

# THE JOURNAL OF LOCAL HISTORY

VOLUME 5 NO. 2

Fall 2013

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

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# The Journal of Local History

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### The President's Message

Welcome to the Fall issue of the Journal of Local History. I am pleased with the people who staff the Local History Room so diligently and without reimbursement. Their efforts focus on improving the room itself, to responding to inquiries from the public, putting out a quality publication three times a year and saving the library and the City of Redwood City one hell of a lot of money.

Continued on next page

IMPORTANT: We will be having our joint meeting of the Cemetery Association and the Archives Board on October 4th at 6pm in the Community Room at the top of the stairs in the library. Please RSVP by sending an email to gsuarez@redwoodcity.org or call 650-780-7030, between 1 and 4 PM Monday through Thursday each week.

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President's Message continued.

Many of you have purchased the Union Cemetery book and I am sure you have enjoyed it. I am presently in the process of writing a "Family Book" on Union Cemetery. I welcome contributions by anyone who wishes to contribute to one of these family histories. I have a pretty good grip on the Captain Watkins family, the Teague family and the Fox family. The Watkins family is probably complete, however I can always add to it should I receive additional material.

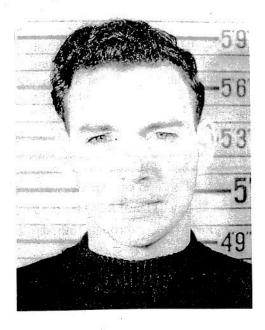
Feel free to contact me at the Local History Room of the Redwood City Public Library 1044 Middlefield Road, Redwood City California 94063. I am always interested in receiving new information on families and individuals that are not included in past publications.

The archives board appreciates your feedback on the Journals and any comments you might have. You are also invited to submit articles on local history. You could become a published author!

John Edmonds President Archives Board, vice President, Historic Union Cemetery Association.

### Remember Norman Vance?

By James O. Clifford, Sr.



A photo – at last.

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A group called "On Eternal Patrol," which honors submariners who perished in World War II, is seeking information about a Peninsula man who died when the USS Gudgeon sank off Iwo Jima.

The sailors name was Norman Vance and very little is known about him, according to a spokesman for the organization.

"We want to memorialize all lost submariners of World War II," said Norman Rutan, a researcher for "On Eternal Patrol." Rutan was particularly interested in finding another photo of Vance, to be placed with a replica of the Gudgeon at the USS Bowfin Park and Museum in Honolulu.

According to Rutan, Vance was born in Virginia in about 1923 and later lived in San Mateo as well as Belmont and Daly City. His parents were Warren and Selma Vance. He had siblings named Bruce and Minnie, both of whom have not yet been located.

Several San Mateo County people helped in the latest hunt for information on Vance, but they could provide few additional facts.

The Journal of Local History staff and others have tried to find additional information including Dee Eva, the dynamo behind the creation of the veteran's memorial at Sequoia High School, and Nancy Oliver of the Sequoia High alumni association.

"If you find that Norman Vance did attend Sequoia, if only for a short time, we can have his name engraved on the monument," Eva said.

Oliver said Vance's name did not turn up in the grad lists of the 1940s, adding that some students left school early to join the service. She also said there were no yearbooks for some years during the war. Officials at San Mateo High School also came up empty handed.

Journal researchers reported that a small item in the San Mateo Times in December of 1937 said Vance was a member of The Forum, a band from Sequoia that played at a Christmas dance at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Belmont. Two years later a newspaper briefly said he had become a member of a new Sea Scout unit in Belmont. The next mention of his name in print was in June of 1944 when the War Department reported he was missing in action. That item in the Times said he had graduated from Belmont School and Sequoia High School.

The Navy Casualties Book shows only that Vance was a Seaman First Class in the Navy Reserve whose parents' address was listed as Box 545, Belmont and that he was killed on April 18, 1944 when the Gudgeon sank off Iwo Jima, probably in an air attack.

"She left Johnston Island on 7 April 1944 after having topped off with fuel and was never heard from again," according to United States Submarine Losses. The Japanese reported sinking a submarine in the area where the Gudgeon was expected to be. The Japanese report said the first bomb hit the bow while the second was a direct hit on the bridge, adding that the center of the submarine burst open and "oil pillars rose."

A photo of Vance did turn up, Rustin said. The facial photo shows a handsome young man wearing a dark, turtle neck sweater standing in front of a wall on which height is registered. Vance looked around 5-10 or so. Apparently the photo was the standard mug shot used on Navy ID cards. The photo find, however, did not result from efforts by San Mateo County residents, although they certainly gave it a good try.

The picture was discovered by Paul Wittmer, a WWII submarine veteran who has searched and published the records of more than 3,600 sailors.

He told The Journal of Local History that the photo was found during a "routine search" of Navy records at the National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri. Wittmer's new Edition Five is a six volume work that includes a history and, when available, photos of each man lost during World War II while attached to a U.S. submarine command. Wittmer thanked all those involved in the local effort for their interest in finding information on Vance.

In doing research, an interesting statistic turned up. According to The American Battle Monuments Commission, 17,582 sailors who fought in the Pacific are missing in action. The figure is almost as many as the Army and Marine MIAs combined. Apparently, when a ship goes down, the sailor is presumed to have died but is listed as missing. Commission officials said Vance's name is on the Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial. He is, indeed, on eternal patrol.

### **Ghosts in Rural Pacifica**

By John Edmonds

The grassy stairs led up to an equally grassy plateau about 100 feet deep into the hillside. It was an afternoon day after the usual morning fog, and the grass glistened in the sunshine. It was a pretty site, but the history of this small part of Pacifica speaks of discomfort and pain for many people now gone.

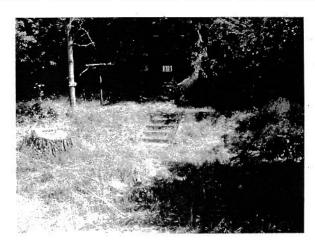
Jim Wagner wrote: "The Sharp Park Internment Camp housed up to 2,500 aliens during the time it

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operated between 1942 and 1945. Ask ten Pacifica residents, and maybe one in nine will recall something about Tanforan. Ask them about the Sharp Park Internment Camp, and their eyes will glaze over."

None of the members of the San Mateo County Historic Resources Advisory Board had ever heard of such a thing in Pacifica. This substantial grassy knoll has no visible reminder of the dramatic history of these times. Perhaps internment is a subject of such embarrassment that we have intentionally blotted it out in our memories. But we must look at it as a lesson learned and work not to let it happen again.

Yamato Ichihashi was a professor of Japanese history at Stanford University. In 1942, he was removed



The steps lead up to a grassy area to the left, upon which stood the buildings that held Japanese, German and Italian men.

from the school and sent to Santa Ana in Southern California to begin his relocation as an "enemy alien." After a few months he was sent to Tule Lake, where he resided from May 26, 1942, until August 19, 1942. He was then transferred to Sharp Park Internment Camp in Pacifica.

Ichihashi had participated in a disarmament conference in 1922 that had involved many Japanese, as well as Americans, but his attendance was used to justify his "enemy alien" status in the eyes of the United States government. The FBI agent in charge of the Ichihashi case was N. J. L. Pieper, who concluded that Ichihashi was dangerous. Pieper sent information into the Justice Department, and President Roosevelt signed an arrest warrant for Ichihashi in July, 1941.

When Ichihashi arrived at Sharp Park, he was met by high barbed-wire fences, guard towers and

Quonset huts. He was reasonably happy during his short six week stay at Sharp Park. His assigned duty of waiting on tables was probably humbling, but none-the-less, he enjoyed the outdoors.

After six weeks, Ichihashi was transferred back to Tule Lake, where he remained until the war was finished. He was relatively happy there too, but because the camp was on the bottom of a drained lake, the ground was very sandy and he went through shoes very rapidly. He was constantly writing to Professor Treat, his friend in the History Department at Stanford University, asking for replacements.

Sharp Park was used primarily as a temporary detention site, and the inhabitants were transferred to the larger internment centers throughout California, Nevada and Oregon.

At Sharp Park, the Quonset huts were gradually removed, as more comfortable barracks were built to house the growing population. In 1943, following Italy's surrender, the Italians were released. Sharp Park was certainly one of the smallest internment camps in the system.

Ichihashi's experience was perhaps a bit unusual because he took copious notes and kept a very positive attitude during his travels and stays in the various locations. After the war, he returned to Stanford University and to his continued profession as a professor of Asian history.

I would like to thank Jim Wagner, a resident of Pacifica, whose essay on the detention center was very helpful. His reference to Yamato Ichihashi enabled me to obtain "Morning Glory, Evening Shadow: Yamato Ichihashi and His Internment Writings—1942-1945," as gathered and organized by Gordon H. Chang, a professor at Stanford University. I also used, very briefly, Executive Order 9066 on Italian Americans: The San Francisco Story, as referenced by Rose D. Scherini in an article for the California History magazine. There is a plaque in Sharp Park at the site of the former camp.

### The Tank at Mezes Park

By James O. Clifford, Sr.

Last year Redwood City asked the public for information about the World War II tank that has stood guard for more than half a century in a corner of Mezes Park, which is often simply called "Tank Park".

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The hunt for information did manage to determine one thing – "that it was not used in battle," said Malcolm Smith, then the city's communications manager. "It did not leave the US."



Kids play on tank again.

Smith sought the information as part of plans to refurbish the park at Warren Street and Standish Street. At the time of the city's announcement, about all that was known was that the M5 Stuart was built by Cadillac and placed in the park "as a memorial and commemoration to everyone who served in WWI and WWII," Smith said.

The park reopened on July 20, 2013, featuring a new restroom, new paths, new lights and play equipment. The tank was all spruced up with a new paint job.

Claudia Olalla, the city employee charged with gathering public input, said a plaque will be installed later that will give a brief history of the tank.

"Unfortunately we didn't get pictures or too many stories," Olalla said. "I'd been hoping for images of kids playing on the tank from decades past. There is one man I remember who said he had a paper route and remembers the tank being brought to the park."

Redwood City Patch, an online news site, did a story on the tank and received a comment from Joe Barrington of Rocklin, who grew up in San Carlos.

"My sister brought me and my brother to this park many times," said Barrington. "We crawled all over this beast. It appears it has been well kept. Oddly, my oldest brother and his son have developed a keen interest in collectible military vehicles. He would love to own an M5."

Volunteer researchers at the history archives in the Redwood City Library dived in and found out the tank came from an ordnance depot in Lassen County in 1947, not in 1946 as often reported. Most importantly, they determined the tank's serial number.

A Redwood City Tribune story on March 22, 1947 said that the 16-ton tank arrived aboard a fire department truck and semi-trailer driven by Assistant Fire Warden Ernest Werder. According to the report, the tank was a gift of the Redwood City American Legion Post to the city to be placed at a "suitable location."

The "suitable location" turned out to be Mezes Park, named after the agent for the Arguellos, the pioneering family recalled by bust of Mrs. Arguello that is a fixture adjacent to the train tracks at Broadway.

According to "The Story of Redwood City's Parks," the Arguellos sold Mezes a large portion of their rancho after he cleared the family's title in 1854. Mezes donated two sites to Redwood City for plazas. One became a plaza called California Square, which is now the San Mateo County Hall of Justice and Records. The other eventually became Mezes Plaza, which is today's Mezes Park.

(The State Office of Historic Preservation pointed out that the Mezesville Subdivision of 1854 shows three blocks were actually donated, the other being the block containing the old courthouse on Broadway.)

The late Francis Hutchinson, former principal of Sequoia and Woodside high schools, said that Mezes Plaza was just a vacant lot in the 1920s that he and other neighborhood kids used as a playground.

"There wasn't much there, except for some great trees for climbing" Hutchinson said in "The Story of Redwood City's Parks," which was published by the city. Later, a veterans' building opened near the park, allowing mostly World War I veterans to share camaraderie. That structure would be torn down and replaced by homes. After World War II Veterans met in the American Legion hall erected on El Camino Real.

#### No Battle Scars

The park tank never fired a shot in anger, but it still had a brush with history. The depot where it was stored was the Sierra Army Depot, one of several ammunitions facilities located far inland, giving clear testimony that Americans of the time felt the nation was vulnerable to attack by the Japanese. The depot was built in 1942 in southern Lassen County about 70

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miles north of Reno. The present town of Herlong was built to house civilian workers at the ordnance facility.



Never fired a shot in anger.

According to the "Sierra Army Depot" history published by the Army, the site was a "reasonably safe distance from the coast, thus lessening the danger of attack, yet close enough to western military posts and ports to facilitate shipment of supplies." The history also notes that the area was sparsely populated which would decrease the chance of casualties from an ammunition explosion, a fear that was real. On July 17, 1944 two ships exploded at a Navy ammunition depot at Port Chicago in the East San Francisco Bay Area, killing 320 men.

While the Mezes M5 sat out the war inland, other M5 Stuarts, named after Civil War Confederate cavalry commander J.E.B. "Jeb" Stuart, won battle stars, mostly in the Pacific were it and an earlier M3 model were effective against the Japanese. The M5 made its debut in the invasion of North Africa and by 1943 was becoming the standard light tank of American armored divisions, according to the Tank & Ordnance Memorial Museum. British, French, Russian and Chinese forces also employed the Stuart, but it was inferior to German tanks and eventually took on reconnaissance and escort duties in Europe.

Mostly overlooked in histories is the key role the Stuart played after Normandy, albeit not against enemy tanks. Following D-Day, Allied infantry confronted centuries-old, mangled hedgerows that acted as barricades for the Germans. A teeth-like apparatus was placed on the front of the M5 that cut through the hedgerows. Ironically, the cutter was

fabricated from steel obstructions planted by the Germans along the coast of France.

#### Other Memorials

Even though it did not have an impressive war record, the M5 Stuart light tank, along with the earlier model Stuart M3, served as a popular memorial in other states, including Wisconsin, Georgia, and Massachusetts, possibly because so many of them were surplus after the war. The tank is a feature at the General Patton Memorial Museum at Summit, California, even though the famed World War II tank commander used much larger Sherman tanks against Hitler's army.

Other Stuart tank memorials can be found as far away as Australia and Prague. The most moving memorials are at Salinas and in the Philippines where a National Guard unit from Salinas suffered terribly during the early days of World War II when the Japanese onslaught seemed unstoppable.

About 100 Salinas soldiers from the 194<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion of the National Guard were sent to the Philippines in September of 1941. They were the first American armored outfit deployed overseas in what soon became the Pacific front. Only 47 of the men survived. Most of them died in prison camp from starvation and all manner of abuse, according to Burton Anderson's history of the Salinas National Guard.

The Veterans Building moved onto the Mezes Plaza block in 1928 and two years later the park site was spruced up and shrubbery was planted. Two tennis courts were added in 1934 and playground gear followed three years later.

#### MATCHING GIFTS

Many employers will match contributions both from current and retired employees. All you need to do is request a form from the company, fill out your portion & send it to us along with your gift. We will fill out our portion of the form & sent it to the company for processing. Questions? The company department that provided you with the form should be able to answer them all.

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# Another Redwood City Medal of Honor?

By James O. Clifford, Sr.



Victor Kandle killed in action, buried in France

There was a volley of excitement at the American Legion Hall in Redwood City when, by sheer serendipity, it was discovered that the city might have a second connection to the Congressional Medal of Honor. Alas, an investigation by The Journal of Local History shows any link is slender.

It was hoped that another photo of a soldier who was awarded the nation's highest honor might soon grace a wall at the Legion Post 105 hall on El Camino. The building has long been home to a picture of Mitchell Paige, a Marine who was awarded the MOH for his exploits on Guadalcanal in World War II.

Paige survived the war and became a member of the post in Redwood City where he lived. The other Medal of Honor recipient, Victor Kandle, was killed in action and is buried in France.

Any Kandle tie to Redwood City was dormant for decades until the Legion hall underwent a half million-dollar facelift recently, according to Post Commander Romie Bassetto.

"We found this in a storage area," Bassetto said, motioning toward a frame that housed a photo of Kandle in his first lieutenant's uniform and a certificate describing what he did to be awarded the MOH.

"What Kandle did reads like something out of 'Sergeant York," said Bassetto, referring to the World War I Medal of Honor recipient made famous in a movie that starred Gary Cooper in the title role.

The citation for Kandle's heroism said he showed "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty" on Oct. 9, 1944 against German forces near La Forge, France. It said Kandle captured five prisoners and then engaged in a "duel at pointblank range with a German field officer and killed him." If that wasn't enough, Kandle killed a German machine gunner "with accurate rifle fire" and led his men in taking out another machinegun crew.

"Finally, he led his small force against a fortified house held by 2 German officers and 30 enlisted men," the citation continued. "After establishing a base of fire, he rushed forward alone through an open clearing in full view of the enemy, smashed through a barricaded door, and forced all 32 Germans to surrender."

Kandle was credited with capturing or killing three German officers and 54 enlisted men, the destruction of three enemy strong points and seizure of enemy positions that had halted a battalion attack. He was killed two months later. One report said he was killed by a grenade tossed at a tank he was riding on.

Kandle was born in Pierce County, Washington, but just exactly where is unsure. Some sources say Roy, Washington while others list Puyallup and McKenna, also both in Washington. He attended Yelm High School in Yelm, Washington. The towns all fall in to the circulation area of the Nisqually Valley News which ran a detailed story on Kandle's heroism in its May 17, 1945 edition. Additional information about Lt. Kandle's exploits was supplied to the Valley News by Pfc. Mark Porter of Puyallup, who was a correspondent with Stars and Stripes.

The German major opened fire with a machine pistol and, "as bullets splintered the trees around him, Kandle opened up with his rifle, forcing the officer to dash through the trees in an attempt to escape," the newspaper reported.

"Firing through the sights at a standing position, Lt. Kandle hit the German in the arm, and when he kept running two more shots stopped and killed him," the newspaper said in winding up the duel.

Several government documents say Kandle enlisted in Redwood City where his wife, Marijene, lived at her mother's home, along with their son, Terry. Other sources say he enlisted in Seattle in 1940. The widow and son received the Medal of Honor at a ceremony in the Presidio in San Francisco and that may have led to the erroneous conclusion that Lt. Kandle was from Redwood City.

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Actually, Kandle never set foot in Redwood City, according to his widow, now 90 and living in North Dakota with her second husband, Earl Dodd. She said she and Kandle were married in Olympia, Washington.

"I think this misunderstanding all started when Look Magazine ran a story and photo about the award at the Presidio," she told The Journal of Local History in a telephone interview.

The Redwood City Tribune shares some of the blame. Its story about the award at the Presidio said Kandle was a "Redwood City man." The headline read the same.

Dodd, who married Marijene in 1947, said, "This keeps popping up. Some years back someone in Redwood City wanted to name the armory after him. I can tell you he never was in Redwood City."

The wife and son lived in several Bay area cities during the war, which reminds us how uprooting WWII was. According to the National Housing Agency, which launched a "Share Your Home" drive during the war, an estimated 1.5 million families shared their dwellings, sometimes with strangers.

"I don't remember too much about my grandmother's house on Finger Avenue," said Terry Kandle, the son. "I think I was three or four. I do remember that there was a creek in the back yard that I spent a lot of time playing in." Terry said his grandmother was Floise Lee Dodge.

Another item that needed clarifying was the spelling of Marijene. It often appears as Marigene.

There is still one mystery left: no one knows where the framed picture and citation came from.

### P. H. Canavan

By John Edmonds

In the 1878 San Francisco business directory Mr. P. H. Canavan was listed as a real estate businessman who was living at 521 Montgomery Street.

From the Sacramento Daily Union, Volume 15, Number 91, 7 June 1882 – P. H. Canavan:

"The sudden death of P. H. Canavan will grieve a large circle of friends. He was a man who had made an enviable reputation in public life and whose virtues were conspicuous and manifold. His memory will endure as one of the few "faithful among the faithless

found," who have held office in the municipal government of San Francisco without becoming corrupt or condoning corruption in others. He was a member of the Board of Supervisors for years and a City Hall Commissioner. Yet his reputation never suffered a stain and he took no ill-gotten gains with him when he retired. A scholar, a gentleman, a patriot, scrupulously honorable in all his transactions, faithful to his friends, compassionate, hospitable, abounding with domestic affection, his life offers an example of the most ennobling character and his death makes a void which will long be marked"

P. H. Canavan moved to Mayfield after his retirement from San Francisco, he was buried on June 5<sup>th</sup> 1882 in plot 149T in Union Cemetery at his own request. Mr. Canavan was 52 years of age when he died, a native of Ireland.

## Ghost at Pigeon Point Chapter 4

By John G. Edmonds

Carl Coburn won the election to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors from the 5<sup>th</sup> district, Pescadero. He commuted, for the most part, from Pescadero to Redwood City for meetings. While carrying out his responsibilities, he continued to observe the continuing failure of his Uncle Loren as aged. Carl wrote regularly to Arzo on the East Coast describing details of the mistakes Loren was making. Carl also realized that Loren could neither read nor write.

Carl was well liked in the Town of Pescadero; his only fault, a few people thought, was that he didn't pay his bills very promptly.

Loren spoke frequently about his ownership of the Mexican land grant, a tale which seemed to grow each time he told the story. By then the grant extended from the south coast border at Ano Nuevo all the way up to a mile north of Half Moon Bay. When he was asked what would happen to all the people who lived in Half Moon Bay, he would simply say, "They will all be paying me rent for the property."

Arzo had seen a deed showing some 400 acres assigned to Sarah Upton. During Loren's competency trial several years earlier, he was more than a little surprised when he quizzed Loren about it because Loren

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said Miss Upton did not own any land. When he continued his inquiry, Loren had said, "Don't you think I know what I am doing?"

C. V. Thompson, a 26-year-old medical doctor, came to Pescadero and rented space on San Gregorio Street. Loren had seen him as a patient and he told the young doctor that he owned the building that he occupied and that he would have to pay him the rent. When Thompson refused to pay him the rent, Loren refused to pay the doctor for the treatment.

Soon after Arzo returned to the East Coast, and was just settling in, when he received a letter from Carl asking him to come back because Loren was making more trouble with Dr. Thompson. Marraton Upton had been in an accident and was taken to Dr. Thompson. The doctor fixed him up after Loren agreed to pay him fifty dollars. Loren rationalized that Marraton wasn't hurt that badly anyway, so he refused to pay the doctor.

In 1908 Loren was eighty-two old. When Arzo returned to Pescadero, Loren addressed him as Judge Coburn, and when Arzo told him that he was not a judge, Loren insisted he was and continued to address him as such.

In the winter of 1908 a second competency trial began in the Odd Fellow's Building on Main Street where Judge George Buck was sitting while the courthouse on Broadway was being rebuilt.



The Honorable George Buck

The room was adequate for the Odd Fellows' purposes, but it was quite small for the San Francisco attorneys litigating Loren's incompetence. Two law firms agreed to take the case. Ross and Jordan, and Rowe and Brown. Loren hired Archibald Treat of San Francisco and Archer Kincaid of Redwood City.

Judge George Buck was sixty-one years old when the trial started. He had a totally unblemished record on the bench; he had been the district attorney of San Mateo County from 1882 to 1890 when he won the election to the Superior Court bench in 1890. Judge

Buck was extremely punctual; you could set your watch when you saw him walk by at any point on his way to work. Judge Buck had presided over the first competency trial some eight years earlier and had given a verdict that Loren was very happy about. So Loren was happy about where he was, and he looked forward to another good session with Buck.

Arzo was the first to testify, and he explained that he didn't think Loren was competent to run his own business. He talked about how Loren and Carl had drawn up phony deeds to things like the Oakland City Hall. He talked about the deed to 400 acres he had seen during that trial and that it had been signed by Loren over to Sarah. Arzo felt that Sarah was the designing person in search of Loren's gold.

Testimony then turned to Loren's dealings with the lumber company in the Gazos Creek area. That was the company that Loren obtained after pushing the primary owner, Horace Templeton—the retired San Mateo County judge and the owner of several lumber mills in the 1860 and '70s—off a cliff at Pigeon Point. But the discussion dealt more with Loren's inability to figure out how much money he should be receiving versus how much the mills were receiving. Arzo's figures differed greatly from Loren's, so Arzo assumed that Loren was obviously being cheated. Loren had no idea that he was losing so much money.

Arzo testified that Loren talked about how much property he owned on the coast. Originally, the amount was from the county line up to Gazos Creek; however, in the last several years it had gradually increased from the county line to Purisima Creek, then to Pomponio Creek, then to one mile north of Half Moon Bay. Loren insisted, whenever questioned, that this was all part of his Mexican land grant.

Edward Gayety, whom Loren had hired to run the Pigeon Point operation, testified that Loren always made ironclad deals with tenants, but that he bought shoddy equipment that was too expensive, and when a deal did not go his way, he simply stomped off like a child.

A whole list of dignitaries testified that Loren was quite competent to handle his own finances. P.P. Chamberlain, the San Mateo County treasurer, said he had always been able to control his own fortune. L. P. Behrens said Loren had always handled his relationships with the bank in good standing. Several additional witnesses testified to Loren's ability to handle his own financial situation.

However, on February 10, eighty-four-year-old Loren Coburn and seventy-three-year-old Sarah Upton

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were married in St. John's Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. It was a small but beautiful wedding with a reception at a friend's house nearby. When Loren and Sarah returned to their home in Pescadero, a grand celebration was set in motion, and everything seemed to be getting rosier. The San Francisco newspapers carried the story of the wedding and mentioned the small fortune of Sarah's of \$150,000 in real estate in Fitchburg. The paper reported that Loren's holdings were in the millions in four counties--San Mateo, Fresno, Monterey and Merced--all in real estate.

The marriage also produced an evening of dancing and merriment at the Odd Fellows Hall in Redwood City. A number of Pescaderans traveled over the hill for this wonderful event.

The Coburn couple spent a great deal of time together. They travelled to San Francisco, where they contacted Judge Hebbard about making a new will because the existing will named Loren's son Wally as the primary beneficiary. The will was kept by Loren's business agent, Isadore Levin, in a safe at his office. A second will was produced as a later will by Carl Coburn. This will spread Loren's fortune to many people. The court threw out the second will because it was not witnessed.

Loren celebrated this success by purchasing a new five-passenger automobile and told people that since the good people of Pescadero were so anxious about his good health, he was going to enjoy the fresh air.

During 1902 Loren continued to purchase large tracts of land, primarily in the valley, and he very rarely sold or parted with any part of his holdings. His personal income became greater and greater. Judge Maurice Dooling became interested in Loren's competency, or lack thereof, to make proper decisions regarding his thousands of acres of lands. More and more of the land was producing grains, vegetables and fruit, with many acres in orchard.

Now in his mid-eighties, Loren was slowing down; his mental condition was slowing down faster than his physical condition. He was continuing to invest in litigation more than any other single individual in San Mateo County history at that time. He was interested in watching one of his antagonists, Carl Coburn—his nephew and a former county supervisor—get into trouble.

The new courthouse was being completed and had to be furnished in late 1909. Supervisor Carl Coburn received money from a furniture dealer, who wanted to do the furniture for the courthouse. It was a

bribe, and some of the other supervisors received the same contributions. It seems that there was an election shortly thereafter, and Carl lost his supervisorial seat in a bitter struggle against Dr. D. E. Blackburn, the local dentist in Pescadero. Apparently Dr. Blackburn, after taking his seat on the supervisor's panel, was contacted by the person with money in his hands. Blackburn also pocketed the money.

Thus, Carl Coburn had set a trap; he invited government officials to Pescadero to hear a conversation between himself and Dr. Blackburn. Holes were drilled in a wall so that the officials could hear the discussion without being seen. There, Carl admitted wrongdoing and then Blackburn did the same thing. In about half an hour, Dr. Blackburn admitted way too much and successfully ended his supervisorial career, several months later.

It was a grand scandal; all the newspapers had exposes for several days in a row, until a Grand Jury investigation ended it, all with indictments. Both Blackburn and Coburn were indicted, but Carl, because he had turned state's evidence, was treated much better. He ended up with just a reprimand: he pleaded guilty, and he was released. The only real result for him was a very sour reputation in Pescadero. Carl's reputation in Pescadero was that he was an informer.

In 1912, Loren was back in court doing more litigation. He had a lawsuit against Robert Reece to recover \$4,986.46, which he said was his share of farm products sold by the defendant. In a separate suit, Loren was being sued by Henry W. Walker for an unpaid stenographer's bill of \$824, an amount due for work in Judge Dooling's court two years earlier.

Loren owned considerable acreage in the Salinas Valley. On one farm was a young tenant named Christian (Chris) Widemann, who was one of the enterprising young men on this 10,000-acre ranch. Widemann was wise with his money, and even as a young man, he had an investment in race horses. He rose rapidly to the position of vice president of the Bank of Gonzales. The son of general store owners, Widemann saved his money. When Loren got to know him, he was so impressed with the young man that he sold his Gazos Creek timber and mill interest to him.

Widemann was a very good-looking, stout young man who wore all his clothes very well. He had a lot of expensive clothing to make a good impression on occasions. The confident young man cut costs and improved production at the Gazos Creek Mill. He resurrected the system of floating the milled lumber down to the mouth of the creek and moving the

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material on the tracks that the original owners had built from the mouth of the creek to Pigeon Point. He improved the loading ramp that extended out to a safe anchorage away from the rocks. He also hired a set of divers to secure the best location for anchors and to attach buoys so the steamers would find safe and secure loading positions.

All was going so well at Gazos Creek and Pigeon Point that Loren started giving Widemann property to keep him around and to make him productive. Widemann set up an office at Pigeon Point and then brought in a friend, Ed Eaton. He developed a merchandise store and a warehouse. He sent out a notice to the entire south coast that he would buy and store 2,000 tons of hay and other grains. He and Eaton also brought in 500 sheep and hired Pescaderans to farm the sheep and to do much of the work around Pigeon Point. Widemann became a very popular young man in Pescadero.

He established a residence in Pescadero, and so did Eaton, who also brought his wife and family. Soon after, Andy Sterling, a former deputy sheriff, and John Clements, a black man, followed their boss to Pescadero. Also arriving was Widemann's beautiful and well-dressed secretary, Josephine Vosti. All of them were very nice people and were warmly welcomed into Pescadero society.

Loren was extremely happy with the way things were going: he didn't need to hire a guardian to keep accounts straight; he was receiving money regularly; and Widemann was managing all the projects better than any city folk person could have done. Loren was proud of the timber sales and the selling of the hay. He told his debtors that it was time to settle accounts, and many of them did just that. When he was receiving money, he was a very happy man.

However, as the litigation continued, his competency again came into question. In this one, most of the players were the same as during the last competency trial; the primary difference was that this trial was being held in San Francisco.

During this trial Loren's relatives became anxious and also jealous of Chris Widemann and his success. Sullivan, the attorney, testified that Loren trusted Widemann so much that he was being blindsided and that Widemann and Eaton were selling timber for less than market value. He also said that Loren had no idea of the devious things the two were doing to him. However, Sullivan provided no evidence or basis for these unsubstantiated statements. There was also criticism that Loren had turned over his

business to Widemann. Loren testified that he turned the business over because he wanted to retire and really relax.

The jury's verdict was that Loren was quite competent; that was their verdict. The result was that Loren got rid of his enforced guardian, who turned in extensive records that Loren liked. Loren paid him for his duty. Loren told people that this had given him new life. He went over to Widemann's, where he signed a new contract for Gazos and Pigeon Point and paid for services rendered.

The 1910 census showed that the farming community in San Mateo County was worth some \$20 million. The great majority of the farms were on the coast side, and Pescadero had a large percentage of those. These were good times; the farms were prospering. By 1914 the Ocean Shore Railroad had claimed bankruptcy, largely due to the increase of trucks for transportation of goods from the coast to San Francisco. But it did not bother Loren anymore because he was still receiving regular payments from Widemann.

Then Widemann, who was a bachelor, purchased a large rural home east of town, where he lived with the beautiful Josie. He called it the "Social Club." He invited celebrities such as Dr. Thompson and other influential persons rather than the local inhabitants of Pescadero. Still, from time to time, some of them came as well. Widemann hired a French chef from Monterey to come and cook duck, turkey, frog legs and quail.

In the summer of 1917, the amiable Ed Eaton, fifty-five years old, was killed while driving back along the coast from an event in San Francisco. His car rolled over. This was a blow to many in Pescadero, as Eaton was very well liked.



Sarah Colburn

On November 14, 1918, Loren Coburn died of pneumonia in his home in Pescadero. He was buried

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beside his first wife, Antoinette, in Cypress Lawn Cemetery in Colma. The widowed Sarah went to San Francisco, gathered up her three attorneys, and went to the Bank of Italy where they withdrew the 1914 will and went to City Hall, where they filed the document. The will divided Loren's entire fortune equally between Sarah and Wally, except for a thousand dollars, which was given to Ah Gee, Loren's faithful Chinese servant.

The homely Sarah Upton Coburn found, as one might expect, that there was a rapid filing of challenges to that will. In some cases, the signatures were in question. Carl Coburn had presented his ability to define signatures when he had testified at one of the competency trials, and that was broadly recognized throughout the community. When the courts received the "subsequent" wills, they were reminded of that testimony, and it immediately put the will in question. Arzo Colburn was the person who presented the most realistic "subsequent" will; he presented it with proper documents. Of course, he would receive a substantial income from the document, but in truth, he had performed many honest and valuable services to Loren. And while Sarah disdained him, he, nonetheless, did deserve some credit.

A mysterious second will executed, supposedly by Loren, on October 31, 1914, six months after the April will, was presented by Attorney Hall C. Ross, in which Arzo was named the executor and in which Sarah got \$75,000 and Wally got \$100,000. Carl and Minni Coburn were witnesses to that; Arzo was the "residuary legalee."

There were a number of subsequent filings against the will, not just by hungry recipients but also by debtors, some of them in question, some honest. But paper work and investigative work would take substantial time. The final outcome allowed people to relax a little and look at their needs and a way to compromise. Surprising to all, especially the newspapers, the people involved in the inheritance review did successfully reach a compromise, and the process ended.

On Wednesday, June 4, 1919, the headline in papers all over San Francisco and the southern bay region read: "Mrs. Colburn found murdered while asleep in a back room of the Pescadero house. . .The 63-year-old mentally deficient Wally was found muttering incoherently over the lifeless corpse." Wally was taken to Gardiner's Sanitarium and held there while the investigation took place.

There was a coroner's inquiry in Pescadero, and many people testified on "Wally's past behavior". Most

people did not believe Wally was capable of committing such an act. However, some people testified that he had picked up a fireplace poker and took a swing at Mrs. Harrison, but that he put it down immediately afterward and was then despondent.

At the end of the inquiry, a verdict was rendered that said, ". . .deceased came to her death from a blow on the head by a piece of wood, exhibited to the jury, by some person unknown to them, thereby causing a fracture of the skull."

Thus ends this essay on the various murders that occurred under the auspices of the Loren Coburn family. None of them have ever been solved, nobody has ever been arrested, and the cases have fallen off the open list long ago. There is certainly plenty of evidence for a ghost at Pigeon Point; if you stand near the fog signal building and just listen on a cold and stormy evening, you can well imagine Horace Templeton as he was yelling "@#%&\*" before he hit the rocks that ended his life after a good shove by Loren Coburn.

Or

Alexander "Scotty" Rae as he was being gunned down by Loren Coburn's hired thugs after firing a warning shot over their heads. He had a right to be there, and they did not.

#### And

What about Sarah Coburn, who was sleeping soundly when somebody bludgeoned her in her bed?

## San Mateo County Stagecoaches

By John Edmonds

The first stagecoaches in San Mateo County ran from San Francisco to San Jose. Warren F. Hall and Jared Crandall ran from the California Exchange at the corner of Clay and Kearny at 8 a.m., stopping first at Angelo's in Belmont, then to the Steinberger Ranch in Mountain View, then Hall's Ranch in Santa Clara, and in good weather, arriving at San Jose at 3 p.m.

An opposition stage line started on August 13, 1857, and apparently, Mr. Hall and Mr. Crandall had a separation of the minds, as Hall moved his stage line up to the Moss Bookstore at 161 Kearny. However, the new line started in San Jose, with stops at Mountain View, Redwood City, San Mateo and finally, San Francisco. Leaving San Jose daily at 6 a.m., it arrived in

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San Francisco at noon and departed to San Jose the same day with fresh horses.

The true first stagecoach from San Francisco to San Jose, running through San Mateo County, was John Whistman's. It did not provide good service, but at the time it was the only service. Whistman used an old French omnibus drawn by mustangs and mules, and it was very slow. During the winter rains that almost



Simon Knights wearing his well-known white duster. Taken in La Honda, c1875.

excluded San Mateo County and ran from Alviso to San Jose for the rainy season, he used six horses.

Simon Knights first appeared in 1869, when he established a stage route between Redwood City and the Summit House on the "San Gregorio Turnpike." The stage left Redwood City every afternoon upon the arrival of the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad. The stage left Summit Springs in the morning in time to meet the 9 a.m. train back to San Francisco. During 1869, Mr. Knights purchased three lots on Cedar Street at the corner of Phelps Street (now Middlefield Road). On these lots, he built his stable and kept his coaches and wagons. He also established his offices in the American House on Main Street at the end of Bridge Street (now Broadway).

Leonard Fisher and Samuel Murch were wagon makers and blacksmiths. They built a large two-story building on Cassia Street, just north of Middlefield Road. They received a contract from the Knights' Stage Coach Company to build two large coaches.

On March 15, 1873, the San Mateo County Gazette wrote: "The coaches being made at the shop of Leonard Fisher for Simon Knights are vehicles to see and feel. Each coach will weigh about 1,600 pounds. A Concord coach weighs 2,200 pounds. Simon is having his coaches erected especially for the Redwood City to

Woodside and Searsville run; they can accommodate seventeen passengers without crowding, nine inside and eight out. When the travel or road is heavy, six horses are to be used; otherwise four will do."

By the end of March the coaches were completed, and they began their duties on the Searsville run. John Poole held the reins for these trips to Simon Knights' hometown. Knights and Poole became good friends, and on many occasions Knights took the reins to give Poole some time off.

In April, 1874, a joint stock company was formed with a capital of \$12,000 to establish a transportation system to Pescadero from Redwood City. The original directors were E. M. Armstrong, Hugh Kelly and Doctor McClure. Simon Knights continued to hold the day-to-day business. The stages, horses, and harnesses were part of the company. But by June of that year, the stagecoaches were running from Redwood City to Woodside, Searsville, then over the hill to the Glass Ranch in La Honda, the Bell farm in San Gregorio and to Pescadero. It was an all-day trip and involved a stop at La Honda to change horses and rest the passengers who enjoyed their lunches in the redwoods.



Leonard Fisher and Simon Murch built this blacksmith shop on Cassia Street near Phelps, (Middlefield Road)

The Gazette stated on June 12, 1875: "On Tuesday evening last, the Pescadero and Redwood City Stage Company held a meeting in the law office of George W. Fox. After listening to the report of the Secretary C. N. Fox, George Fox, William Holder, A. Dennis and Chris Baird were elected directors. A resolution was passed authorizing the directors to dispose of the company's property on the best terms obtainable."

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On September 25, 1875, G. W. Hartsough was added to the list of drivers for the stagecoach lines from Redwood City to Pescadero. The fact that he had twenty years of experience driving stagecoaches had a lot to do with the decision to hire him and to giving Mr. Poole some much-needed rest.

A decision was made to sell the stage line, and it was formally auctioned off in November 1875 by the Redwood City and Pescadero Stage Company. By December 1875, Simon Knights and George Wentworth had put together the money to make the purchase.

The Times and Gazette wrote a story on June 2, 1877. It read: "Redwood City and Pescadero Stage Company, Simon L. Knights Proprietor. Stage leaves the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, Redwood City, every morning at 10:00 AM for Pescadero via San Gregorio Road. Returning leaves Pescadero at 9 AM, connecting with the 3:49 PM train for San Francisco. Tickets are \$2.50."

In their 1878 book, "Illustrated History of San Mateo County" Moore and De Pue wrote: "For public means of communication between Redwood City and the coast, the Redwood City and Pescadero Stage-Line affords the facilities by which a six-horse stage, making daily trips (roads and weather permitting) between the above points. . . The distance is thirty-two miles and is made in six hours, including stops at Woodside, Searsville, Weeks' La Honda and San Gregorio. Stages on this route commenced running in 1873. The proprietor of the line is Simon L. Knights, an early settler of the county and a veteran stager."

On May 4, 1882, the San Mateo County Journal reported: "Fast freight from La Honda and San Gregorio to Redwood City. Leaves San Gregorio and La Honda every Friday at 10 AM, leaves Redwood City every Saturday at 10 AM. Picnic parties conveyed to La Honda at reasonable rates. Baggage and supplies attended to with the utmost care."

In the mid-1890s, the Knights' Stage Company added the route to Mountain Brow (King's Mountain) and Bella Vista. The stages left Redwood City on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

An ad in the Redwood City Democrat on January 28, 1892, read: "The Knights Stage Company leaves daily from Redwood City to Pescadero, La Honda and way stations. The stage meets the 9:30 train and picks up the mail and leaves for San Gregorio and Pescadero through the redwoods, the most attractive portion of San Mateo County. Easy roads, comfortable coaches, competent drivers and reasonable fares."

On June 10, 1893, the Redwood City Democrat announced: "Walter Knights (Simon's older son) started an evening stage from Redwood City to La Honda and Bellvale, the new post office station on the Bell Ranch.



John Poole

Operations in the oilfields there have attracted quite a number to that section, and Walter is determined to afford the public all traveling conveniences. The stages will run daily except Sunday."

The Redwood City Democrat reported on May 11, 1905: "Walter Knights has put on a new stage which leaves Palo Alto at noon, connecting with the stage from Redwood City at the Alpine for La Honda and Pescadero. The new route is established to accommodate travel from the College City and vicinity to the coast side."

The Democrat again reported on June 21, 1906: "Walter Knights, the enterprising stage driver, is taking steps to get his transportation business strictly up to date. Last week he purchased a Pierce-Arrow automobile of the latest pattern, which he will use in carrying passengers and mail between this city and Woodside. The machine has a double cylinder French motor of 20 horsepower and can easily develop a speed of 40 miles per hour."

The paper said on August 18, 1910: "Knights Stage Line between this city and Pescadero will shortly be taken off and thus will pass one of the pioneer institutions of the county. For over half a century, the stage has made its daily trips across the mountain to the pretty coast side resort, and thousands of passengers have enjoyed the scenic ride through the redwoods. The knockout blow was delivered when the Post Office Department took the mail service away from

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Mr. Knights and gave it to the Ocean Shore Railroad. While the people are being served more promptly, there are a large number of residents between Woodside and La Honda who will have no means of getting their mail, except by making a long journey to the post office."

On September 29, 1910, Walter Knights disposed of the stage line by selling it to J. C. Halliday of Point Arena. And thus the regular run from Redwood City to Pescadero ended.

After this point most of the "stage runs" were being done by automobiles acting almost like today's taxicabs.

### McEvoy - Lloyd Family

By John Edmonds

It is one of the most dramatic and beautiful plots in Union Cemetery, and its two hands joined in an endless handshake indicates an endless "shake" for the family members who are buried in this plot. There are very few families who come from different locations, meet in Redwood City and spend their lives in the Woodside/Redwood City area in entirely different occupations, then unite through marriage and become such friends.



Patrick McEvoy

Patrick Henry McEvoy was born in Sydney, Australia, on May 9, 1848, and he migrated with his parents to California in the fall of 1849. After a sixmonth sail aboard the ship Monterey, they arrived in

San Francisco. One year later they moved to the Carey Jones Ranch—later known as the Horace Hawes Ranch—which is now part of greater Redwood City. From this place, Patrick McEvoy attended the first school in Redwood City, a private one located on the northwest corner of what is now Dingee Park. Patrick finally graduated from the old school building on the island. He finished his education at Saint Mary's College in San Francisco (as announced in the Redwood City Democrat, August 11, 1910.)

Patrick McEvoy somehow met Elizabeth (Lizzie) Lloyd, and on November 29 1877, he married her at the home of her father and mother in the town of Searsville. The service was conducted by Reverend H. K. Jewett, and the supper was "a supper of grand triumph of gastronomy," as per the article in the Times-Gazette on December 8, 1877.

Elizabeth Lloyd was the eldest child of William and Jane Lloyd, having been born in Searsville in 1856. William was born April 25, 1823, in Montgomery Shire, England. In his early life in England, he was apprenticed to the blacksmith trade, an occupation he would pursue for the rest of his life. He arrived on the East Coast of the United States before the Gold Rush and plied his trade, but he headed for California and gold as soon as news of gold having been discovered reached him. He arrived in San Francisco in early 1852 and briefly worked before heading to Placer County. There he was a successful blacksmith, as well as in his hunt for gold. However, he came to San Mateo County in 1854 and settled in the town of Searsville where he married Jane Roberts. He engaged in both farming and blacksmithing. Six years later he moved to Redwood City. The couple had three daughters and one son.

When the William Lloyd family pulled up stakes at Searsville in 1886 and came to Redwood City, William purchased property known as "the old Billy Smith place," opposite the northwest corner of the courthouse block, from a Mrs. Smith. He resided there the rest of his life. William Lloyd died on February 14, 1895. He was buried in plot 28K in Union Cemetery. He was not the first to go to rest in this plot; his wife Jane predated him on June 11, 1891.

Patrick and Elizabeth Lloyd McEvoy lived in Redwood City, where Patrick was a member of the Board of Supervisors. He started his political career in 1892, winning a close election. He ran a second time in 1896 and again won by a narrow margin. Patrick lost the election in 1900, but in 1904 he won by the largest margin of votes in San Mateo County history.

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Patrick and Elizabeth moved from Redwood City to Menlo Park in 1920 and were residing there when they began considering a move to Oakland. The couple moved to Oakland in August 1923. On August 21 they were crossing Broadway and 12<sup>th</sup> streets when they were run over by a motor vehicle and killed. They were buried with their parents and children in plot 28K in Union Cemetery.



William Lloyd

Buried in plot 28K along with Patrick and Elizabeth McEvoy and William and Jane Lloyd are William J. McDonald, Lorraine V. McEvoy, William Henry McEvoy, Mary J. Townsend and Mildred J. Townsend.

### The Council of Chosen Friends

By John Edmonds

The first entry in the records is the organization of the Chosen Friends in December of 1880. The Times and Gazette reported, on December 11, 1880: "The council of Chosen Friends, the initial meeting of which was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, perfected its organization by was Harry Grimmenstein, the first Warden was W. E. Green, the first guard was T.J. Lynch and the first Sentry was A. Shafer. The trustees were: W. J. O'Shaughnessy, Michael Kriss and Jacob Spindler.

The organization took the name of "Fidelity Council......"

"The "Fidelity Council No. 17, of Chosen Friends installed their new officers on July 26, 1881: Albert H. Hanson, J. Spindler, Mrs. H. Grimmenstein, P. Wilson, Fred Beck, Fred Older, Edward A. Eikerenkotter, Claus Hadler. This council, though organized in November last year, now numbers over 80 members and is in a

most prosperous Condition financially and otherwise." Times and Gazette, July 30, 1881.

The San Mateo County Journal reported on March 16, 1882: "Redwood Council No. 17 of the Independent Order of Chosen Friends was instituted last Saturday evening at Germania Hall by Grand Councilor T. M. Cook of that organization. This council started into existence with 35 members and quickly grew to 80 members. The majority of these refused to remain with that council when it recently returned to its affiliation with the old order and have since been carried as members at large of the Independent Order. In organizing the new council they were joined by a number of others who have hitherto remained loyal members of Fidelity in all its changes of affiliation but finally leave it because they claim the assessments in the old order are 'altogether too frequent... The following officers were elected and duly installed by the Grand Councilor: John Solon, W. W. Hull, Mrs. Grimmenstein, H. Grimmenstein, Dr. E. Windele, Martin Kuck, P. Jamieson, M. Cronin, S. Walker, A. Toussaint, trustees: T. Shine, James Crowe and M. K. Doyle."

Following this entry the material on the Chosen Friends becomes much thinner. The organization was meeting in the building on Main Street that housed John Titas' blacksmith shop and is now recognized as the "Odd Fellows" building.

The final formal entry in the Redwood City Democrat of July 2, 1896: "The following officers of the Fidelity Council No. 17, Order of Chosen Friends, will be installed July 16<sup>th</sup>: M. Stelter, M. Hedge, H. H. Hurd, Henry Beeger E. Hedge, P. McKanna, J. Sullivan, P. B. Jamieson, Gevert Plump, Charles Hadler and A. Cook."

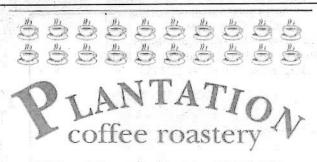
The last entry is a handwritten document by the Redwood City Democrat dated December 20, 1900, "Fidelity Council, organized in the 80s, has 29 members. Society fails.

#### Editor's Note

Thank you to the Redwood City Civic and Cultural Commission for their support.

We hope you enjoy the **Journal of Local Histor**y. Please send us a line at <a href="mailto:gsuarez@redwoodcity.org">gsuarez@redwoodcity.org</a> or call me, Gene Suarez, at 650-780-7098.

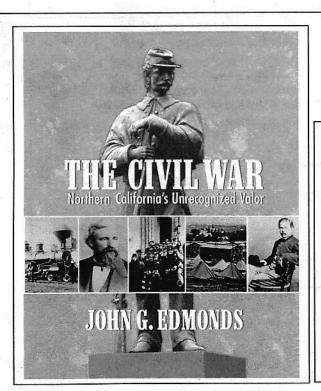
We welcome all of your comments and constructive criticism. Our next issue will appear in the Winter 2013. We all wish you a happy Fall.



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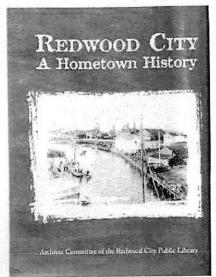
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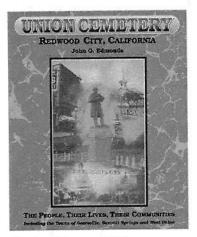
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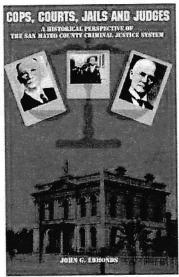


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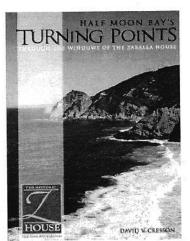


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