of a family that was destitute and starving: a man with three daughters, the oldest of whom he was going to send out to prostitution in order to feed the family. The man could not marry off his daughters because he had no dowry.

Under cover of darkness one night, Nicholas threw a bag of gold coins through the window of the family's humble dwelling. In the morning, the father discovered the gold. Oh, how he rejoiced: his family was saved, his daughter's honor was preserved and a dowry was secured. Sometime later, Nicholas repeated his action, secretly throwing another bag of gold through the window, thus providing for the second daughter. Still later, he similarly provided for the third daughter similarly.

But on the third occasion, the girl's father was watching. As soon as the bag of gold thudded on the floor, he chased after the lad until he caught him. Nicholas was mortified to be discovered in this act of charity. He made the father promise not to tell anyone who had helped his family. Then Nicholas forsook his wealth to answer a call to the ministry.

In the nearby city of Myra, a bishop supervised all the region churches. When he died, bishops and ministers from other cities and villages—Nicholas among them—gathered to choose a successor.

Nicholas habitually rose very early and went to the church to pray. On this morning, an aged minister awaited him in the sanctuary. "Who are you, my son?" he asked. "Nicholas, the sinner," the young minister replied, "And I am your servant."

"Come with me," the old priest directed. Nicholas followed him to a room where the bishops were assembled. The elderly minister addressed the gathering. "I had a vision that the first one to enter the church in the morning should be the new bishop of Myra," he said. "Here is that man: Nicholas."

Indeed, they did choose him as bishop. Nicholas was destined to lead his congregation through the worst tribulation in history.



A Drawing by Thomas Nast. C1862

In 303 A.D., the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered a brutal persecution of all Christians. Those suspected of following the Lord were ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods. Nicholas and thousands of others refused. Ministers, bishops and lay people were dragged to prison. Savage tortures were unleashed on Christians all over the empire. Believers were fed to wild animals. Some were forced to fight gladiators for their lives, while bloodthirsty crowds screamed for their deaths. Women suffered dehumanizing torment. Saints were beaten senseless, other set aflame while still alive.

Yet, persecution couldn't stamp out Christianity. Rather, it spread. Third century leader, Tertullian observed, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." Those who survived Diocletian's torture chambers were called "saints" or "confessors" by the people because they didn't forsake their confession, "Jesus Christ is Lord." Nicholas was one of these.

After years of imprisonment, the iron doors swung open, and Bishop Nicholas walked out, freed by the Emperor Constantine. People flocked to him as he walked into the city, shouting, "Saint Nicholas has come home!" Nicholas was beaten, but not broken. He served the people of Myra for another thirty years. Through his words and prayers, many people found faith, salvation and healing. Nicholas participated in the famous Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. He died on December 6, 343 A.D, a living legend, beloved by the entire city.

Secret gifts, the red Bishop's robe, and the deep caring of the people all who assist today's Santa Claus. Many believe giving gifts is attributed to the wise men who brought gifts to the Baby Jesus. But there definitely was a historical Saint Nicholas who once really played the role of Santa Claus.

Photographs of Christmas Time in Redwood City

By Janet McGovern



Reg McGovern photograph

"Decking the halls" started outside Redwood City's City Hall in 1952 when Santa and his sleigh appeared on the lawn outside the building, located at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Middlefield Road. The City Hall shown in this picture was built in 1939 but was replaced in 1997 with the present seat of municipal government. Note that the flagpole still stands, as does the redwood tree in this picture.



Reg McGovern photograph

In 1947, a decorated float with Santa Claus aboard toured Redwood City neighborhoods during the nights leading up to Christmas, with "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" and "Jingle Bells" blaring from the loudspeakers. Dubbed the Kris Kringle Cruiser, the float was sponsored by downtown merchants and decorated by Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President E.W. (Ned) Butler and John Ball, chairman of the Street Decorations Committee. As the Cruiser came down neighborhood streets, excited kids rushed out the door to wave and smile.



Reg McGovern photograph

Who was the jolly fellow behind that flowing white beard, handing out lollipops to Redwood City children in this 1952 Christmas photo? It was none other than police officer Phil Bray, who was a popular fellow around town in those days. That was quite a feat because Bray's job, when he was not being Santa Claus, was spent riding a three-wheeled motorbike, handing out parking tickets.

THE GHOST AT PIGEON POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Chapter Two

By John Edmonds

Loren Coburn, his wife, Mary, and mentally ill son Wally moved from Pigeon Point to a three storied, eight room home on San Gregorio Street in Pescadero. This home was across the street from the well known Swanton House hotel and restaurant, the Elkhorn Saloon, The General Store. It was one of the busiest locations in the small town.

Coburn then purchased property just a little bit up the road from his house and resorted back to his original trade by opening a stable calling it the Eureka Stable. At this point he also purchased the property at Pigeon Point that was owned by his

nemesis, Horace Templeton. He purchased the mill building up Gazos Creek and the horse drawn railroad that the company built from the mouth of the creek north to Pigeon Point and he started milling lumber and shipping it just as the company had done.

One of his biggest problems was that, just as he was beginning to get trade going, the uproar against the Chinese began and all the Asians, working for the Company departed for parts unknown. Coburn could not function and was making no money.

Coburn's next biggest problem was the arrival of relatives. Some of the relatives, as well as the community in general, thought Loren was losing his mind and they were getting in line to get his money. This scared Loren more than anything because the last thing he wanted to give away was his money.

The first to arrive was his brother J.C. Coburn, his wife Lucy and ten-year-old son Carl from Vermont. Loren was very fond of Carl, so he purchased a large lot some 300 feet from his own house and had a home built for the family and gave it to them as a present. The community was very surprised at this generosity and hoped Loren Coburn had seen the light, even if it was just family. But the community knew when Loren began putting up fences around all his properties, including the new house of his brother, that all was still normal. His purpose was to protect his property from the community.

Aunt Sarah Upton came to live with Loren and Wally. Her job was to care for Wally primarily and she was very welcome in the house. Unlike the others, Sarah was not poor; she had received \$50,000 from her father when he passed away.

Least welcome was Marraton Upton, Sarah's brother, a widower in his 60s with a scraggly white beard, who wore long black overcoats and black hats and drank heavily. He professed to be an old Indian fighter and had ridden with Kit Carson. He wasn't much help to Loren when he was put in charge of keeping the books. Not a very good decision as the young men

of the community would give him whiskey to get him to forgive them their debts to Loren.

Marraton was also assigned to keep an eye on Wally but he wasn't much value at that job either because he was usually drunk or sleeping off hangovers. When Marraton was drunk he talked too much and this led the boys to learn the books and how to get him to forgive the debts.

Marraton's sister, Anna Celestia arrived from the East Coast and immediately fell ill. She quickly learned to despise Loren; she was bedridden most of the time. She devised a plan, recognizing that Loren could not read, to get him to sign over his properties to her by waving a commitment to an insane asylum in his face.

Yet another brother, Alonzo, who was seriously ill, came to live out his life in Pescadero. He moved in with J.C. Coburn but his presence in such close proximity simply added to the absolute hell in Loren's life.

Now that Loren Coburn was complete owner of the Pigeon Point docks, he finally was starting to get some income from the farming community in the San Gregorio, Pescadero and South County area of the San Mateo County coastside. Coburn was getting older and starting to slow down a little bit.

Tragedy struck the San Mateo County coastside in the late fall of 1885 when a heavy storm slammed against the coast. The winds were very heavy and the rain was equally strong. The giant loading chute at Tunitas Creek was blown into bits and the Pigeon Point loading chute was equally treated, ending Loren Coburn's business activities along the Pigeon Point area. In Pescadero the tragedy was compounded by fire, with the \$40,000 Sulpher Springs Hotel catching fire and burning to the ground, never again to be resurrected.

The only thing under consideration, at this point, was the Ocean Shore Railroad, a railroad that would run from San Francisco, down the coast, to Santa Cruz: a great idea and one that Loren Coburn invested in substantially. His well stated belief was that if he invested in the railroad they would stop at his hotel at Pebble Beach. This, had it actually occurred, would have appreciably

increased his income level. Improving his hotel was the number one project he had then on the coastside.

Coburn became paranoid about the people coming from Pescadero across his land to Pebble Beach and he started closing all the roads and trails leading to his area of the coastside. He informed villagers that the trail was now unsafe for travelers, even on horseback. He put up heavy fences and gates with signs indicating that he accepted no liability for any injury or other difficulty resulting from violating the property rights he had erected.

The well worn trails that consisted of ruts created by wagon wheels, horses and human beings was a crooked trail that had resulted in twisted ankles in the past and the complete closure took place in September, 1891. The gate had not been closed before.

The San Mateo County Times and Gazette stated, "Loren Coburn claims he owns Pebble Beach and all the pebbles." "The people are expressing their indignation at this move and the children are in open rebellion at the usurpation of what they considered their rightful playground." The villagers were aware that Loren Coburn had killed Horace Templeton and that he had hired gunslingers to kill "Scotty" Rae. They realized that he had never been convicted of these crimes and that he had probably, they believed, paid off judge Dangerfield. They were afraid of his anger and total disrespect for the community in which he lived.

The Levy brothers came to Pescadero in the mid 1880s and purchased the old McCormick building and Joe Levy quickly became post master of the town. The Levy brothers were running stage coaches from Half Moon Bay to San Mateo and their primary purpose was to extend that route to Pescadero. The Brothers second purpose was to establish a dairy ranch on the south coast. This brought them in contact with Loren Coburn who rented them land near Pigeon Point, where they installed the latest equipment for making cheese.

Unfortunately Joe Levy was very confrontational and his aggression found an outstanding target in Coburn. It was not long

before the community hatred for Loren became well entrenched in Joe and when a call came out to take down the gate at Pebble Beach he jumped at the opportunity to make points in the community. He joined with County Supervisor Henry B. Adair and County Roadmaster Charles R. Pinkham to travel to the gate and take it down.

Five two horse buggies and five single horse buggies and several one horse wagons began the trek along the squiggly trail to Pebble Beach. One of the men on the wagons made a straw image of Loren Coburn with the intention of hanging him in effigy. When they arrived at the gate they took a board or two and were able to break down the gate and they then proceeded down to the beach and had a party.

Loren rode into Redwood City and had a warrant sent out for the arrest of Joe Levy. Before Coburn could get back to Pescadero Levy received a telegram at his store and was aware of the warrant and was on his way to Redwood City. When he got to Redwood City he asked Judge Welsh for time to get organized and he was released on his own recognizance. A week later a jury was ordered and Joe Levy was put on trial. "I broke down the gate because Coburn had illegally obstructed a county road that had been used for thirty years," said Joe, who was acquitted.

Loren Coburn felt, and told the town, that Judge Welsh must have been bribed. This is more a self criticism than anything else because Judge Welsh, while only a temporary judge, was a very honest person and certainly nobody could make that statement in real criticism.

Now Coburn turned to his hotel at Pebble Beach and started laying out extensive plans for additional buildings and facilities. There was first of all a plan to dam Bean Hollow Lagoon and to channel it into a fresh water lake on the hotel property, a clubhouse was to be added, a coursing track for horses with stables and sheds for the horses and wagons. There was to be a camping area where tents would be rented and stretched out under a thousand cypress trees all of which would be planted on the north side of the hotel.

Even after the court's decision Coburn continued to believe he actually owned the beach where the colorful rocks continued to entertain many families. The colorful pebbles continue to exist today but they cannot be removed from what is now a state beach. The cliff goes straight down at the top of the beach and the rocks continue to be deposited by incoming tide.

During the process of this court case, Mary passed away at age seventy-two. This left her sister Sarah in the house along with brother Marraton, mentally ill Wally, Ah Gee, the Chinese cook and servant and Anna Celestia, still suffering from an illness.

July 1895 found Loren Coburn in court in San Francisco. He filed a law suit against the County of San Mateo and, of course, he did not feel he could get a fair trial in San Mateo County as everything, except the criminal trials, he had been involved in had failed.

This time it was a law suit regarding property rights at Pebble Beach and it had much to do with the question of legality of his present ownership. The original map of the property that he owned showed that he owned only up to Gazos Creek, which would mean that he did not own Pebble Beach or Pigeon Point. The statements by the County's expert startled Coburn but the judge said he would take that statement under submission until all the evidence was in and there certainly were subsequent witness who testified to the dishonesty of Issac Graham from whom Coburn purchased the property. Eventually the property was restored to Coburn but then the question came up about who actually owned the pebbles found at Pebble Beach. Apparently the pebbles actually exist all the way up to Tunitas Creek.

Coburn submitted a small jar of pebbles that he said were quite valuable. He had earlier testified that he had found pebbles well inland from the beach and that they existed only on his property. But experts testified that the pebbles come from the ocean and they are deposited along a substantial longer space along the coast.

The attorneys for the County of San Mateo inquired of Mr. Coburn how long had people been

traveling over the trail or road from Pescadero to Pebble Beach. Coburn replied that they had been doing that for twenty years and that the gate had been unlocked until recently when he began locking the gate too.

Previous witnesses had testified that people had been using the road for more than thirty years, ever since the pebbles had been discovered and that visitors had been taken to Pebble Beach during the spring and fall months primarily because that was when the weather was best. Coburn denied this stating that the trips started when he bought the property, which was 20 years ago.

"It has been twenty years since there has been a road from Pescadero to Pebble Beach," there has been a county road that went from Half Moon Bay to Santa Cruz for sometime as well and sometimes people come through the broken down gate without going to Pescadero first.

Coburn kept saying over and over again, "I own the Spanish Land Grant and have owned it for thirty years and the board of supervisors and the County of San Mateo keep trying to take it away from me." These kinds of statements in a professional courtroom caused people to start to think about the old man's competence. His own relatives were also thinking about his competency.

Following lunch, Coburn gave a speech to the court in which he stated, "It injured me...very materially in my business. People had gone all around talking about me, and they looked at me in a disrespectful way; and it has injured me not only in my business matters in that part of the country, but it has injured me in my family. It has injured my wife very much. My wife was sick along through those days. It had a very bad effect on her. And, of course, she was taken from me a short time ago.

"There is another thing," appealed Coburn. "When a man's reputation is gone... it injures him in business matters. People think I wanted to get something that didn't belong to me. Well, if that had been even true, I might not have had much excuse. But my property there, I claimed was my property – a Spanish grant. I have owned for thirty years and had to pay taxes on it and it is my own."

Coburn said that if he didn't own the pebbles and had no right to close off people's access to the ocean, then he had no rights at all.

The discussion with Coburn continued turning to his livery stable and the question of business. Coburn said he opened a livery stable a number of years ago but business has never been really good. Business was seasonable and in recent years competition has been strong from R. K. Farley who was one of the men who Coburn tried to have arrested at Pebble Beach. Coburn said, "Farley's business was substantially better than mine because the people of Pescadero were boycotting my business."

The next witness called was Henry Hanks, the former state mineralogist that Coburn had hired to establish the source of the pebbles and the value of them. At the time Hanks walked the beach looking for the source. The tide was low and he was able to see that the pebbles washed out of the land and into the ocean where they were rolled into pebbles and then floated back to shore on the tide. He also said that the same thing was occurring in a number of places along the San Mateo County coastline.

When Hanks was asked the value of the pebbles he said almost no value, the value was primarily in the workmanship that went into making them shiny for jewelry, therefore the colorful rocks were very plentiful along the coast and the only value was in the subsequent workmanship for jewelry. He looked at the pebbles in the jar and was asked if they were valuable, he said, "In this form they have no value." This completely deflated Coburn's argument that the pebbles were very valuable.

"How did you travel to Pebble Beach, that is over what road did you travel?" Mr. Fitzpatrick asked Hanks. "I traveled over the road from Pescadero to the beach and it was a nice road" Mr. Hanks responded. This again deflated Coburn's argument that the road was just a trail for wagons and was deeply rutted especially in winter. Coburn knew he was losing his case and this was in the San Francisco courts where he thought he would have better luck.

The next witness was Alexander Moore, a 69-year-old farmer, who settled in Pescadero in 1851, "When there were somewhat less than a dozen people in town. Moore testified that the first time he went to Pebble Beach and found the pebbles was in November 1853 when he, "traveled over an already existing trail to the beach by mule" thus establishing that the trail and the pebbles existed before Loren Coburn came into the picture and that Pescadero townsfolk, as few as there were, were already using the road.

The trial ended when the attorney for Colburn called the attorney for the County of San Mateo, Mr. Fitzpatrick to the stand. Mr. Boone, Coburn attorney, asked the witness if he was suppressing evidence by not asking his witnesses about the surveyors he had sent out to Pebble Beach. Fitzpatrick testified that he had not sent such people out, but that the County of San Mateo had in order to find the original survey markers in that area. They did not find the markers to Mr. Boone's distress. "It is a fact that you have not presented these witnesses in this case, is it not?"

"Yes it is a fact, because they would have had nothing to add to the case." Fitzpatrick responded.

The judge took the trial and evidence under submission and decided to render a decision in a couple of weeks.

This ends chapter two of the Ghost of Pigeon Point. The following issue will have chapter three.

Life and Times on the San Francisco Ferry

By Kathleen Wade

In 1926, when my dad took a teaching position at Polytechnic High School, our family moved from Ventura, California to San Francisco, and it wasn't long before we discovered the pleasures and necessities of the Bay Area Ferry Transit System. Ferry rides were a great time to relax, read the news, or walk the decks and take in the views.



*The Eureka
still afloat at the Hyde St Pier in San Francisco*

Some of our family were daily commuters. For my sister Janey, it was a time to study for classes at UC Berkeley. And when my uncle Arthur Smith was teaching at Balboa High in San Francisco, he used the Auto Ferry from Berkeley for his daily rounds. Traveling by ferry was dependable, and matched schedules for streetcar and cable car connections.

In the 1930s, I was going to Polytechnic High, where my dad was a science teacher. I enjoyed hiking, so I joined his Nature Club. The Nature Club often met at the Ferry Building early on a Saturday morning, and ferried over to Sausalito. We transferred to the electric red train, and clackety-clacked alongside the Bay, stopping at intervals to let hikers off who were heading for Muir Woods, Stinson Beach, Tiburon, Tamalpais, Larkspur, or Mill Valley. In those years, the Marin hills were wide open, and good trails invited many hikers. Returning to Sausalito at sunset, we joined with other hikers and ferried our way back across the bay, sharing stories. Often one small group on the ferry would start a song; others would join in until we were all caught up in a rousing chorus.

The ferries were a great way to make friends. Many parties and special occasions were celebrated aboard. And in the early days, it was said that the food service was excellent. One of the features I enjoyed on the finer ferries, as others did, was a set of glass windows where passengers could sit to view the main engine in motion and watch the big rocker arms pumping up and down.

Ferry transit reached its peak in the 1930s when 60 million people crossed the bay annually. With so much boat traffic on the bay, you might expect some accidents. I still have a vivid memory of our ferry collision in 1937. Our ferry, the Vallejo, was halfway across the bay, heading for San Francisco. It was mid-

afternoon, and the fog was rolling in. Suddenly, another ferry, the Eureka, appeared through the fog, less than a hundred yards away. There seemed no way to stop its forward momentum. It looked like it would be a direct hit on our starboard side. The Eureka began to turn parallel, but still couldn't clear. As it collided with our Vallejo, structure, timber, and broken glass went flying. The few sitting next to the windows had jumped away, but still got cut by flying glass fragments and needed emergency treatment. I remember the captain frantically running from one end of our boat to the other, assessing the damage.

Luckily, I was safely beyond that devastating impact. The passengers on our boat were helped aboard the Eureka, and taken to the nearest San Francisco pier. Our damaged Vallejo was towed to Alameda for extensive repair. It was a frightening experience, but on the other hand, it could have been so much worse.

Alas, that wonderful ferry lifestyle was soon to change. In April 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge was completed, and President Roosevelt announced the great engineering achievement from the White House. When the bridges were built, people did not want to take time for those long ferry rides. It was a time of "Hurry up!" Yet it was often said that the ferry boat passengers had more fun on their daily trips than other commuters.

Now, in 2012, a faster generation of ferries are proving their worth again, offering alternatives to automobiles crawling along bumper to bumper on those same highways and bridges.

A Day in the Park Gone Very Wrong

By Francis L. Ludwig

The Main Event-Kidnapped!!!

One of my coworkers at Stanford Research Institute (now called SRI International) wanted to know whether there are high concentrations of tiny particles called condensation nuclei (also called Aitken nuclei) in pristine forested areas. So, on Wednesday, November 13, 1963, I gathered together my lunch, the raincoat that I had kept when I was discharged from the army,

the nuclei counting instrument¹ and a sling psychrometer to measure temperature and humidity. Then, I checked out an SRI-owned 4-wheel drive pick-up with a camper shell on the back and drove to Big Basin State Park, in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which form the spine of the San Francisco Peninsula. I was looking forward to a quiet commune with nature.

What follows is my recollection (after 49 years) of that day as augmented by an article from the San Mateo Times of November 14, 1963. The copy of that article that I saved includes handwritten annotations that I made at the time before sending a copy to my parents. The newspaper article makes the events sound much more terrifying than I remember them being. I didn't dispute most of the newspaper facts with my contemporaneous notes, so maybe it was as bad as described. Nevertheless, I'll stick with my personally remembered version, which includes some unreported thoughts and incidents.

Upon entering Big Basin Park in the early afternoon, I was hailed by a ranger and shown a picture of a young man. The official said, "Please let us know if you see this man. He has escaped from a California Youth Authority work crew. He's not dangerous." I pushed the information to the back of my brain and proceeded to make arrangements at the park headquarters for access to a spot well away from the crowds of campers and other visitors. Then I drove down a narrow road, passing the CYA work party. Another half-mile or so down the road, I came to a clearing in the redwoods that seemed a perfect for my instruments to make measurements.

I had brought a stool to support the nuclei counter and I was about to go back to the truck for a lab notebook, when a young man about my size came into the clearing. I recognized him immediately as the escapee whose picture I had been shown. He asked if I had seen a group dressed as he was and he told me that he had become lost and needed a ride back. He asked me how long I expected to be there, and if I would give a ride back when I left. I told him I had planned to leave sometime between three and four in the afternoon, but I'd be glad to take him back right then. I had no desire to let an escaped juvenile spoil my afternoon alone among the redwoods.

He accepted the offer and we both got in the truck. Almost immediately, he pulled out a small blade

¹ A small shoe box size device that sucks in air and expands it rapidly to form an artificial cloud whose density is measured by the attenuation of a light beam.

that he had extracted from a CYA institutional razor. He threatened to slit my throat if I didn't cooperate. I cooperated by emptying my pockets of wallet and a pocket knife. The latter was considered by my captor to be a better weapon than his small razor blade. We drove a very short distance before he had me stop and take off my shoes so that I couldn't run away. Apparently, he didn't know how slow I ran. He crouched down on the passenger side of the cab while I began to get accustomed to working the clutch, brake and accelerator in stocking feet. We passed the work crew and the crowded entrance area to the park. I remember thinking each time, "This would be a good place to jump out of the truck." However, I couldn't bring myself to jump from a moving vehicle or risk getting stabbed by the "*not dangerous*" escapee sitting next to me.

The first two escape opportunities would not be followed soon by any others. I drove barefooted up to Skyline Boulevard, which runs along crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains. There, we headed north. I don't think either one of us had a long range plan; I know my only plan was to try to stay alive as long as I could and hope that somehow things would turn out OK and that I would survive.

He soon revealed his short range plan — break into a house and find a weapon. After a short drive north on Skyline, he directed me to turn down Old La Honda Road, which is a very steep, winding and narrow route that connects Skyline to the more populated parts of the San Francisco Peninsula. Along the road are many small cottages that originally served as summer getaway homes for San Franciscans, but by 1963 most of them had become permanent residences. Somewhere along the way, I had noticed that there was a name tag on my companion's hard hat that identified him as John Groeschel.

In what seemed to be a random choice, Groeschel directed me to stop in front of one of the cottages and get out of the truck with him. He told me to kick in the door. I pointed out that I was barefooted, so he kicked it in himself with his work boots. What followed next was a demonstration of special criminal instincts. He marched directly to a bedroom, opened the third drawer of a chest, pulled out a revolver and ammunition. The revolver seemed quite large, but that perception was likely influenced by the circumstances. I remember that I was quite disheartened by the turn of events, because it made the possibility of escape much less feasible. He donned my old olive drab army

raincoat to hide his CYA uniform. I continued down the road in my assigned role as get-away vehicle driver.

Looking back on it, we engaged in a great deal of remarkably ordinary conversation throughout the whole episode. Most of it was like small talk with a stranger at a party. He told me how much he disliked his girl friend's father and in return he learned that I was married with two small children. This had an unexpected effect on him. He actually appeared concerned about their well being.

Here, my recollection differs from the newspaper account. I do not recall stopping for a hamburger and two cups of coffee, nor his phone call from a gas station reported by the paper. In my version, we had proceeded north from the site of the burglary. At some point, he decided that he needed to buy some hair dye to change his appearance. We stopped at a Safeway grocery store about a mile-and-a-half from where I still live. He decided that along with hair dye, we should buy some bread and milk so my kids wouldn't go hungry, using money from a \$25 check that I was directed to cash.

He put the revolver in his pocket and we entered the store. He continued to wear his hard hat with his name on it. We stayed together of course. We picked up the bread and milk and went to the personal care aisle and he asked if I knew anything about hair dye. I did not, but thought I might have to learn, because my hair would certainly turn prematurely grey, if I survived. I hid my amusement at what came next. Seeking information about the hair dye he had selected, he approached a naturally grey-haired woman and asked her if he would have to bleach his hair in order to use the dye. She shrugged and said, "I don't know. Maybe you should ask her," as she pointed toward a head of flaming red, obviously dyed hair that was just down the aisle. Groeschel learned from the red-head hair dye expert that it would not be necessary to bleach his hair, so we proceeded to the check-out line, where he had me cash a check to buy the dye, bread and milk (and cigarettes, according to the newspaper). Through all this, he was at my side with his hand on the gun that he had hidden beneath the rain coat.

All the time, I was thinking that surely someone would recognize the CYA hard hat and call the police. Nobody did. It was back to the truck to resume my coerced journey. I began wondering why I hadn't tried to escape. That question still puzzles me. I remembered something I had learned in a college Shakespeare class I had taken a decade earlier. I learned in that class that all the tragic heroes had a fatal

flaw that would lead to their downfall. Hamlet's flaw (like mine) was indecision. That bit of higher education was not at all comforting.

The next thing I remember is being in San Bruno. Groeschel had me drive past the same house several times. He became more and more agitated with each pass, mumbling about shooting three people in front of the San Bruno police station. I thought it might be useful to memorize the address of the house that upset him so. Then, if I escaped, I could have the occupants warned.

At this point, Groeschel decided that he wanted to drive. The truck was a manual transmission, four-wheel drive vehicle, with two gear ranges. Groeschel was not very good at driving it, but he managed. By this time it was nearly sunset, which comes early in mid-November. He drove to what I think was Bay View Park, overlooking Candlestick Point in the southeast corner of San Francisco. He said he was looking for a place where he could leave me that I wouldn't be able to go for help for an hour or so. It was mildly encouraging that he wasn't talking about a way to keep me permanently from going for help. It was dusk and I think he was about to leave me in the park, when he spotted a couple necking in a parked car. I thought, "Just my luck! They can't wait until it's completely dark."

As we left the lovers, Groeschel made some racist remarks about black people (not his words) living in the nearby Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco. He said he wouldn't leave me there because the blacks (not his term) would surely do me harm (also, not his words). I was consoled by his concern for my well being, but thought to myself that I'd rather take my chances in the neighborhood among the locals than with him.

At this juncture, I was really getting anxious about my predicament. I had the long-shot idea that he might be induced to believe that I wouldn't go for help right away if I were without my clothes. I think I mentioned this possibility, but do not remember for sure. In any event, he decided to take my clothes and wear them himself, thereby confirming my estimate that he was about my size. I was left with only my shorts. At the time, all San Francisco's TV transmitters and most of the radio antennas were on San Bruno Mountain in Daly City which borders San Francisco. The road to the transmitters goes through a large unpopulated area, where Groeschel decided I could be left — if he knocked me out.

He parked the truck beside the deserted road leading to the transmitters. We got out and we walked

together to a grove of trees about 50 feet off the road. He said, "I'm sorry, but I'll have to knock you out." He took the revolver and hit me on the back of the head. It was hard enough to hurt, but not hard enough to knock me out. I tried to fake being knocked out by falling face down on the ground. I guess my acting was unconvincing, because he said, "You're not knocked out!" I thought, "Oh s**t!", and waited to be shot, but Groeschel turned and walked back to the truck. He got in and I heard the truck drive up the hill toward the transmitters. I immediately got up and ran to the other side of the road, figuring that I would make him hunt for me if he changed his mind. Shortly thereafter, the truck drove back down the hill. I wouldn't see Mr. Groeschel for another six weeks, then never again.

The Immediate Aftermath

I was still leery that Groeschel might change his mind, so I remained in hiding beside the road. I heard a car coming, and could see that it wasn't the SRI truck, so I tried to flag it down while standing in the middle of the road in my shorts. It passed and stopped briefly, just long enough for the driver to confirm that he really had indeed seen some nut in his shorts standing and waving in the middle of the road. The car proceeded up the hill toward the transmitters.

I realized then that nobody was likely to stop for a lunatic in his underwear, so I began making my way toward the lights of the nearest house. It was some distance away, at the edge of a patch of tract houses that had spread up the side of the hill like kudzu. I was now faced with the prospect of greeting some unknown home owner while standing mostly naked in the dark on his doorstep. I decided that I would request that the owner do what he was likely to do anyway — I'd ask that he call the police. When the owner opened the door, I said, "Excuse me, I've been kidnapped. Would you please call the police?" That worked, but to my surprise I was invited in. Whenever I tell this part the story, a common reaction has been something like, "Oh, I could never have asked for help if I were undressed!" Given the right circumstances it isn't all that difficult. I was glad that I had followed every mother's advice and worn clean shorts that day. Speaking of clean underwear, I don't recall any bathroom stops between Big Basin and Daly City. Oh, to have such a youthful bladder again!

Opposite the front entrance to the house, and across the living room was the door to the kitchen-dining area, where the rest of the family was having

dinner. I am ashamed to admit that I have forgotten the family's name. After letting me in, the owner walked to the other door and slid it closed to shield his family from having to look at the guy standing in his underwear in the living room. I was feeling embarrassed, so I asked if the man had a robe that I could wear. He left the room and soon returned with a robe. He then called the County Sheriff's office. I told him that I thought it was important to contact the San Bruno police and give them the information about the house where Groeschel had made the threatening remarks. After that was done, I called my wife, Jody. Jody answered the phone and I apologized for being late for dinner. I told her that I had been kidnapped. She replied, "*Don't be ridiculous. You're too old and too poor to have been kidnapped.*" I told her that might well be true, but I had been kidnapped nevertheless. I also told her that I didn't know when I would be home. Once I was robed, the door to the dining area was reopened. I wish I had noticed how easily it slid.

Soon, two deputy sheriffs (according to the San Mateo Times, they were Ralston Eng and E. L. Pronske) arrived and asked if they could use the dining area to get my story. They were very professional and asked me to close the sliding door. Now, my house had a sliding door that was nearly identical, but my door was sticky and required a very hard tug. My highly developed synapses gave my benefactor's door a hard jerk. The door sprang out of my hand as though it were in a drag race, flew to the door jamb and snapped off the pot metal pull-handle. I apologized as best I could. At Jody's suggestion, I returned a week or so later with a box of candy and a replacement handle for the door.

One officer sat opposite me at the table while the other stood behind me. I told them the story of the kidnapping, basically the same as laid out here. When I got to the part near the end where I described my attempt to get help from the car on San Bruno Mountain, I sensed a glance of recognition passing over my head and connecting the two deputies. I assume that they had received a report that some nearly naked guy was trying to flag down cars going to the transmitters and they now knew what the report was all about.

I learned later that while I was telling my story to the sheriffs, Mr. Groeschel was unsuccessfully trying to drive the SRI truck and he had an accident with a Muni Bus in San Francisco. He fled the scene and wasn't captured for several days. SRI must have been called and informed of the accident, because someone from SRI called Jody and demanded to know what I was

doing in San Francisco in an SRI vehicle. I know that SRI was told of my kidnapping, because eventually someone from their Health and Safety Department showed up at the Daly City house with a set of my clothes.

I rode back down the peninsula with the man from SRI. We stopped at a hospital emergency room along the way to have my head examined (i.e. X-rayed). I asked him about weird claims on the company's workmen's compensation insurance and I was told that my case would not be as strange as a claim that was filed for an employee injured by an elephant on a project in Thailand. Eventually I arrived home, probably before midnight.

Jody had arranged to have the four in our family sleep on the living room floor at the nearby home of friends — after all, Groeschel was in possession of my address and my house key. It turns out that he was probably making his way to Marin County, north of the Golden Gate.

I got a call from a reporter the next morning at the friends' house. I was never sure how the reporter got the phone number. I was late for work the next day. While I was puttering around my office, I got call from a local radio reporter and was interviewed. That ended my contacts with the press.

A week later, JFK was assassinated. That, and subsequent developments made all other news inconsequential.

Lingering Developments

Within a week or two, the infamous SRI truck had been repaired and I set off to recover the equipment which had been left in the clearing at Big Basin. I thought I'd take a more scenic route. I chose to try Alpine Road, which I had been warned was not passable after a rain. It hadn't rained for a week or two, so I figured it would be OK, especially with the truck's four wheel drive. I was wrong. Soon after starting up the road the pavement ended. Soon after that, I encountered the slipperiest mud on the planet. Gravity pulled the truck sidewise into an embankment, damaging the newly replaced camper shell. I walked back to a public phone near the lower end of Alpine road where I called a tow truck — or maybe I called SRI and had them call one. Regardless, the tow truck came and proceeded up Alpine road to a point on dry ground within winching distance of the stuck truck. The tow-truck driver attached a cable to SRI's truck and pulled it

loose, further damaging the body and camper shell in the process.

A week or two later, in early December 1963, I made a second attempt to retrieve my equipment. The SRI truck had once again been repaired. (I learned later that this same truck fell off a grease rack in 1964 while being serviced. Obviously, the truck had been cursed by whatever god is in charge of jinxing trucks.) This trip to park headquarters went without incident, but the ranger in charge seemed irked when I asked about my equipment. He had read the kidnapping story published by the San Francisco Chronicle. The Chronicle had good comics and good columnists, but didn't do news all that well. They had reported that I was collecting soil samples. The state park rules state that nothing is to be disturbed or removed from the park. Apparently, it was OK to abduct a visitor, but the abductee must not take any soil with him. I explained that I had intended to sample some air. I demonstrated the instrument; I showed him how it sucked in a bit of air, manipulated it and, most importantly, ejected the air after the measurement, thereby leaving the park virtually unchanged. He seemed mollified and the equipment was returned.

Sometime during the weeks following my abduction, I received a subpoena to appear at a pre-trial hearing in Santa Cruz, which is the County Seat for Big Basin's county. The hearing was held Christmas eve, 1963, a Tuesday. I met with an Assistant District Attorney handling the case before the hearing. I learned that Groeschel had been caught a few days after the kidnapping, while using his burglary skills in Marin County. They thought that maybe his girlfriend had been with him at some point in Marin. I also learned that the house that had upset him belonged to the family of his girl friend and that he had been sent to the CYA after burglarizing it. I recited the kidnapping story to the DA, who said that he intended to charge Groeschel under California's Little Lindbergh Law in the hopes of getting him to plead guilty to a lesser charge.

The hearing took place. I was sworn in, told my story yet again, and answered a few questions. As I recall, Groeschel sat passively through my recital. However, I did not look at him much, except to identify him as my kidnapper when asked. I was dismissed and left for home. The DA had told me that I'd likely be called back in a few months to testify at a trial. I waited and waited and never received that call. I went back to my routine and seldom thought of my adventurous day.

Many years passed before I accidentally heard some startling news while I was driving and listening to

the radio in Southern California. This must have been 1971. The newsman reported that a John Groeschel had shot an elderly woman through a door when she refused to open it for him. She later died of the wounds.

My recollection was confirmed by an opinion piece about the shortcomings of the California's parole system that appeared in the January 5, 1972 Modesto Bee. According to that article, "A 74-year-old North Hollywood widow ... was fatally wounded Dec. 3 [1971] by a gunman who fired through the front door when she refused his command, 'Let me in or I'll blow you up.'

"Police arrested John Lee Groeschel, who fired at them when they approached an unoccupied house nearby. Groeschel was charged with murder after Mrs. Farber died. ... Groeschel served eight years of a life sentence for ... kidnapping for purpose of robbery in Santa Cruz County. ... [he] had had a parole date set by the California Adult Authority and had been granted a pass to reestablish ties in the community."

A few years later, our family—Jody, Kiamara, Kevin and I—were sitting at the dinner table. The TV was on, which was unusual for us during dinner. The TV newscaster read a short piece to the effect that John Groeschel had died from stab wounds after a fight at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville. My wife said I turned white when I heard the name, John Groeschel.

In the process of searching the internet for information, I came across a letter from John Lee Groeschel to the editor of the Modesto Bee. It was published New Year's day, 1975 and reads as follows:

"Editor of The Bee — Sir: I am presently incarcerated at the correctional training facility at Soledad. I am writing this in the hopes that it will appear in the 'Letters From the People' column to clearly show that many men in prison are appalled by many forms of crime. One such crime was reported in the Dec. 9 Bee. It concerned the rape-killing of a 13-year-old girl. While being shocked, many of us were indeed happy for the escape of her girlfriend. What really caught my personal attention was that this tale of terror began with the all-familiar 'accepting' a ride theme. The article did not specify hitch-hiking per se, but it did bring to mind the following: The young need to be fully educated concerning the in-depth dangers of hitch-hiking. Unfortunately, they have been told, 'Don't do that', and yet adults who are fully aware of robberies etc., will at the same time pick up passengers. So, it's the old story of 'Do as I say, not as I do.'

"However, there is one aspect in the theme of hitch-hiking that is rarely brought to the public's attention, Besides running the obvious risks of robbery, rape, murder, an innocent person may also become a suspect for a crime. For instance, Mr. X leaves a hitch-hiker off and drives away. Later that day the hitch-hiker is found dead, and some citizen remembers Mr. X picking the person up. Bang, before you know it, Mr. X is suspect.

"Schools, PTAs, newspapers and sheriffs' departments can all educate the young to these dangers. The Scouts and other civic groups would well serve the purpose. Again, though, the parents have to set examples. Just like the father who is telling his child, 'You shouldn't smoke, cause it's bad for your health.' This while he is opening a pack. So, educate the adults to set examples. I hope that you find this worthy to print

Thank you. JOHN LEE GROESCHEL. Soledad."

When I came across this letter of advice, I had the eerie sensation that Mr. Groeschel might have been trying to atone for the escalation of his antisocial behavior that began when he accepted the ride from me. I'll never know.

Where's Herbert?

By James O. Clifford, Sr.

The Journal of Local History may have—and we emphasize "may" —put together a puzzle that resembled the "Where's Waldo?" game, only this time it was "Where's Herbert?," Herbert being Herbert Hoover, the 31st president of the United States.

For decades, it was reported that President Hoover visited Redwood City in both 1928 and 1932. During the latter visit he had dinner at the home of Sam Winklebleck, an executive with the Redwood City Tribune.

The reports about the 1932 dinner were probably based on information in the trusted Schellens Collection, named for the late Richard Schellens, who amassed an astounding amount of facts about Redwood City history.

The Schellens file on Hoover is skimpy at best. It includes a copy of a clip from the Redwood City Tribune of June 30, 1928 that reported on a new home

owned by Winklebleck, the one Hoover would visit a few years later.

In a note accompanying the clip, Schellens claimed "President Hoover was at Winklebleck's house sometime during the latter part of October or the early part of November, 1932, to discuss strategic publicity." The missive goes on to say that there were about 12 persons present at the dinner, one of them Ray Spangler, then editor of the South San Francisco Enterprise. "The names of the others have as yet not been ascertained," the note added. Another note said there were more than three Secret Service men present, adding that there were "no local news items covering this event, understandably, under the circumstances."

What the last line about "circumstances" meant is one of speculation. However, the nation was in the midst of the Great Depression and many people blamed Hoover for their plight, which included collections of shacks along railroad tracks that were dubbed "Hoovervilles." Security must have been a paramount concern.

It should be noted that Spangler, a power in local news media, was copied in on the note. At that time, newspapers were pretty much the only game in town when it came to getting the word out — or keeping it from getting out. Spangler, who died in 1997 at the age of 93, would go on to serve as publisher of the Redwood City Tribune from 1945 until his retirement in 1970. During his career, Spangler served as president of Sigma Delta Chi, the national journalist group, as well as on the board of The Associated Press, the nation's main gatherer and distributor of news. Apparently, discussing "strategic publicity" meant no publicity.

Who Cares?

At this late date, who cares about an event that took place in the 1930s and has little, if any, bearing on today? The answer is that this incident shows how easy it is to keep repeating something until it is accepted as fact. It also reveals how the tools of modern communications technology aid in digging in to the past. It also serves as a reminder to hold on to the simple, low tech research tools of pen and pencil, such as the Schellens' collection. The author knows how easy it is to dismiss paper files as meaningless. In the 1980s, then a reporter with the once powerful United Press International, he was given the task of "clearing out" filing cabinets filed with manila folders containing old news stories. The reasoning was that in the future

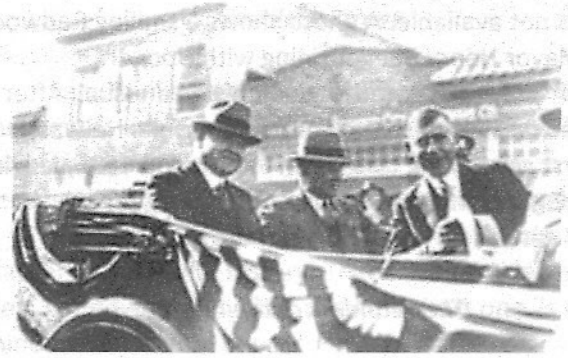
stories would be “called up” via computer. The jettisoned files were not digitalized – just tossed out so more space would be available for new electronic gear. It was as though the past was no longer viewed as a foundation of today. “If it didn’t happen in my lifetime, it didn’t happen,” one of my colleagues said. After all, this was the era when many in higher education believed something along the line of “they who control the past, control the present and they who control the present control the future.” Me? I prefer what Faulkner said about the past not being past.



The Sequoia Hotel: where Herbert Hoover DID NOT sleep

Herbert Hoover Slept Here?

There will be more later on Hoover’s 1930s visit, but let’s take a look at the accepted line about 1928, which is that Hoover rode a touring car in the July 4th Parade and stayed at the Sequoia Hotel. The information is contained in several official city publications, including a 1976 City Planning Department report on historic structures that said Hoover “visited Redwood City during his term and stayed at the Sequoia Hotel.” The report lists several sources, including the Redwood City General Plan, the Historic Landmarks Element, and the Redwood City Historical Trail. The city recently placed a marker across the street from the hotel at Broadway and Main that states that Hoover stayed at the hotel and rode in the 4th of July parade.



Herbert Hoover in a Redwood City parade NOT on July 4th 1928

The legend just keeps feeding off itself, despite the fact that the Redwood City Tribune’s July 4, 1928 issue – an afternoon paper – contained no report of a parade. The headline read: “Independence Day Observed Quietly Here.” The newspaper reported that “the city was deserted” with people attending events elsewhere, mainly at Memorial Park in La Honda. It also noted that fireworks were banned in Redwood City.

Gordon Seely, a retired San Francisco State University history professor, doubts Hoover stayed at the Sequoia, which today bears little resemblance to how it looked in its prime.

Seely should know. The hotel that opened in 1912 was operated by his grandparents. Seely lived in the Sequoia from 1930 until 1934 with his parents, Gordon and Helen Fromm Seely, who were the hotel proprietors.

“He never stayed in the Sequoia Hotel,” he said. “My parents were staunch Republicans and, believe me, if he had they would have told everyone. The most important politician I recall as a little fellow was Governor “Sunny Jim” Rolph, who bounced me on his lap during a visit to the hotel.” Hotel officials say they have no record, say a signed register, of any Hoover visit.

Seely does, however, recall Hoover, a Republican whose term ran from 1929 to 1932 when he was defeated by Franklin D. Roosevelt, passing through town in an open touring car. Seely said his memory “may play tricks” but he thinks Hoover was on his way to his home on the Stanford campus.

According “Redwood City: A Hometown History,” Hoover rode in a touring car in Redwood City in a special parade so local residents could see the 31st president. The parade was in 1928, shortly after Hoover’s election but before his inauguration. The exact

date is not available. A photo shows a smiling Redwood City Mayor Henry Beeger riding with Hoover.

Such a "special parade" wouldn't be unusual. After all, Hoover had close ties to the Peninsula. He was in the first graduating class from Stanford in 1895, leaving with degrees in mining engineering and geology. As noted earlier, he had a home in the area.

The Wonders of the Internet

A decade or so ago, people seeking a look into the past were pretty limited in what tools to use. Thanks to modern communications, researchers now gather information in seconds. For instance, Patch, a local online news agency, had a piece on President Obama's visit to Redwood City, noting that Hoover also visited the San Mateo County seat. The article was seen by Sam Winklebleck, son of the newspaper publisher whose home was visited by Hoover.

"I was there," Winklebleck commented. "I think the year was probably 1933 or 1934, after Hoover left office. I was three or four years old when introduced to the ex-President." He said, "Family legend has it that my mother broke a leg of the dining-room table while dusting the chandelier above it. A hasty repair was made, but there was great fear that Hoover (who was rather portly) might lean too heavily on the table and send the dinner crashing to the floor."

The house built in 1928 had already drawn attention for its unusual design. The Redwood City Tribune said the structure "is striking in its exterior design." There might be some bias here. Yes, Winklebleck was then the paper's business manager, but the house is an eye-catcher even today.



Winklebleck House where Hoover dined

"Although of English architecture, the combination of one large chimney of field rock, the edging of the corners, the brunt rock trim of the

windows ... gives the exterior an Irish atmosphere," the report continued.

The next stop in our search to find information on Hoover and Redwood City was the Hoover Institution on the Stanford campus. An obvious move, right? No.

"Most of our material on Hoover is contained in records of the various governmental and aid organizations he headed, such as Commission for Relief in Belgium, American Relief Administration, and others," said Carol Leadenham, who is with the institution's archives.

"I've looked at boxes 1-5 of the Herbert Hoover Subject Collection, the biographical file, which has materials about his life in California, but I've never seen anything about Redwood City," she said. Then Leadenham gave us a tip—try the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa, where Hoover was raised. Turned out the Library was—to use a cliché Hoover, a mining engineer, would appreciate—a virtual mother lode of information about the mysterious Redwood City visit.

The Trail Warmers

Spencer Howard, an archives technician at the library, said the story about the July 4th 1928 parade "is not accurate" because Hoover was in the nation's capital on that date. He may, however, have cleared up the confusion by noting "there was a big event in Palo Alto on August 11, 1928 when Hoover formally accepted the Republican presidential nomination, which may be the source of the story."

The Hoover library provided the Journal of Local History with several documents, including a copy of Hoover's daily appointments calendar for the years 1917-1964.

In general, the calendar entries include the name of the visitor and sometimes the name of an organization. Hoover and his staff maintained the calendar, which was transcribed and converted to a database at the library. The calendar for July 1928 shows Hoover made several California stops, including those in South San Francisco, Burlingame, San Bruno and San Mateo, noting he "spoke briefly."

As for 1932, there were parades in San Francisco and Palo Alto in November when Hoover returned to California to vote in that year's election. The Hoovers maintained the home in Palo Alto for almost 40 years, so it is likely that Hoover "visited Redwood City on occasion," Howard said.

The presidential library has some documents about the meeting at Winklebleck's. Most importantly, the documents cleared up the date of the gathering. It was on January 25, 1936.

"While the purpose of the dinner is not stated, it was almost certainly intended as an opportunity for Mr. Hoover to gauge the possibility of a Presidential run in 1936, or at least to influence direction of the Republican Party," Howard speculated. He noted the guests included Ben Allen of the California Almond Growers Exchange. Howard described Allen as "Hoover's unofficial campaign manager in California."

The library in Iowa was able to come up with the names of the people at the meeting, those Schellens could not "ascertain." In addition to Ray Spangler, the earlier mentioned journalist, the list included mainly attorneys and business executives, such as Redwood City banker Ed Harrison. Several other people were invited to come to the home after dinner.

The invitation was extended by Robert Littler, an active Republican and chairman of the Stanford Law School. During Hoover's run for the presidency against Al Smith of New York, Littler spoke at rallies on behalf of the Republican candidate.

Littler, believed to be a member of the San Mateo County Assembly in 1936, said at the time that he did not know everyone on the list. He went on to say that several were added by other members of the GOP assembly.

"I have cautioned those who are inviting some of the guests that they are only to invite those who can be trusted not to talk out of turn," he warned. "However, I fully believe that they are all good Republicans and will be quite safe."



Winklebleck Street

Sam Winklebleck's son said he recognized three names on the list. Spangler: of course. The others he knew of were Wayne Millington, who became a superior court judge and Norm Menifee, an attorney.

He didn't need those names to remind him of his father's brush with history. There's a "Winklebleck Street" in Redwood City. The street, a short one, is off El Camino near the train depot.

When the city council voted to name the street after Winklebleck, it said the move was "a most appropriate tribute to the memory of a man who has contributed so much to Redwood City." It also said the decision was "particularly appropriate that the handsome Tribune Building, which is itself a memorial to the vision and genius of the late Sam Winklebleck, should occupy a prominent corner" on the street. The Tribune Building, on the northwest corner of Winklebleck and California, was demolished in 1960.

Other Redwood City reminders of Herbert Hoover include Hoover Street and Hoover School. Wait!!! Could that Hoover have been the vacuum cleaner? The Journal staff will have to look into that.

A Child's Life In the Early Sequoia Hotel

(Eds Note: Retired San Francisco State University history professor Gordon Seely writes about his childhood years living in the Sequoia Hotel at Main and Broadway in Redwood City)

The Sequoia Hotel opened in 1912 as a business owned by my grandparents, August and Mae Smith Fromm. The building itself, which also housed a drug store and a candy store, was owned by the Sequoia Hotel Company.

My earliest memory was in 1932 when a nearby paint shop burned to the ground. I can vividly remember being held in my grandfather's arms and looking out from the second-floor parlor of the hotel as the paint shop burned. Inside were large plaster of Paris Santa Clauses, which Redwood City put out at Christmas time. I can still see the Santas amid the flames. My grandparents earlier hotel experience was in the Capitol Hotel, which is a half block up on the

northside of Broadway from Main Street. The hotel lost two floors in the earthquake of 1906. The lower floor is still in place. My grandparents retired from the hotel business in 1935. They had just completed their new home on Edgewood Road.

I lived in the Sequoia Hotel from 1930 until 1934 with my parents, Gordon and Helen (Fromm) Seely.

My dad had the United Cigar Store Agency about a half block up from the hotel on the north side of Broadway.

The Hotel was a temporary home to attorneys who came to Redwood City to appear in the Superior Court. One of the most famous trials, which my Grandmother attended faithfully, was the paternity suit brought by Constance Mae Gavin against the Flood will. The trial is written up in an account that makes wonderful reading for old-time Redwood City people. (Note: See The Journal of Local History, Summer 2010 for "The Trial of the Century.")

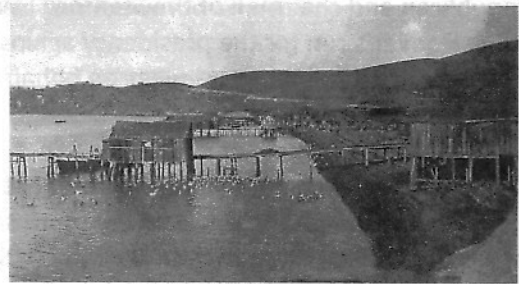
According to city records, the hotel cost more than \$100,000 to build, a large amount at the time. The three story building was expensively decorated and furnished. Every two rooms had a bath and hot and cold water. There were public restrooms on every floor and the ground lobby led to a dining room and public restaurant. Three parlors where business and social meetings could be held were on the second and third floors where 60 rooms were located.

Construction, which was handled by contractor John McBain, was finished on March 15, 1913 and the grand opening was held on April 17. The local newspaper referred to the Sequoia as "the finest hotel in the valley." The circular lobby had a polished hardwood floor extending to the main dining room. There was an oak staircase from the lobby to the second floor, which led directly to a handsomely appointed parlor. As well as managing the hotel, my grandfather tended bar and handled the front desk. My grandmother ran the restaurant and dining room. Seven principals formed a company to build the hotel. Each principal invested an equal amount of \$14,285. The seven included my grandfather who was vice president.

Redwood City's Oyster Beds

By John Edmonds

When I was a boy of ten or eleven years, I used to meet friends from Washington School on the north side of Redwood Creek, and we used to walk on the bank of the creek downtown. We used to come up to cross El Camino, but then we could walk, pretty much, all the way to town. We used to throw rocks about the size of our fists into the creek mud on the sides and watch the oysters squirt. Sometimes they got really high. You could only do this in the summer and at low tide, and we got to know pretty well whether the tide was flooding or ebbing. We adjusted our walks accordingly.



Oyster shucking building on the shoreline near San Bruno Mountain

John Stilwell Morgan, a frugal and industrious native of New York, a former captain of the bark, "Magellan," formed the Morgan Oyster Company in 1887. Morgan planted his oysters in the mud of the Washington, Oregon, and Redwood Creek and what was known then as "Grecco Island" in Redwood City. Morgan bought a house and lived in it at the junction of Steinberger and Corkscrew creeks. The house had originally been built south of Dumbarton Point and was moved to Redwood City. The house was also used as the office for Morgan Oyster Company.

On March 30, 1974, legislation was passed and signed which was called "The Oyster Act." A number of companies went into the oyster business in California, but it was the Morgan Oyster Company that was formed in 1887. They planted oyster beds from San Bruno to Alviso. The companies were required to mark the locations of the beds by a large sign, one foot by six

feet, on which was painted in white and black lettering that stated: "Oyster Beds."

Beginning in 1890, the Morgan Oyster Company began canning its product and selling it under the name, "Eagle Brand Oysters." The business directory in San Francisco showed the Morgan Oyster Company as part of a wholesale group in a special market at 87 California Street. The market apparently lasted for a number of years. It extended between Montgomery and Kearny. Other companies involved were Crellin & Co.; Doane & Co.; M.M. Moraghan, Shoalwater Bay Oyster Co.; Swanberg & West; and E. Terry & Co. All the companies listed here eventually became part of the extended Morgan Oyster Company.

The Redwood City Democrat stated on November 24, 1898: "John S. Morgan, owner of the Morgan Oyster Company and oyster beds which line the bay between this city and San Francisco, is reported to be dying in San Francisco. Morgan is reported to be a millionaire. His family consists of four sons and one daughter."



Gathering Oysters off Redwood Creek

In *Historic Spots in California*, "San Mateo County," page 443, "On the tidelands of the Bay from San Bruno point southward as far as San Francisquito Creek, native oysters flourished for untold centuries. After the building of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, Eastern oysters were imported and planted along the Bay shoreline off San Mateo County. Several companies engaged in this pursuit, most of them being finally consolidated into the Morgan Oyster Company. This company owned several houses built by ship joiners on piles above the water. Like cottages in a garden enclosed by a picket fence, these oyster houses stood within a water area surrounded by partially submerged wickets that insured the safety of the bivalves growing in their beds. John Stillwell Morgan, a

frugal, industrial man and a native of New York, was made captain of the schooner, "Telegraph," then (1846), plying the sea in the oyster business. "Sailing in 1849 for California in the in the bark, "Magellan," he arrived in San Francisco and thoroughly prospected the Bay for oysters without success. He then went to the mines, and afterward to Oregon, where he engaged in the oyster business. The Morgan Oyster Company was formed in 1887, when Morgan took in four partners. The planting of oysters took on greater proportions along the San Mateo County Bayside. After a number of years, the business did not succeed to the hoped extent, and it was sold to the Pacific Cement Company."

The Undocumented History of Emerald Lake

By John Edmonds

Richard Schellens wrote that Moses Hopkins, the brother of railroad magnate Mark Hopkins, built the dam that formed Lower Lake, up Oak Knoll Drive at Lake Boulevard. Moses himself was an official of the railroad that his brother and three friends built.

When Leonard & Holt, of 41 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, decided to start construction of their "Highlands of Emerald Lake," they used the lake in their advertising and illustrated the location at thirty-six miles from San Francisco, nestled among "beautiful ancient oaks and madrones." "California's Paradise" they called it. Even though the original purpose of the lake was substantially more mundane (water for cattle), the construction company developed a far different concept.

Emerald Lake number 2 was developed by Leonard & Holt for similar construction purposes. The lake we now know as "Upper Lake" was never a lake until the company came into the picture and thought it a good way to bring the relatively wealthy San Francisco crowd down to their summer homes among the oaks and madrones. The company was good about placing the homes they built among the trees with a minimum of destruction to the trees and their environment.

It was thought that both lakes were originally spring-fed watering spots for the Mexican landowners under the Spanish Land Grant system and used for

cattle watering. But there is no record to that effect, and Leonard & Holt certainly took credit for the development.

The Emerald Lake Country Club and Golf Club stepped into the picture eventually, and, following the Great Depression, gradually built itself into a true country club and golf course. Mr. and Mrs. Simpson Reinhard, who operated a jewelry store in town for many years, purchased seventeen acres and sold them off as their own development.

Vincent Ryan was the first secretary of the Emerald Lake Country Club. Mrs. Ryan said, "We came down here before we were married and spotted this beautiful little spot." She said people came and left lunch bags, watermelon pieces and other litter about, all of which developed into greater control of who might come onto the property and enjoy the lake.

Perhaps the most beautiful time for the lake was for a few years when Chinese lanterns hung on poles around the lake that were lighted at night and a Chinese pagoda floated on a raft on the lake.

Alaska Codfish Company of Redwood City

By John Edmonds

Grecco Island is just east of the docks of the Port of Redwood City. When one stands on one of the port docks, it is across the slough and to the right of the Redwood Creek channel. Grecco Island is adorned only with PG&E power towers and a few timbers protruding. But once it was the home of an important business in Redwood City, the Alaska Codfish Company.

The earliest cod fishery was that of Thomas W. McCollam & Company, originally established in San Francisco in 1878 and shortly thereafter reestablished on Grecco Island in Redwood City. The original firm had been at Hunter's Point in San Francisco and had substantial success there but residential housing was encroaching, so they knew a move was necessary.

In 1904 the Alaska Codfish Company took over the buildings constructed by Thomas McCollam and added several more. They spent \$10,000, a substantial sum in those days. In addition to the buildings, levees and docks were constructed, and six large Alaska trawlers were put to work sailing the Alaskan waters,

where they fished and packed the catch in salt and ice. Each year the six boats brought in 3,000 tons of fish that were cleaned, chopped, packed in cans and sold to wholesalers. The boats were the *W. H. Dimond*, *Hunter*, *City of Papeete*, *Glendale*, *Maweema* and *S. N. Castle*.

The processing work was done by women, who were transported to the Island by boat each morning and then transported back at night. All the women had to remain until all the fish of the day were processed and canned. Unlike other food processing plants in San Mateo County where the women could walk home at the end of their shifts, these women could not leave until work was completed.

Part of the plant on Grecco Island was a box-making plant, which was used for shipping the cans to wholesalers.

Following World War I, the demand for codfish dwindled, and the ships lay at anchor side by side against the docks. In 1921 a fire started simultaneously in three of the boats and spread quickly throughout the plant. Arson was suspected. The fire burned spectacularly for several days. When it hit the barrels holding gasoline and oil, the explosions were sufficient to alert anybody who wasn't paying attention. There were no fire department boats in those days, so the plant was left to burn down. A launch was sent over to rescue the men who were still on the island.

When the fire was out, the thirty buildings that had been the Alaska Codfish Company's Redwood City plant were burned to the ground, a loss estimated at \$150,000. The plant was not rebuilt.

Editor's Note

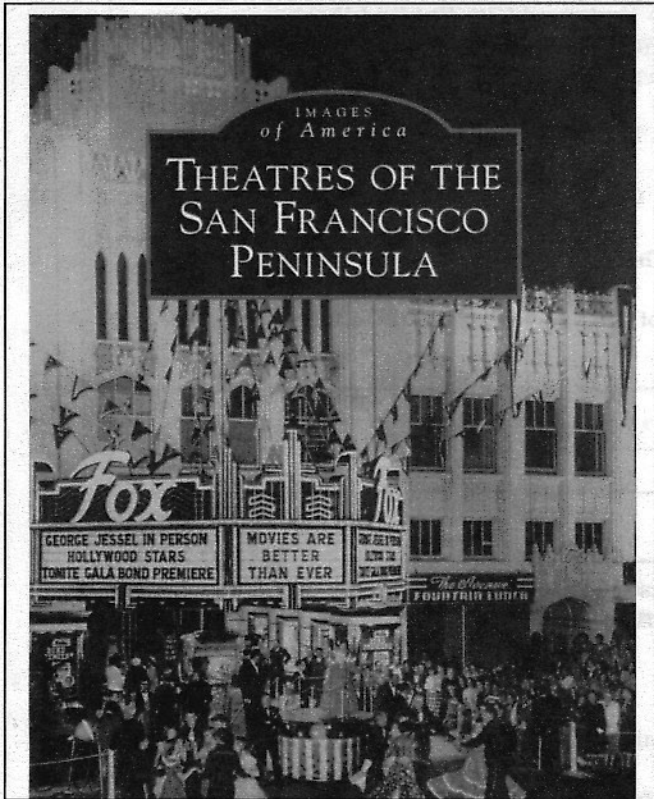
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Hope you enjoy the new and improved Journal of Local History. Please send us a line at gsuarez@redwoodcity.org or call me, Gene Suarez, at 650-780-7098.

Any comments and constructive criticism are welcomed. Happy Holidays.



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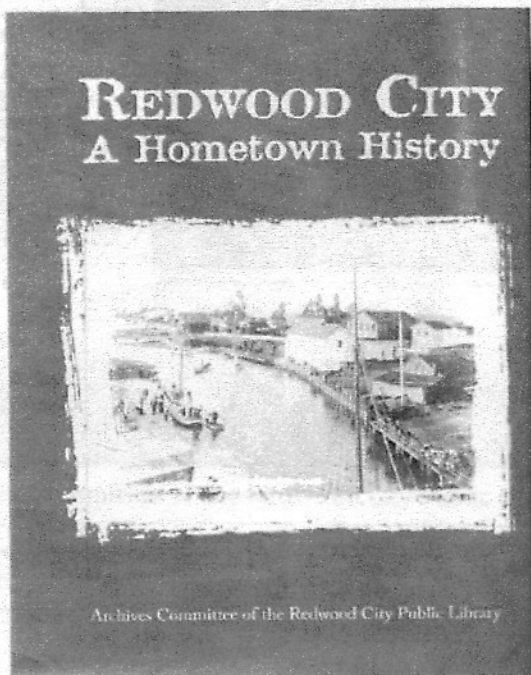
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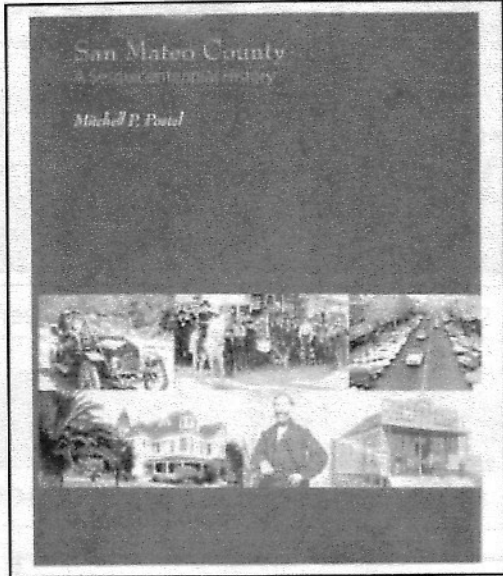


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