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Vol. 10
CARLMONT HISTORY
By
Russel Estep
From Enquirer-Bulletin
1991-1992

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CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Belmont has always tried to keep up with progress.

The first telephone was installed in the train depot in 1885. It had a crank and the crank must be turned to get "central" in San Mateo. The phone was a magneto type and people had "calls" such as three shorts and a long, or two "shorts."

Each subscriber, after that came to pass, had a sheet of paper with the calls of others who could be reached on the primitive line. When the phone rang, everyone listened. It was something like the TV networks we have now. People kept abreast of the goings-on by listening. When men came home from work in the evenings their first question was "Well, what happened today."

The cost to subscribers was about \$2.25 per month at first.

The telephone lines were strung on trees and power poles. The telephone line always had a hum.

When one house was on fire, the owners gave the telephone crank a turn, and before the house was completely engulfed by fire some neighbors would arrive to help. The first fire truck was purchased in 1936. There were many fires before this. Some of Belmont's oldest and finest homes went up in smoke, such as the Mezes home and the house where Mrs. Ralston lived at Carlmont.

The first telephone lines were uncovered wire, some of it not even copper. Any wire seemed to work well. Even baling wire was tried.

The first telephones were fastened onto the wall, at a height easy for the housewife to speak into.

Listening on the telephone was referred to as "rubbering," yet it was very popular and preceded television as a

diversion. What the neighbors said was often interesting.

Later, there were so many subscribers that numbers had to be given to subscribers and still later the central or relay stations had to add several operators to handle the calls.

Mr. William C. Ralston used a telegraph at his large home and no record can be found of where he installed a telephone very early.

After all, he died in 1875 and there was no telephone line yet that extended to Belmont.

Belmont's electricity was provided by the San Mateo Electric Company in 1895 according to old newspaper accounts. There soon were lights in the Emmett and Waltermire Store (pink building). This was sometime before citizens acquired the facility. They were still using kerosene lamps back then.

The lamps had to be filled weekly and their chimneys cleaned. It was discovered that the best, and easiest, way to clean chimneys was by the use of old newspapers. This allowed the glass to shine and the carbon deposits to disappear. The paper worked much better than cloth for this purpose.

Wicks had to be trimmed with scissors now and then to help keep the chimney clean. It was usually the chore of girls in Belmont homes to do this. Some became proficient and could clean, trim wicks, and refill lamps in record time.

Everyone celebrated though when electricity was installed in their homes. Soon, many quit using the iceman, and bought refrigerators. Life in Belmont caught up with that in big cities, and Belmont residents thought they had things very easy — like a continuous vacation.



Old timers in Belmont will remember the large white house on the west side of a short street that ran north and south, near Lyall Street in Belmont. The house had been the residence of Mr. C.R. Splivalo.

The house burned years ago, but here is an interesting item from the Redwood city Democrat of Nov. 11, 1913. "C.R. Splivalo, President of the Yosemite Flour Mills of San Francisco, and one of the oldest established mill operators in the State, died early yesterday. For many years he was a well-known capitalist, being a member of the San Francisco Grain Exchange, and the Chamber of Commerce. He was 64 years old."

The article goes on to tell that he was a director of the First National Bank and the San Mateo County Savings Bank and that he was a graduate of Santa Clara College.

An earlier article in the Redwood City Democrat dated Jan. 18, 1894 also verifies some of his background and of his house. The article reads, "The residence of C.R. Splivalo will be occupied by Mr. Marbie and family, during the absence of Mr. Splivalo and family in San Francisco. The gentleman is a son in-law of Adolph Sutro, the millionaire philanthropist."

Upon the death of Splivalo, his residence in Belmont became the California Sanitarium. Tubercular patients were treated there, as well as patients having other ailments. (I believe that he died in 1924.) I visited a patient there many years ago and discovered the old house had silver door knobs.

For some years, there were two tuber-

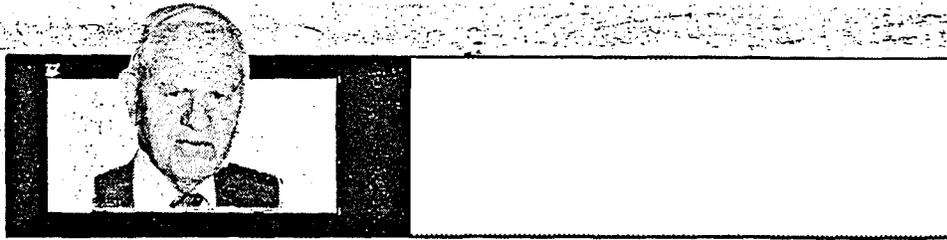
culosis sanitariums in Belmont. On June 12, 1924, articles of incorporation were recorded for the Howard Foundation. An article about it comes from the Redwood City Standard of June 12, 1924.

"Articles of Incorporation of the Charles S. Howard Foundation were this morning filed in the office of the County Clerk, Elizabeth M. Kneese of Redwood City. The Charles S. Howard Foundation was recently established by the wealthy San Francisco automobile man and Hillsborough resident for the purpose of building a free tuberculosis sanitarium near the California sanitarium at Belmont for the care and treatment of poor children afflicted with the white plague. Howard provided \$200,000 for the foundation and work is scheduled to start immediately on the construction of buildings."

The Howard Foundation buildings still survive, but the California Sanitarium has been replaced with apartment buildings. The good climate in Belmont has attracted other sanitariums which is why we have the Belmont Hills and the Hill Street sanitariums.

The Belmont Hills Sanitarium treats alcoholic and drug patients, while the convalescent hospital on Hill Street treats mainly elderly people. Both appear to be full all the time, and the word is that patients are well treated.

Our Belmont hospitals have a reputation for making life easier for thousands of people. We are glad these establishments are located here. When we become old we won't need to go far for treatment if it should be needed.





CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

When we travel to the east coast, we usually discover that many houses do not have a garage for their automobiles. In California, where our weather is better, everyone has a garage. We think our cars must be protected.

In earlier days even the eastern people had barns. They wanted to protect their horses, wagons and vehicles from the weather, and keep their hay dry.

William C. Ralston had a barn constructed immediately after moving to Belmont in 1864. It was a combined carriage house and stable for horses, with hay stored above. He found it satisfactory until it burned June 27, 1874. It had been built of wood hauled from Woodside. He resolved that this wouldn't happen again. His next barn would be constructed differently — from something that was fireproof.

He had workmen build a large stone barn for his carriages and valuable horses. The barn is still there. It has lasted since it was built in August 1874, according to old records noted in the San Mateo Gazette.

The large old barn was constructed of rocks and has an upstairs — now used for plays and musicals by College of Notre Dame.

The large lower section formerly held many expensive carriages and Ralston's valuable driving horses.

His groom took good care of his teams and he used them to race the trains between San Francisco and Belmont. Of course, the first train didn't travel very fast. They went via Visitation Valley to Colma. He usually changed his horses at Colma according to old records.

There do not seem to be any records of him harvesting hay on his acreage. It is likely that he purchased hay from farmers in San Carlos and San Mateo. However, some hay was harvested in the lower portion of Belmont years ago.

Hay balers weren't in use in those days so he must have had loose hay stored in the upper portion of his barn.

Much of the level portion of San Carlos remained a hay field

until after World War II.

Following Ralston's death, his valuable carriages were disposed of. It is probable that the beautiful enclosed carriage in the museum at College of San Mateo was owned by someone from Hillsborough — not Mr. Ralston.

When racing trains, the carriage must be light in weight and able to roll lightly and easily. He had several of these.

Hay balers were in use in early 1900s and local people

require large barns anymore for storing loose hay. Many built simple sheds for a few bales and to shelter their driving horse, or milk cow. These early balers usually required a horse that walked around and around to make the baler press hay.

Men pitched hay onto the platform and another man shoved it into the hay press. It was hard work, but they were young. They usually earned a dollar a day for 10 hours, and as inflation advanced they received \$3 per day.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur own the huge Ralston barn now. They use it for storage and upstairs, their theater students often produce interesting plays. Go sometime. You'll enjoy it. And you'll see Ralston's big barn. It's worth seeing.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

There have been different kinds of people living in Belmont almost since the first settlement. The first settlement was in what we call Twin Pines Park and early Indians had their camp there. They were of the Costano people.

They gradually died out and disappeared, as have other Indian tribes in California. The history class at University of California made much out of what they described as the "last Indian." They called him "Ishi" and he had lived near Mt. Lassen before scholars had him taken to Berkeley. You will find an interesting book about "Ishi" in most book stores. He died many years ago.

Newcomers to Belmont often ask why everyone isn't descended from the Spanish since it was they who had owned this area in 1795. The answer is that the Arguello family owned 34,200 acres and their rancho was so large that although there were squatters on it, the squatters were far apart.

In 1850, when the title was cleared for Mrs. Arguello, the names of people living on her land were Anglo, not Spanish. Pioneers had followed the gold rush miners and believed they had found good homesteads.

Probably the first person to become settled in Belmont was Charles Angelo. He built a small hotel in the middle of the road at the intersection of Old County Road and what became Ralston Avenue. An old advertisement in the Daily Pacific News announced his hotel being opened in "Waterview" — later Belmont.

In 1850, Sidney M. Mezes had a large house constructed in Belmont, which burned later. He had been Mrs. Arguello's attorney. His fee for clearing her titles was 15 percent of the large rancho, and he received Belmont, part of San Mateo, all of San Carlos, Redwood City, Atherton and Menlo Park. Having a choice of where to live, he chose Belmont as the best place.

There were soon several farms

established where the lakes are west of Belmont. Two of them were that of Christian Bollinger and Mr. Harrington.

The names from old records of Belmont pioneers list only persons of Anglo-Saxon origination. However, these early settlers didn't have anything for their entertainment and they began using an old Spanish custom following a wedding. It was considered a favor and honor to give newlyweds a "chivarie." This

meant friends would wait until the newlyweds' light went out and then the people would start banging on cans, shooting guns into the air, yelling and pounding on the house door. Anything to keep the newlyweds from going to sleep.

The newlyweds were expected to get up, open the door, invite the revelers in, threaten them to drinks, and allow them to dance until daybreak.

This old custom continued until newlyweds began to travel on honeymoon trips. Nowadays, they leave town for a while.



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Belmont has had two log cabins. One is in Twin Pines Park in back of the Police Department near the creek.

It is boarded up for its protection, but you can see its exterior. It consists of one room with a fireplace at one end.

Many people ask about its history. I can find none although old newspaper items say that it was brought in from La Honda during the depression in 1931. Many people ask why it hasn't been kept in repair, and why the windows were boarded up. Possibly, the city doesn't have extra money to do these things. However, it is hoped that someday money may be available so local people and visitors may see how early people lived.

I don't recall anyone living in the old log cabin, but during the Great Depression things were very rough. It is possible that people really did live in the cabin. They would have had an outside outhouse, and would have had to carry water from the large living

conditions at the time.

Belmont's other log cabin was owned by a member of the Pullman sleeping-car inventors. It used to be in a wooded area at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas.

An old newspaper item date in 1902, states that Sang Pullman would move to Belmont.

The Pullman family had purchased the old log cabin from Mrs. Hugh Hume. The item states that the location was on the corner opposite the Reid School.

Our Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors held a meeting in the old log cabin in 1952. I was there. The cabin had been well furnished by its new owner, Mrs. Annette Alexander. Mrs. Alexander was one of the directors of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce, and she seldom missed a meeting.

She had wanted to give the wooded corner to the city of Belmont, but citizens voted it down. The wooded corner was later sold to the Safeway Company,

although a portion was sold to the people of the Greek Church.

Both a church and a Safeway store were constructed on the lot. Many beautiful trees had to be cut to make space for the construction.

Mrs. Alexander owned her Alexander Sanitarium — now Belmont Hills Hospital. She had purchased the old log cabin and the wooded lot just for a weekend place, or recreation area in which to rest.

In later years, she had a chauffeur to drive her car. During a hard rainstorm while resting in the log cabin, he fell asleep. A log rolled out of the fireplace and set the place afire. Some beautiful antiques were lost but the chauffeur was able to escape the hot fire.

The Pullmans had their log cabin for use as a hunting lodge. Deer were plentiful.

There were other houses in Belmont in 1902 so it wouldn't be right to say Belmont grew from two log cabins to what we see now. Presently, nearly every vacant lot in Belmont has been built upon. Still, we occasionally hear people from large cities say they want to live in Belmont because they like country living.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

In many parts of the country the first settlers came and went, and many didn't stay long in one place. This seems not to have occurred in Belmont. For instance, old records tell the arrival time for some and dates of their deaths, while they were still here many years later.

One settler in the early 1850s was John Schmoll from Germany. One of his sons was Antone Schmoll, who stayed here when he reached adulthood. John Schmoll died here in 1903.

Mr. Schmoll was here so long that Schmoll Street was named for him. Much later, after his death, the street was renamed Sixth Avenue, so as to carry on numbered street names.

Mr. Schmoll, as well as Antone Schmoll, were farmers — probably west of Belmont where the lakes are now.

Mr. Schmoll married Caroline Sweigart, whose family was pioneers. Her family had settled in San Francisco, although she was born in Pittsburgh, Pa.

An old item in the Redwood City Standard dated June 8, 1921 tells of her passing away. She was getting old, for another item states that she had been born in 1835.

Another very early settler was Christian Bollinger. He crossed the plains in a covered wagon to California in 1852 and came to Belmont in 1854. He farmed west of our present city, where the lakes are. He established a large dairy and took milk, eggs, butter and cheeses to San Francisco twice each week. Old reports tell that his trips to San Francisco required a full day because the primitive road was so bad. There was deep mud in the winter, and deep dust in the summer.

Sometimes he butchered hogs, sheep and cattle and then arrived in San Francisco with a loaded wagon.

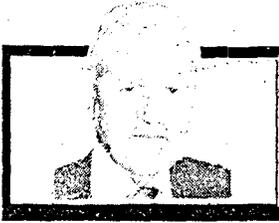
He also raised a vegetable garden and in the early fall, he took vegetables along to the hotels. There always seemed to be a ready and waiting market.

Another pioneer settler was Mr. Harrington, who came west in 1853. He too settled west of Belmont where the lakes are. He also farmed and lived on the farm until his death.

All of the early pioneers weren't farmers though. Charles Angelo was a hotel operator and he built a small hotel in the middle of the road where Ralston Avenue and Old County Road cross. Travel was light and he wasn't bothered by traffic in 1850.

Several Janke families settled in Belmont in the early days. Belmont streets were named for Schmoll and Janke. Both Schmoll and Janke streets have been renamed, however, as was Johnson Street. Johnson Street was located along the railroad tracks and was absorbed when El Camino Real was moved west of the railroad tracks in 1918. Janke Street was a short street running north from Ralston Avenue, between the Bay View Shopping Center and El Camino Real. It too disappeared.

Although we remember these long lost street names, some people think our city should place markers where the streets were so that future residents may know these pioneers are remembered.



CARLMONT HISTORY

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In Belmont's early days, when Mezes and other early settlers lived in this area, some raised cattle and hogs. The animals ran loose for there were no fences except around the houses. These cattle and hogs intermingled with those of Mission Dolores, and the big Stanford ranch south of here. Identification was necessary. The livestock had to be branded and earmarked.

Most of the small ranchers used brands such as their initials. Large ranchers used all sorts of symbols. This seems to have been the same elsewhere.

In Shasta County, Harry Hunt had started his cattle spread when he was a young man. He didn't know if he would succeed, so he chose a brand of "zero." All his livestock were branded on the left side with a big "0." After he owned 15,000 acres of good land and 1,000 cattle, people said he didn't have a cow long enough for all the zeros his assets entitled him to.

Hunt tided at age 54, still using a single "0."

Some early ranchers used

dewlaps to identify their livestock more easily. Dewlaps consisted of a piece of the animal's skin cut so it hung below the head. Hunt's was a piece of skin about four inches long below the jaw.

Other ranchers had hanging strips of the animal's hide hanging in various places such as the brisket. Some had two strips hanging about four inches apart. Others had single strips cut so they opposed one another.

When an animal was quite a distance away, the owner or their cowboys were able to cut their animals out of herds in very short order.

No record appears to be available about the Stanford, Arguello or Mezes marks or brands. Mission Dolores might have used the letter "G" for God. Stanford might have the letter "S" and Mezes the letter "M."

There's no doubt they each marked their animal's ears. Nowadays most people haven't seen ear marks. Livestock now are kept in fenced pastures and corrals. They don't run loose anymore.

A well-known mark used to be a "crop, swallow fork and underhack in the left ear, and a swallow fork in the right."

A swallow fork used to be a V, and the crop was when the tips of the V were cut off, leaving blunt ends. The underhack was merely a half-inch slit in the lower edge of the animal's ears.

There were various other ear marks as well, including the owner's brand, and they were registered in Sacramento, as well as in the county seat where the animals were being kept.

It is possible that some old cattle brands are at the San Mateo Museum at College of San Mateo.

The ranchers and their cowboys used to mark their animals, and then wipe their knives on their overalls. The animals didn't become infected. A veterinarian explained that cattle can stand this operation with no ill effects, unlike humans who would surely land in a hospital.

Occasionally old-time ranchers and cowboys were seen tossing mountain oysters into the branding-iron fire. When they were cooked, the men sometimes ate them. One man's wife had nine children. That, though, probably had nothing to do with it. They worked long hours and probably were hungry.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Everyone needs recreation now and then. Some areas are different than others. In Belmont, the citizens have always had a wide choice. Some travel to the mountains, while others go to the beach. Some travel to San Francisco or San Jose to see plays or listen to concerts. But it hasn't always been so easy to travel there.

In the late 1800s, people first had to catch their horse, put the collar on him, then the harness, then hitch him up to either a buggy or spring wagon. It would take people hours to go where they wanted to go.

Horses usually walked about three miles an hour. If they trotted, they traveled about six miles an hour. On the way the horse might lose a shoe which would slow them down as they limped along.

Going to San Francisco or San Jose took most of the day. When the railroad came in 1863, the trip could be made in about two hours in either direction because trains traveled slowly.

In the early 1900s, when street car Number Forty began operating from San Mateo to San Francisco, the street car ride was a diversion in itself. It went through Visitation Valley and Colma. Another street car ran down to San Jose from Palo Alto through prune orchards.

When Belmont residents wanted to go to Lake Tahoe they had to take a train from Oakland Pier. Having crossed the San Francisco Bay on a ferry, they boarded an enormous train ferry that took them across the upper bay at Port Costa to Benecia. Some people left the cars and walked forward to see the engine. When the train ferry docked at Benecia, the sections of the train

had to be re-connected. Then the train would proceed toward Sacramento and the mountains ahead.

The ride through the snow-covered Sierras was relaxing and enjoyed by many before the turn of the century.

Upon arriving at Truckee, a horse-drawn bus was waiting to take the people to the Tahoe Tavern at the north end of Lake Tahoe. There they would be transported to the nearby ski slopes by horse-drawn vehicles. In the evening, they sat near a large stone fireplace in the hotel lobby and visited with others.

Some Belmont residents often went to Big Basin for relaxation. They traveled the dusty road in horse-drawn vehicles and enjoyed the trip.

And some Belmont citizens liked to travel on the train to Santa Cruz. They enjoyed riding through the dense redwoods, sitting on the sand and watching the waves. The pier was shorter back then and most walked the length of it.

Living in Belmont, however, was also very relaxing and everyone enjoyed being here. Travel on El Camino Real was light and only a few wagons and the very early automobiles passed through town each day. Occasionally, the few who had saved their money went to Hawaii. The trip required seven days. Going and coming took up most of their vacation time and so they didn't have much time for the beach. But they enjoyed the boat ride.

Belmont people have always known how to relax. Nowadays some fly to Europe over a weekend. And they can go to Hawaii in five hours. Things have changed in Belmont.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Many people from Belmont have probably visited the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and have seen the letter written by President George Washington to the War Department in 1783. He writes about witnessing a flight of a balloon coming there from Baltimore. His letter states that he believed air flights might have great possibilities for our country in case of war.

A century later, an old item from the San Mateo Times-Gazette dated Feb. 28, 1885 tells about another balloon flight. That balloon came from San Francisco to Belmont and landed in our bare hills west of town. This item states that it created considerable excitement.

This balloon had lifted off from Woodward's Gardens where we now find Golden Gate Park. It had two occupants — Professor F.T. Martin and Mr. W. Hart, who had said that the highest height they reached was 8,500 feet. The balloon was named "Hercules."

After this balloon flight, it was many years before another air flight occurred in Belmont. The

next one was "almost" an air of flight, however.

Mr. Fred Johnson was a youth following the turn of the century and he and some other boys stripped down one of the very early automobiles. All that was left was the frame and wheels.

Fred had told of coasting down from Cipriani Boulevard almost to El Camino Real on the vehicle. He said one boy stood at Alameda de las Pulgas to stop any traffic while he took an extremely fast ride. He reported that a highway patrolman clocked him at more than 40 miles per hour. He had a feeling that his vehicle was flying. If it had wings it might have lifted off Ralston Avenue.

A few years before World War II, Belmont had an airport. It was located where we now find Sterling Downs. The graveled strip ran east and west. Many private planes used our strip but no commercial flights came to Belmont.

One airplane owner taught flying lessons and advertised a free flight or one flight lesson for the winner of a contest encouraging

people to learn to fly. I won the contest and the plane owner took me and my family for a 20-minute ride.

When World War II started, all private planes were quickly grounded. The little airport disintegrated and an army camp was constructed in the area. Many soldiers were stationed in Belmont, and an electronics school was established in the former Belle-Monte Club House, which is now our Congregational Church. Following the war, Andy Oddstedt built homes over the area and the Mae Nesbit School was constructed on the site. It's called Sterling Downs now.

We have the nearby San Carlos Airport where hundreds of private planes are kept. Many Belmont people fly from that airport for vacations and for business. Charter flights are always available.

San Francisco International Airport is also only nine miles from Belmont and easily accessible. The San Francisco Airport was preceded by Mills Field which had been named for J. Ogden Mills, who lived on the hilltop in what later became Millbrae.

If President George Washington came back, he would surely be amazed at how far flying has advanced since he witnessed the balloon flight in 1783.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Newspapers recently told of a man's body that had been frozen in ice for 4,000 years. This happened in Europe, and the news item mentioned that he had 12 ar-

rows. Presumably the wood might have been decayed, yet the arrow heads survived. The man's face could be recognized and he looked in photographs very much like modern man of today. This was a wonderful discovery.

Most people in Belmont think

of the Arguello family, who owned this area in 1795, as being too far removed to have left anything from so many years ago. Yet, about a block north of San Carlos Avenue on the east side of Cedar Street is a very old house that was built there for the Arguello family. People live in it and are very comfortable. It is where Cedar Street bends.

Across the street the houses are set back a little, and this was the location of one of the Arguello barns. San Carlos Avenue became the Arguello driveway down to Old County Road which was El Camino Real in early days.

If we look around, we will discover traces of the early settlers who were here years ago. For instance, our Belmont Canyon Road used to be the road to the coast. It was narrow, winding and very steep in places. Yet, horse-drawn wagons traveled it for many years.

Horse-drawn stage coaches traveled El Camino Real from San Jose to San Francisco and changed horses at Colma. They stopped to water their horses and to let passengers stretch where a plaque is set into the side of a parking garage just south of Mills Hospital in San Mateo. We hardly know the creek exists now a days for it is covered over. Its start is near the dam that holds water in Crystal Springs Reservoir.

In addition to the William C. Ralston house, his irrigation lake still exists. He had it built about 1873 to irrigate his field. He died in August 1875.

We call the lake Water Dog Lake. It is in the small valley south of Ralston Avenue, and behind the book publishing company property far out on Ralston Avenue. There is no guard posted, and children are warned with signs to use caution when visiting the area. Rattle snakes have also been killed there so it really pays to keep the eyes open.

In early times, Belmont was covered with brush and many early settlers had trees planted. However, the Oaks were here already and some large ones still remain.

The eucalyptus trees along the railroad tracks in San Carlos were started from sprouts brought from Australia before Ralston's death in 1875. They are large now, and many have been removed to protect the railroad when hard winds come up in the winter.

If we look around us, we can find things from early Belmont. They are here to be found just as the Rosetta Stone was found in Europe, which is now in the British Museum, as well as those books of the Bible that were found in caves in the Holy Land.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

If we are awakened in a small town, while traveling by roosters crowing, we realize that we are in a rural area. If we want to purchase something after a store opens, we think it probably does not have what we need. This is how it used to be in Belmont.

Only 25 years ago the roosters crowed in Belmont. There were so many complaints that the Belmont City Council appointed Alvin L. Penna as chair of the rooster committee. He was to call the police after identifying where the noisy rooster was.

Al Penna's appointment lasted several years. The Lions Club used to joke with him about it, and then fine him for sleeping when the roosters crowed. Of course the fines were a joke, as the money collected was used to help our Boy Scouts.

There were many families in Belmont who raised chickens. One man raised them commer-

cially while others raised them for family food and the eggs.

The man who raised chickens commercially used to sell hatching eggs for as much as \$5 per dozen — quite a price in those days. It's probably equal to 20 times that much now.

Presently, there are no chickens raised in Belmont, as far as I can determine. At least we don't hear roosters crowing in the mornings.

Eggs used to sell for 50 cents a dozen. If some early citizens didn't have chickens, they usually wished they did.

There is really pleasure in traveling by a small village where chickens crow. But that doesn't happen often because most motels and inns buy their eggs. They would rather do that than provide chicken feed and gather the eggs.

Several kinds of chickens were raised in Belmont. There were red, black, speckled and white

chickens. They each had brand names, but I can't remember them all. They were Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, White Rocks, Silver Lace Wyandottes and others.

Even some turkeys were being raised. However, their "gobble-gobbles" didn't wake our citizens. While the noise was occasionally loud, it didn't usually occur very early in the morning as did the rooster crowings.

One man was in the commercial chicken business in a big way. He had more than 3,000 chickens. However, on Sept. 6, 1927 a fire occurred and all his chickens were destroyed. Even his house barn and chicken house burned. He was also burned in the fire and several weeks were required for his recovery.

If someone started raising chickens again in Belmont, they would receive a citation for doing it. Penna, our first and only "chicken inspector," passed away several years ago. The chicken raiser would have neighbors to deal with.

Our city isn't so rural anymore. Our city has grown up. Belmonters like to sleep.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Before the Bayshore freeway was built Belmont citizens had only narrow El Camino Real to travel on. El Camino Real was first a single lane and later widened to two lanes. Then the two lanes were paved. That was adequate for a long time. But, even then, the state's highway engineers were studying an alternate route along the bay.

The new Bayshore freeway construction followed the pattern of the earlier El Camino Real: one lane and then two lanes. Almost from the beginning, it was well traveled. Then in the late 1920s it was widened to three lanes. This was impractical, for many lives were soon lost in accidents. When it was widened to four lanes, it required many tons of fill dirt. Some fill came from a quarry west of Belmont, beyond the crossing of the Spring Valley Lakes, on the right-hand side of the road. Dozens of trucks hauled the red-rock dirt down Ralston Avenue. Spills occurred and Belmont citizens protested.

Soon, the City Council ordered canvas covers to be placed over the loads before they came down Ralston Avenue. Citizens then found that so many trucks were traveling on Ralston Avenue that they couldn't use the street themselves as the trucks were running only a half minute apart and sometimes less. The City Council therefore required the gravel trucks to be spaced a reasonable distance apart so Ralston Avenue could be used by local people.

One gravel truck lost its brakes west of Cipriani Boulevard and began to roll down hill. The

driver did all he could to stop it. However, just east of Alameda de las Pulgas the road clearance was blocked by other cars and the driver guided this gravel truck into a large tree on the right side of the street.

His truck then caught fire and he died in the accident. His load of gravel then slid forward, putting out the fire and burying him. It all happened very quickly.

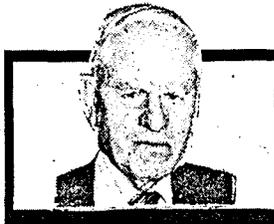
After that gravel was hauled from Red Rock Hill, which some people called Newhall Hill for a family living at its south end. A road from Old County Road to Red Rock Hill was soon named Quarry Road — the name it still retains. The entire hill was used as fill for widening the Bayshore freeway to four lanes. Presently, several factories are operating along both sides of Quarry Road.

We traveled El Camino Real into San Francisco via Colma and then down through Visitation Valley, and Mission Street before the Bayshore freeway was built.

The first part of the highway was built through South San Francisco and Brisbane. As we passed Brisbane, we traveled up a hill. In the late 1920s a heavily loaded truck lost the brakes and coasted very fast down that hill and demolished a service station at the bottom near Brisbane's entrance road.

Fortunately, the station operator had walked next door for a cup of coffee in the nearby coffee shop. Had he been at his station, he might have been killed.

He claims that he hasn't missed a church service since



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Old records and historical articles tell of early men getting together in groups to settle matters and to enjoy each other's company. Modern men do this and call their groups the Lions Club, Kiwanis or Rotary. Women also have clubs such as Business Women and Soroptomists.

Each has clubs in Belmont which are well attended. The clubs raise money to help the community by sponsoring projects and by fining members at the meetings who speak out of turn, or spill something on their neckties. Soup on the necktie would bring the "Tail Twister" or "Fine Master" running. It's all in fun and some meetings become hilarious.

Some of the men play tricks on others and some tell jokes about their friends. Presently, with business slow club meetings are more quiet. Years ago, one of the Belmont old-timers, Ed Vallerga, arranged for the Fire Department to drag a fire hose through the dining room when a business meeting was going on at the old Belmont Casino.

After the hose had been rolled up and put away, the men relaxed. George Tiegel thought the stunt was particularly amusing. Most of the others remained sober, feeling fortunate that there really was no fire.

Another old-timer member who always had a good time and often a laugh was Lloyd Malech, owner of the Malech Engineering Company. He, too, has passed away. He and George Tiegel often brought considerable amusement to our meetings.

The Belmont Lions Club recently voted to purchase a large radar screen to be placed on busy streets. The screen will show how fast cars are going. Figures are about a foot high and easily read by a passing driver. When drivers discover they are exceeding the speed limit, they will usually slow down. The \$800 screen will be in place in about 60 days and will be moved regularly to where it is needed.

The Lions Club has also purchased new eyeglasses for several students who couldn't afford them.

The Lions here are members of the Lions Eye Foundation and have paid for eye surgery for several Belmont people who couldn't afford the surgery.

The club is planning to have a booth at the November Arts and Crafts Faire in Twin Pines Park. The club hopes it can raise money to help a distressed family in Belmont.

While Lions' meetings are often amusing and good times are had by the members, their work is serious and their aim is to assist Belmont and its citizens.

Many years ago, George Tiegel played what he thought would be a funny trick on Lloyd Malech. He obtained Lloyd's photo and had it enlarged so it would fit the hole in a toilet seat. At a meeting, he told Lloyd that he had a gift for him and handed Lloyd the framed photo. Lloyd looked out the window and smiled. Then the "Tail Twister" came running and fined George \$5.00. Lloyd turned back and laughed and laughed, and then accepted his "gift." His photo was framed by a toilet seat.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

When Lewis and Swift purchased land here on Nov. 12, 1887 from Sidney Mezes, they didn't find Belmont as we see it now. Both Mr. Ralston and Mr. Sharon had passed away and the Ralston property was up for grabs. El Camino Real was still east of the railroad tracks and Johnson Street was where we find El Camino Real now. Johnson Street was an unpaved, single-lane road.

An old record from a title company states that Mr. Swift would soon build a residence on the slope above the railroad grounds. Much later, the area was subdivided and became known as the "Swift Tract."

A later item tells that Mr. Swift's house was completed and was being painted white. The article about it also states that it was quite an imposing structure.

Mr. Swift was a San Francisco lumber dealer and, apparently in early days, his partner was Mr. Lewis. There isn't much further news about Mr. Lewis.

While the old El Camino Real was rough and narrow and traffic was light, people still passed through Belmont. One who came and settled here was Robert Mills. He had come from England and he became a good friend of William C. Ralston. He was born in 1831, according to old records. He was first designated as a farmer after he purchased 215 acres adjoining some of the

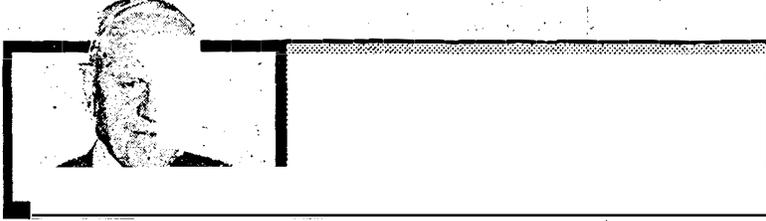
Mezes land at the north end of Belmont. Later, records indicate that he had become a glazier. Likely, with so much land, he was both farmer and glazier.

When Mr. Ralston had the Palace Hotel built, Mr. Mills was given a contract to furnish all the window glass. The hotel was large and he must have accumulated considerable money from the contract. Other old items tell that he built a large house. It was two stories and he had a veranda in front on the bay side.

Robert Mills died in 1897 and soon after his death, old records state that a lawsuit was filed. Someone claimed that he had fathered two children and they came forward wanting a portion of his estate. Mrs. Mills' first husband had been Lemuel F. Murray, who was said to have been a well-to-do gentleman. When Murray passed away, Mr. Mills married his widow.

In researching old records about Belmont, some interesting things turn up. The impression gained is that our very early citizens were very normal and not unlike people from other areas. We should be glad our early citizens were what they were and that our city had such a good start.

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Spanish provinces such as An-



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

When talking with other people on my ham radio, they often ask about Belmont. They ask how large Belmont is and they want to know what the people do here. I tell them that we have factories, here, but that some people commute to San Jose and to San Francisco.

I believe our largest factory is the Dalmo Victor company, started by Tim Moseley during World War II.

Mr. Moseley lived in Hillsborough in the huge Carolands mansion — suitable pad for a successful man. It has 99 rooms and a new book is out about its features. The book is available from the San Mateo County Historical Association.

There are other factories here. Tiegel Manufacturing Company on Bragato Road manufactures stogie battery assembly machines

which were invented by George Tiegel. He passed away and his two sons, Ralph and Eric, manage the company now.

Both men graduated from Stanford University and have engineering degrees. I have been told that their company also manufactures other items developed by these bright men. Eric is a past president of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce.

Then there is Wilbur Harbold Machine Works, which is booming. The business manufactures gears of all sizes and types.

The city of Belmont also has Oracle Corporation. It has become so large that it has expanded into Redwood Shores, although it still has hundreds of employees in Belmont.

Belmont is fortunate to have at least two large publishing houses. Both publish textbooks, but not

fiction. One is located on Fifth Avenue and the other out on the hilltop in west Belmont above Water Dog Lake. Each publishes different textbooks from what the other company publishes.

When the Wadsworth Publishing Company broke ground at its first building, many Belmont people were there. At the ground breaking, company President Richard Ettinger was to hold a shovel and toss some dirt so his picture could be taken. Just as he tossed the dirt, the Belmont wind happened to blow very strongly. Dust flew over Mr. Ettinger who just laughed and later had his best suit cleaned.

Several years later when his company business had been built, he retired and moved to Newport Beach. He spends his retirement days sailing his large yacht.

While he was here, he was very active in the Chamber of Commerce, and seldom missed a meeting.

Belmont has other manufacturing companies and it's too bad there aren't more. Manufacturers help Belmont's tax base.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Christmas is coming and most Belmont people will have a Christmas tree and exchange gifts with their families. Some in Belmont, however, won't be able to celebrate as most of us do. They are the people living under culverts, and sleeping outdoors in the bushes along the railroad tracks.

Most of those folks are homeless and all do not have jobs. Some are probably too lazy to search for a job. Others do not have any skills so jobs aren't easy to come by.

A few seem to have just given up and don't look for work anymore.

All have grocery carts to store their possessions.

Newcomers in Belmont weren't here to see Belmont during the Great Depression. Thousands couldn't find work and went from place to place looking. Freight trains passing through town usually had several hundred men riding in box cars. Most were looking for a job — any job.

Belmonters, generally, weren't among this group because they were established. Some worked locally or had a business, while others commuted to San Francisco. People who lived in Belmont didn't feel the depression like others did.

Work was scarce. In the central valley near Bakersfield, we saw people picking cotton. Cotton is light and the picker's sacks were large. I once asked a man how much money he could make and his reply was, "If I work very hard and fast I can fill my large sack in 10 hours." He said he was paid \$1.50 per hundred. A full sack usually weighed that much, but it would have been difficult in the afternoon to drag such a load along the cotton row as it was picked.

There wasn't much inflation in Belmont during the depression. People could get a loaf of bread for 10 cents and sometimes for only 8 cents. Milk cost as much as 10 cents a quart.

Prunes were raised where the Carlmont High School stands,

and some local youths picked prunes. They received 10 cents per box for picking 25 pounds. Boxes were usually of that size.

There were not any food stamps such as the poor receive now and also no relief checks. People in other places struggled.

Ranchers only received 5 cents a pound for beef cattle but most raised good gardens.

Unhappily, girls who finished school and couldn't find work sometimes reverted to prostitution. Belmont had several places where they worked such as The Vans and the old red hotel on Old County Road. However, these were not local girls, they were reportedly from other places.

People we called "tramps" were seen walking along El Camino Real with a rolled pack on their backs.

We appear to be far above a real depression, and we do not see walking tramps. Last Christmas, I saw a homeless man pushing a grocery cart along El Camino Real with a small Christmas tree protruding from the loaded cart. He would probably have his Christmas under a culvert.

As he pushed his grocery cart along, he called to me, "Have a Merry Christmas!" I gave him a dollar and my lunch bag. He left Belmont smiling.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

When towns have their beginning, they are often just a few buildings along one side of a road. Then someone builds across the road and soon there is a settlement.

Belmont had a different beginning. We had two roads and our town was built between them.

There was the El Camino Real that the Padres used in 1769. There is a marker at the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue which shows how the Padres turned toward the coast and then proceeded toward the ocean. Our Old County Road was the original El Camino Real until 1918, when it was moved west of the railroad tracks.

Belmont's other historic road is the Alameda de las Pulgas. The Padres used it during their exploration of California on their way north toward San Francisco (which was built later on).

The name "Alameda de las Pulgas" wasn't kept by all towns the road passed through. Different names were given to por-

tions of it both in Burlingame and Palo Alto.

We should be proud that our city has retained the strange name. What other town in the world has a street named "Avenue of the Fleas?"

The street hasn't always been a straight route through town. Up until about twenty years ago the street jogged around the military academy at the intersection with Ralston Avenue. The Alameda turned south where the Bank of America is located today and then returned to where it is now which is about where the mortuary is situated.

Before the sale of the academy's football field to Almon Roth, the street was moved westward to its present location.

Roth built the shopping center and some people claim the shopping center is now the center of Belmont. Still others say it is Safeway.

Some want the large Safeway store downtown enlarged and

possibly turned facing El Camino Real. But others point out the huge Safeway store on El Camino Real in San Mateo hasn't made that area a center of San Mateo.

Who knows? Whatever is done will help Belmont's tax base. Any improvements will make our city look better.

Over the years Belmont has seen constant change and likely this will continue. For instance it seems that only a short time ago there was no bus service in Belmont. And now we see busses everywhere.

Belmont was started in 1850 when Charles Angelo built a tiny hotel in the middle of the road at the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue.

There wasn't much travel at that time and perhaps Angelo didn't have a shovel. He used the most clear spot he could find.

Old records say he didn't operate the hotel very long, and that he went to Victoria, B.C. he was jailed for embezzling \$10,000. Perhaps his little Belmont hotel hadn't been very profitable.

Anyway, we are glad he started Belmont. After he left, our town was called "Angelo Corners." It was later renamed "Waterview" and then finally "Belmont."



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

One day when an English gentleman came into my office, a local house painter strolled in for a notary. The two visited while I did the notary. The Englishman asked how things were with the dairy business. I listened as the amused house painter told the Englishman that he didn't deliver milk, that he painted houses. The painter was wearing white bib overalls and a white cap.

The Englishman smiled, and noted that in England milk was delivered in glass bottles. I spoke up and told the Englishman that that was how it used to be here. The Englishman smiled and said that this was his first trip to America. He said that in England a person dressed in accordance with his work and that he could tell immediately what people did for a living by how they were dressed.

We had a very interesting discussion. In listening to him, I found that in our country it was much the same. Workmen here also have distinctive clothing.

Carpenters used to wear a white canvas bib overall, a white cap and heavy work shoes. They pulled the canvas overalls over their blue jeans, thus giving them more protection from injuries.

During World War II all work had to be done in a hurry. Carpenters, for example, discarded their overalls and began wearing a heavy leather belt that had a hammer loop and large nail pockets. They still wear this belt and contractors think their men can produce more.

In other lines of work, we always find nurses dressed in white with small white caps on the back of their heads. Priests always have their collars on backwards and are easily identified. Laborers wear the blue jeans, although they often are so poor that they wear whatever they have.

There is a dress code expected of attorneys and real estate men. They must always wear a tie. Who would trust a slouchy attorney or a slouchy realtor?

Dentists usually wear a white

coat in their offices. Optometrists don't appear to have a dress code.

Policemen and firemen wear blue uniforms as do street car conductors and train conductors. Each wears a cap giving their identity number.

Service managers in car dealerships and garages wear long white coats. Mechanics wear coveralls.

In London, I noticed a limousine with a well-dressed man in the back seat wearing a derby hat. When I asked the Englishman in my office about this, he replied that the man must have been a judge or a member of Parliament.

In our country, the wearing of stove-pipe hats such as Mr. Lincoln wore lasted until the mid 30s. President Franklin Roosevelt was photographed wearing one at his inauguration. He looked very distinctive.

During the Great Depression, however, people didn't think favorably about those above them, whether financially or socially. Wearing of the stove-pipe hats was discontinued by Roosevelt. Following this, old photographs do not show anyone wearing one, especially in our country.

Here, all people are presumed to be equal or at least they were created to be equal.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by *Russ Estep*

Old records from 1821 to 1850 tell of many squatters on land in what became Belmont and San Carlos. Most couldn't be persuaded to move on. Some of them started raising livestock such as cattle and hogs. The animals ran loose and ranged over the countryside. Squatters made their own living — the cattle eating grass and the hogs acorns.

Some people have asked what the early people did with their garbage. Most burned what they could in their wood-burning stoves. The rest of it was tossed to their dogs. What the dogs couldn't eat was picked up and tossed over the yard fence for the hogs.

Their homes and yards were kept clean, although there were no garbage men yet. The pickups came much later.

As we look back on how these people lived, we might think they had a simple life. Yet, much to

the contrary, their lives were strenuous and difficult.

Their most relaxing time came during the evenings when they sat by their fireplaces. They occasionally burned some of the waste in the fireplaces, but usually it was burned in the kitchen stove. Otherwise the newspapers would pile up and various items would be in the way.

Most had a metal barrel outdoors for burning waste items. The use of these trash burners continued until only five years ago. Some people were careless and didn't place a coarse screen on top and sparks flew out. Some fires were started by trash burners. They were outlawed a few years ago and fires from this source were eliminated.

Earlier, people in Belmont burned trash in open fires now and then. Some fires also were started as a result of this.

People sometimes left trash where they camped in the moun-

tains. Large fires were occasionally started from this. Even the early Indians went away from their campfires leaving mortars and pestles. Some of these can be viewed at the Belmont Museum in Twin Pines Park, which is open each Saturday afternoon, and is well worth a visit.

Belmont used a trash dump across the Bayshore Freeway for years and years. The Japanese have built in the area and don't seem to have had a problem with the dump site. Almost everything imaginable was tossed there.

Individuals also buried trash in their yards for many years — any way to dispose of the trash.

Presently, Browning-Ferris Industries picks up our garbage and trash and takes it to their dump site east of Half Moon Bay. The area is known as "Ox Mountain."

The population is increasing and in a century, Half Moon Bay will have expanded considerably. Possibly, after the entire area has been filled, a subdivision of Half Moon Bay will be on the site. It may be known as the "Browning-Ferris Subdivision" with deluxe condominiums and homes built all over it.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Cities which are incorporated are run like corporations. There is a mayor, city manager, treasurer and city clerk. These people usually listen to their city council and some big decisions occasionally occur. We often hear about these individuals — except for the treasurer who rarely receives any publicity. Yet the position is important and the right person must be elected to the job.

Belmont was incorporated in 1926, but it didn't stick right away because of the lawsuit by the man who owned the area where we find Carlmont High School. He claimed the city had taken in his property without his wishes. He sued to get it out of Belmont.

The case was settled in 1929 and Belmont stayed "born." One of the early treasurers was John Berringer. He seemed to think there was too much work, so he resigned after serving a short time.

Our town was very small and there were only a few city employees. Some people wondered why Berringer had accepted the job. Anyway, he did

his work well while he was here and when he left, many citizens were very sorry to see him go.

Our next treasurer was Harold F. McNeill. Harold stayed here several years and old news items tell us that he did his work well. He was respected and stayed as treasurer for several years.

The next person, a Mrs. Manning, served Belmont as treasurer for a long time. She kept her books correct and always had a kind word for people who happened to enter her City Hall office. Things ran very smoothly under her watchful eyes. She was the mother of Robert Manning who was a Belmont Realtor for many years. His office was in the Carlmont Village Shopping Center. It appears that he is now retired because we don't see him around town very often. He is probably out playing golf.

Mrs. Manning was replaced several years ago by Mrs. Jean Zucca. Mrs. Zucca is our present treasurer and is doing a good job. People like and respect her, and she keeps the city books in order.

She is an excellent city treasurer and Belmont is fortunate to have her.

This brings us up to the present with our treasurers, but let's take a look at our city clerks. We have had several.

First there was Ed Hannibal. Then we had several more through the years. Catherine Hearstner served Belmont for many years. She lived at the corner of Waltermire and El Camino Real, across from the Safeway store. Many years ago, she had her home jacked up and our city library was on the first level. The library remained there for several years until the city had enough money to have a library building constructed. It is on Alameda de las Pulgas near the shopping center. Someone else now rents the lower part of the home Catherine had. She passed away sometime ago.

Then James McLaughlin took over as city clerk. He did a good job and was well respected. He actually had time to write poetry. His poetry was especially good, and many of his poems were bound into a hard cover book.

When he retired, Dorothy Hall was elected city clerk. She is the clerk at this time and is well liked and is serving our city well.

The city clerks and city treasurers in Belmont have been outstanding. We are fortunate to have these top people watch over our town.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

The intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue saw Belmont's earliest business activity. It was where the old Belmont Hotel stood. It was painted red and for many years it was a landmark.

The hotel was condemned in 1949 and torn down. Later, it was

replaced by a business building which was painted the same shade of red. Adjoining the old hotel had been the barn with a hay loft. It, too, was the color red, and had been where horses were kept and carriages placed.

An article in the Alta California dated Nov. 10, 1862 tells of a

hotel being sold and a new owner taking over. He was enthusiastic about his purchase and his advertisement states that his hotel was prepared to provide "everything" anyone might wish for. He describes a group of items and says his hotel can corral livestock and provide feed for them at reasonable prices.

There were other buildings near the intersection of old County Road and Ralston Avenue, but the very first appears to have been the Angelo Hotel, built in 1850 by Charles Angelo. It burned Dec. 22, 1866, according to an item in the San Mateo Gazette. It was soon replaced, and as Belmont grew it was moved south of the road. It was later added onto and the larger building again burned and then another new building replaced it. The present building is the Opportunity Shop.

The Redwood City Democrat, dated March 19, 1903, tells about Belmont contractor P.A. Roussel building a large store for Mr. Emmett, who later became a partner with Mr. Waltermire. This was the large pink building, which still stands as an antique store east of the railroad tracks.

Belmont had begun to grow. Mr. Hammerson built a blacksmith shop on the east side of Old County Road, south of the intersection. He also built his house beside it.

Belmont's children were in need of a school because classes were held in a house for a while. So the people got together and built Belmont's first school on Old County Road. Children from San Carlos as well as Belmont attended. Two individuals who were over 80 years old, who attended this school, Doris Vannier and Fred Johnson, and they still reside in Belmont.

Adjacent to the Waltermire and Emmett Store is the little blue concrete building. It was built to be the "Grand Saloon" and was famous for its liquors for many of the early years.

Farther north on Old County Road was the old Belmont Casino. Good meals were served there and it was popular for many years.

A house was built across the railroad tracks and several others were built south of Ralston Avenue, west of the tracks. El Camino Real was moved west of the tracks in 1918 during World War I.

Belmont finally had the essentials for growth and it did grow. Developers came and in a few years the city became known everywhere as a desirable place in which to live. It has held to this tradition and those of us here like the community. We wouldn't think of living anywhere else.



CARLMONT HISTORY

by Russ Estep

Some of Belmont's streets were named after its early settlers. Later, people, not recognizing the work of early people in helping establish Belmont, sometimes changed the street name. One such street was Sixth Avenue. It formerly was named for John Schmoll, who came here from Germany in 1856 and lived here most of his life.

After coming from Germany, he lived in Chicago first, and then came across the plains to San Francisco in 1849. On his way west, he stayed long enough in the California gold fields to accumulate a considerable amount of money. After arriving in San Francisco, he opened a store which he operated for several years. Then, in 1856, he moved to Belmont and lived here the rest of his life. Old reports state that he loved Belmont and wouldn't think of living anywhere else.

His death was reported to have been in November 1903. The early people had liked Schmoll and named a street after him. It later became Sixth Avenue.

Another early settler was Janke. In fact, there were several

in this family who came to Belmont very early on. A street was named after them near El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue, east of the Walgreens store. Local people liked the Janke people, one of whom operated a soda works and another the Janke Picnic Grounds.

The picnic grounds were where we find Twin Pines Park. Some very well attended picnics were held in the park. But the street that was named after these early settlers has gone by the wayside. Old timers who are still around wish another street could carry the flame.

The developers of the Belmont Country Club Properties named three streets after themselves. Monroe, Miller and Lyon streets were named by the developers after themselves.

Then there was Jim Lyall — the police chief for many years. A street was named after him and still carries his name. Lyall was proud to have been a sparring partner for Jack Dempsey, a famous fighter.

A longtime Belmont mayor

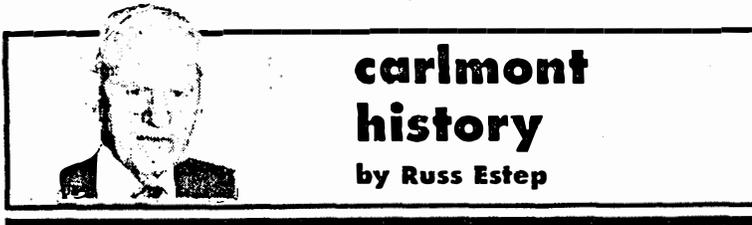
was Wallace Benson, who was called "Wally." A street was named after him out in the western area of Belmont. Wally was mayor for 16 years. He went around town with a cigar in his mouth, and worked in San Francisco as vice president of an insurance company. Many changes and improvements were made while Wally was mayor.

George Pyatt was here for many years operating a vegetable stand on El Camino Real, two blocks south of Ralston Avenue. A street named after him was later changed to Mountain View Avenue.

A longtime resident, and the city clerk for many years, was Katherine Hearstner. "Kitty Lane" was named after her.

And so it goes. It is good that our city honors those who spent a part of their lives making Belmont what it is. But to name streets and later change the street name to someone else's name doesn't seem right.

Suppose the name of the city of Washington was changed to Jefferson? People would react. Yet in Belmont, when some old-timers have been honored by having a street named after them, the great honor is taken away. It's almost as bad as throwing the baby out with the bath water.



Belmont has grown considerably since 1932. When ballots were counted for the election of City Council members that year, there weren't very many voters. James Halloran received the most votes, but he only received 284 votes — quite a difference from the present when several thousand voters are required to elect a councilmember.

Up until the mid-1940s, Belmont didn't even have a bank. Everyone went to San Mateo or to Redwood City for their banking. Finally, the Chamber of Commerce got busy and arranged for First National Bank in Redwood City to open a branch in Belmont. It was located south of Ralston Avenue on the west side of El Camino Real about where a real estate office used to be.

Within a year, Wells Fargo Bank took over the branch and it has been here ever since. Wells Fargo is not in the same location, however, but is on Ralston Avenue near Sixth Avenue.

Many people in Belmont do

not know that California's second governor, John McDougal, had lived in Belmont. His home was in Twin Pines Park. It's possible that the small house now being used as an office of our Parks and Recreation Department was his home. I cannot find anything on when that small house was built. It was later occupied for many years by the Fisher family.

Out west of Belmont, the Spring Valley Lakes were formed as a part of the Hetch Hetchy project. Water was brought from Yosemite in large pipes and terminated where the monument is on the old Canada Road. Presently, there are two pipes, each six feet in diameter.

When the Spring Valley Water Company first considered the large project, some people opposed it. One man working for the company was Mr. O'Shawnesy. Opponents to the project referred to him as "Old Shagnasty."

We are fortunate that the project went ahead. Belmont's

water, as well as other cities including San Francisco, all obtain their water from the pipes or lakes.

Over the years, many subdivisions have added to Belmont. One was that area north of All View Way. The lots were mostly sloping but easily built upon, and they were in demand by buyers because the lots had a good view of the bay.

Each of our Belmont subdivisions had something going for it. The Sterling Downs and Homeview areas were convenient to transportation and had level lots, and prices were generally low compared to hillside view lots. Those areas sold out quickly.

Belmont was becoming settled. Traces of the wild west were gone, except for coyotes which continued to try to get citizens' chickens. The coyotes howled at night and kept this up until the mid-1920s. Presently, we see deer in our yards occasionally. But they make no noise. Sometimes, they eat homeowners' flowers. I recently saw deer running south on El Camino Real, and also saw a big jack rabbit running south in the middle of the street.

Belmont is a quiet town and our citizens can sleep well. They enjoy our rural atmosphere and like it here.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

In the 1880s people said the old Belmont Hotel was considered to be a Deluxe establishment because it provided amenities not found elsewhere.

For instance, it was rumored their bed pots were not made of common enamel, but of crockery painted with pink forget-me-nots. Apparently, this was a luxury.

Not only were their outhouses kept clean and had the latest catalogs for people to peruse, but also a lantern was kept at the desk for evening guests.

Meals were considered very good and prices were reasonable. For example, old records show that the price of a meal was 25 cents.

Horses were stabled and fed for a quarter.

Beds were provided and sheets cost and extra 10 cents per sheet.

All meals provided fresh butter and milk. While coffee was 5 cents per cup, it was free with meals.

Heat for the hotel was provided by a wood-burning stove in the lobby. During cold weather, most guests left their bedroom door ajar.

It was customary for guests to sit beside the stove in the evening or visit with the other guests.

Stomping and snorting of horses did not bother the guests because the animals were kept in the barn behind the hotel. It remained there until only a few years ago when it was painted red along with the old hotel.

The barn had a hay loft from which farmers would slide down

hay to mangers for the animals. There was a large, high window, for placing the hay in the upper part of the barn.

The nightly charge for each horse was reported to have been 25 cents and 50 cents for a team.

If the horses needed rolled barley an additional 50 cents was charged per horse. However, many travelers carried a sack of barley with them.

Lighting was provided by kerosene lamps. One was placed in each hotel room.

Also, there was a washbasin with a pitcher of water standing in it. A folded towel was always placed beside the basin.

Only about one in 100 guests wanted a bath. When this occurred, a wash tub was loaned to the guest who, was told to take it to his room and then go out to the well and bring a bucket of water back to heat on the stove. Few bothered.

All this is what people experienced when traveling a century ago. Right here in Belmont.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

There was considerable activity in Belmont in 1924. That was the year when Monroe, Miller and Lyon were having a golf course built. They had planned for it to be 18 holes, but to speed sales of lots in their subdivisions, they decided to finish only nine holes at first and open it to players. That's all that was ever completed.

The golf course was east of the Alameda de las Pulgas, north of Ralston Avenue and west of Daisy Lane, which later was changed to Notre Dame Avenue. The course was completed in September 1924, according to an item in the Redwood City Tribune.

Old records note that the course cost \$375,000, which was a lot of money when it was built in those days.

One old-time golfer once told me that he should make the nine holes in 36 strokes, but once had made them in 32. He claimed that the most difficult hole was the one on Fairway Drive, possibly because of the slope.

The developers had allowed some cabins to be constructed within the golf course. The only houses remaining where the golf course used to be are larger than weekend cabins.

I have been told that when people purchased vacant lots in one of the subdivisions, they could also purchase a membership cheaply in the country club and play golf as much as they wanted.

The golf course did help with sales, which probably jumped four times what they had been previously. Following completion

of the golf course and clubhouse, folks began to buy. Hundreds of lots were quickly sold.

The streets were paved by the Union Paving Company. The paving contractors allowed the developers to make payments for their work.

Eventually, the Great Depression came and the whole country slumped economically. Hundreds of Belmont lots were foreclosed on. As late as 1947, I sold some of the foreclosed lots for Union Paving. They were reasonably priced and many new houses were constructed.

While sales were going on, the developers brought prospective buyers from San Francisco and San Jose via busses. The buyers were given free box lunches and then driven around the hills. Some early residents didn't like all of the activity. They preferred that Belmont remain as they had found it when they came. But growth continued.

During World War II, the clubhouse was used by Kaiser Research for cancer cures. Before

the war ended, a military group occupied the clubhouse. They, too, were said to be doing research and didn't want outsiders to learn what they were researching.

In connection with this, a U.S.O. had been established in the "pink building" where local ladies sometimes furnished cookies and cake and, now and then, dances for soldiers. The researchers from the clubhouse attended the events and tried to make the ladies think they were hillbillies. Some succeeded, and everyone had an especially good time. Most of the ladies caught on, but didn't pretend that they knew.

They helped to win the war — right here from Belmont.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont has always been a clean city. When we travel to other cities and see their street litter and unkempt yards, we appreciate what we have here.

The City Council and Public Works Department have been doing their jobs well. It has always been like this in Belmont.

Recently, we were told of a coming improvement on El Camino Real. The city will do what San Carlos has done — landscape the center of El Camino Real with small trees and flowers. This will cause drivers who pass through our town to sit up and take notice.

El Camino Real is wide enough so that when the traffic lanes are moved slightly to make space for the planting, we won't find ourselves with red curbs as some parts of San Carlos have.

Belmonters like their recreation. Our Belmeda pool was very well-patronized when we had it. The pool was located north of where the library is located now. I used it many times, although I cannot swim but a few feet. But in those few feet I can swim well. Where I learned to swim, the creek was only 8 feet wide, and there were rocks upstream and downstream.

The Belmont Country Club had a large pool and it was later filled with gravel. It was located in back of the clubhouse, which is presently the Congregational Church.

The Parks and Recreation Department keeps the parks in excellent condition and we see street sweepers cleaning the city's streets very regularly. Since our streets were paved, the amount of dust is minimal.

How different it used to be with only two paved lanes on El Camino Real, and most Belmont streets still redrock where there was dust in the summertime and

mud in the winter.

Belmont has easy-to-read street signs, unlike some cities where you must exit your car to get up close to see where you are. Belmont used to have lots of brush and at least two lovers' lanes. One was All View Way, and another was the short street running north off Middle Road, near Hainline Drive. Nowadays, I'm told the young people park at the overlook parking area that has the good view far out on Ralston Avenue.

In the late 1800s, Belmont people occasionally went to Memorial Grove of Redwoods for Sunday picnics. The bay waters were more pure then and some folks held swimming parties. But as the bay became polluted from the sewer line running to the bay from the St. Joseph Military Academy, no one ventured to swim in the bay anymore and the Morgan Oyster Company had to give up its operations.

Everything was much different in the early days, with people driving horses, milking their cows and young boys dressing up for church in their knickerbockers, called "knicks" usually and nearly always made from corduroy, and almost always colored brown. Boys called them knee pants. Adult golfers copied the style and men all over the world could be seen playing golf in knee pants.

Did the custom start here in Belmont? Who knows?



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There will always be a few people who stand out in any city. It is somewhat like high cogs on a gear wheel. In Belmont, in addition to William C. Ralston, there was Mrs. Annette Alexander and Mr. Wallace Benson, both of whom never will be forgotten.

According to old records, Mrs. Alexander had been a nurse when she arrived in Belmont. Born in St. John of New Brunswick, Canada, she came to Belmont in 1918 during World War I. She hoped to help shell-shocked soldiers, and others needing rest and help for nervous conditions. She started a sanitarium and named it Alexander Sanitarium. Many years later, it became the Belmont Hills Hospital.

Over the years her sanitarium and doctors helped thousands.

She chose a very quiet area of about 13 acres and this contributed to her success. Her sanitarium, located at the western

end of what was the famous Janke Picnic Grounds (where Twin Pines Park is now located), started as a small hospital. She added onto it several times so she could handle more patients. As her reputation grew, she had patients come from all over the United States.

As her patients improved, they could be seen quite often walking on the sanitarium grounds among the trees. Most recovered. Her sanitarium was profitable:

Mrs. Alexander was liberal with the donations. Once she purchased a boat for the Sea Scouts. Another time she gave \$1,000 to two young ladies for gasoline for their airplane so they could be contestants in the Powder Puff Derby.

She was very active in Belmont's Chamber of Commerce as a director. There were times when she, Juel Christensen and I were the only directors at

meetings. We could always depend on her attendance.

She passed away Aug. 30, 1959. A street was named in her honor — Alexander Avenue is located near the Mae Nesbitt School.

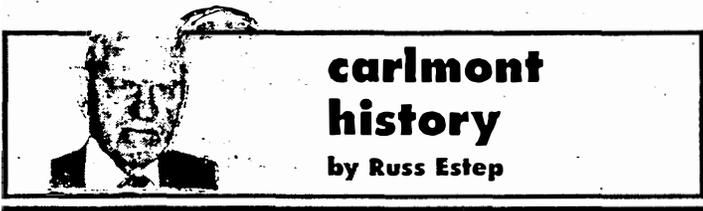
Another local "high cog" was Mr. Wallace Benson, known as "Wally." He was well-liked and served on the City Council and as mayor.

Wally came to Belmont from Louisiana in the late 1940s. He worked in San Francisco as vice president of a large insurance company. He was elected to four terms on the City Council

He also served on the San Mateo County Planning Commission for four years, as well as on other county committees.

Wally smoked cigars and usually had one in his mouth.

Wally died in December 1983. Everyone in Belmont misses him, but the city has named a street in his honor — Benson Drive is located in west Belmont, and runs off Hallmark Drive. Belmont wouldn't have been the fine city it is if it hadn't been for Annette Alexander and Wally Benson. They are missed.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There have been many changes here since Belmont was incorporated in 1929, and hope this will continue. Some say that when there is no change there must be death. But that doesn't always apply, for even in death there are changes.

Many years ago a well-known Portland attorney dropped into my real estate office. He owned a large acreage on the west side of Skyline Boulevard and wanted my help to start a cemetery. I told him, "I thought no one would want to be buried on that windy hilltop!" So he went to Redwood City instead and applied for a

cemetery permit.

After he obtained his permit, he had several burials. Then he sold the cemetery at a large profit.

The cemetery was needed by Belmont because there had not been one previously. Presently, the Skylawn's rolling green hills with an ocean view are widely used. Mr. Phipps once told me that when some people have enjoyed a view from their house, they want to be buried in a cemetery with a view. He has been proven to be right.

Belmont is the only Peninsula city with hills so close to the bay.

Our hills extend almost down to El Camino Real.

Forty-five years ago, I had 50 signs on vacant lots here. Presently, those lots are all built upon and I have no signs out.

A few months ago a committee was formed to designate Belmont's old historic buildings. When we examine the findings, we discover that very few were constructed a century ago, and that's because Belmont is a new city.

When we travel to Curacao, we see signs on the city's buildings proclaiming they were built in the 1600s.

Over in London, we see many buildings that were built 500 years ago. People still occupy them and they even buy and sell them through their realtors.

The owners may do whatever they wish with the interiors, but the exteriors must always remain

as they were originally constructed. If you ask any London tour guide where you can see damage caused by World War II, he will smile and tell you the building fronts were hurriedly rebuilt following the bombing.

When William C. Ralston died in 1875, Belmont was not the same as it is now. For instance, El Camino Real and all other streets were unpaved. In fact, most streets hadn't been laid out yet. The streets were actually built between 1924 and 1927.

When Ralston died, there were only a few houses here and they

were spacious. The small houses were mainly built after World War II.

In 1875, the streets weren't lighted yet, and there were no telephones or telegraphs except Ralston's private telegraph at his home.

Belmont has provided many opportunities for businessmen to make a financial gain. As in other places, those who recognized growth was coming prospered. Some of those who didn't recognize it were run over by the rushing crowd. This will continue.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

A student came into my office one day asking where the materials used to build early San Francisco came from. Fortunately, I was able to help him.

The redwood lumber came from the hills west of Woodside, later known as King's Mountain. The lumber was hauled in freight wagons along Woodside Road to Redwood City, then loaded onto small ships and taken up the bay to San Francisco. As early as 1850 there were nine sawmills

operating at Woodside.

The little creek that flows into the bay near lower Broadway was able to handle the ships as they only drew about three feet of draft. Most were sailing ships of the schooner type. They sailed down the bay with the wind and then returned north against the wind. The schooner's sails were easily adjusted.

When we drive to the top of King's Mountain, we see many

large redwood stumps. The redwood material lasts for many years.

When using recently cut redwood lumber, carpenters learned to avoid splinters. They also discovered blood poison occurs from freshly cut redwood lumber, which is soft wood and easily worked.

Early carpenters used wooden planes and those can be seen in our Belmont museum at Twin Pines Park. It is open Wednesday and Saturday afternoons and there is no charge.

Round nails hadn't been invented yet when early San Francisco and early Belmont were constructed. Carpenters had used square nails.

It is probable that square nails can be found in the south portion of the large Ralston mansion, which was used by Count Leonet-

to Cipriani who came from Italy to represent their government in the consulate in San Francisco. The count didn't know about the nine mills that were operating in and near Woodside. He had his house built in Italy, then taken apart and shipped around Cape Horn to San Francisco.

Of course, all buildings weren't constructed of lumber. Bricks were used for many large buildings. Mr. Ralston had the Palace Hotel constructed with bricks. Most were produced by the Hull family in San Carlos. They lived at the extreme north end of San Carlos on the west side of El Camino Real. Huge piles of red bricks were to be seen adjacent to their house, for many years.

To avoid loading and unloading the shipments of bricks to San Francisco, the Hull

family chose large freight wagons. The wagons required a full day to make the trip to the Palace Hotel.

The two-story house on Belmont's Newlands Avenue was also made of bricks from the Hull's brickyard. The Hull house on El Camino Real was framed by two tall palm trees. The house and trees are gone now.

Two of the Hull sons purchased a vacant lot in Redwood City at the southeast corner of Main and Broadway and constructed a store. They successfully sold hardware there for many years, but had the building demolished when they retired. They sold the bricks.

Early Belmont was built of redwood lumber and bricks and our historic buildings should still be here a century from now. Belmont will never be forgotten.

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carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Inflation has run rampant over the years. Belmonters living here in early days paid much less for things than we do now. Land prices were considerably less back then.

An item in the Book of Deeds dates Aug. 2, 1864 tells that Mr. Clark and Mr. Waltermire paid \$1,600 for five acres at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. It is listed as being on the northeast corner of the intersection and included the old Belmont Hotel which was demolished two years ago.

In those years livestock was driven along El Camino Real. An advertisement for the hotel stated that cattle, sheep and hogs would be corraled.

Waltermire had been operating the hotel for two years prior to this, but it is possible he

had been renting it.

When Belmont people wanted to have a new school built they auctioned off the old school and received \$62.50. Then they paid \$5,000 for construction of the new school. It was a two-story building on the east side of Old County Road, and was used for many years until another building was constructed on Waltermire Street and named Central School.

Central School was used for many years by the Chamber of Commerce, and the City Council used it for their meetings. Then the city purchased six lots on the east side of Fifth Avenue and had the present City Hall constructed on the lots. The lots cost \$3,500.

The Central School building was later demolished and a

Safeway store was constructed on the lot. It is still there.

A new Central School was constructed on the sloping land on Middle Road, and it remains to this day. The school is well attended and Belmont's citizens say their offspring are getting a good education there.

In the early 1940s, Belmont's residence lots were sold for much less than now. Many brought as much as \$600 and some only \$400.

Similar pricing existed in the White Oaks area of San Carlos. Level lots usually could be purchased for from \$600 to \$800 and they were soon built upon.

With land being so inexpensive homes could be sold for small amounts. A two-bedroom house in Belmont sometimes brought \$7,500.

Mr. McDonough, a longtime resident of Belmont, operated a lunch room on Ralston Avenue near El Camino Real. Good meals there could be as high as 25 cents including coffee.

He sold coffee separately for 5 cents a cup.

When I vacationed in Alaska 35 years ago I had to pay \$7 for a meal and coffee was 25 cents. Nowadays Belmonters are charged a \$1.50 for a cup of coffee.

Recently, one old fellow commented that "it didn't bother him. He only drank "decaf." wonder where he finds that for less than regular coffee?



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont has grown steadily since it began in 1850. That was the year when Charles Angelo built his small hotel at the intersection of what became Ralston Avenue and Old County Road.

It was the first hotel here, although two more hotels were constructed by 1881. There was the Angelo Hotel, the Belmont

Hotel, the American Hotel and another owned by "Mr. Hagerly" which burned down that year.

Old records show that a "Mr. Guys" handled the Office of Consular from 1849 to 1850 when a "Mr. Dillon," the son of an Irish general, arrived in San Francisco to take over.

When Dillon first came ashore

in 1850 he found mostly bare hills, all owned by Sidney Mezes until Count Leonetto Cipriani bought them later. Apparently Dillon didn't like what was available in Belmont so he lived on a French ship that was anchored in the bay near Belmont for a while.

Eventually he moved to Belmont and took up his duties in an office on Market Street in San Francisco. (Presently, there are many Consuls on the north side of Market Street, most of which are on the second floor. You may find it necessary to go there when you need a passport to travel abroad. You may be suprised to

see names on doors of countries you may never have heard of. American passports are handled on the south side of Market Street and on the second floor of a newer building).

An old record shows Dillon had a problem. He was arrested in connection with a filibuster affair that took place in Sonora (I have yet to find out more about that problem.) Apparently, he survived whatever it may have been.

Interesting, it seems, that so many early Belmont settlers had legal problems. William Chapman Ralston, for one, was accused of taking money to the tune of \$4.2 million from the bank he founded.

And the man who used to own our Belmont train depot is said to have ended up in San Quentin before his office was moved here from East Hillsdale

Boulevard.

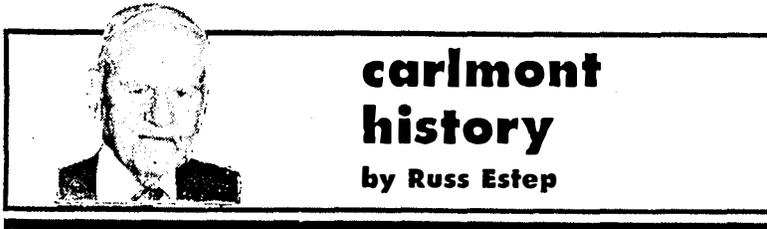
Charles Angelo, who built the first hotel in Belmont, was also sentenced to prison for embezzling \$10,000 up in Victoria.

Apparently, some of the early people here were playing for high stakes. This seems to have leveled off in the many interir years.

For example, about 40 years ago, a descendant of Dillon came to a meeting of the California Genealogical Society and had a chance to meet him. He was a gentleman and became well liked by the Directors.

Today Belmonters seem satisfied with making a living and attending church on Sunday. There have been no big financial scandals for a long time.

This year Belmont is making a local priest, Father John Kenny, its "Citizen of the Year." Belmonters are good people now.



There are young people who have never ridden in a stage coach before. They should therefore attend Victorian Days in the Park, which is held once a year at Central Park in San Mateo. The rides are short and the terrain is smooth, but by riding, Belmont's young people can probably "get a feel," of how it used to be.

Many people do not know that stage coaches didn't have springs. The body of the coach rested on straps. There was one on each side and when horses started pulling the coach, its passengers were tipped upward. Then the body of the coach slammed down and it used to be like a rocking chair ride — up and down as you traveled along.

The interior was a little narrow, and men often enjoyed it when women came aboard because they sat close together.

When Belmont had a rainy winter, the stage contractors usually substituted what they called "mud wagons" for coaches. The mud wagons looked like real coaches, but had on-

ly a frame covered with canvas. This made for a much lighter load for the team to pull. Sometimes the route would be so muddy that there was mud nearly up to the axles.

The mud wagons had suspensions similar to those of the coaches, and in the early days there was more rain than now. Roads weren't paved and some weren't even graveled. So there was mud — lots of it.

One stage passed through Belmont going from San Jose to San Francisco. It stopped at San Mateo just south of Mills Hospital. There is a marker on the side of the parking garage there. Horses could be watered and fed. A creek flowed down from Crystal Springs where the lakes are now.

On June 6, 1859, the road from Gordons to Belmont was declared a public highway. It was 30 feet in width, according to the survey filed, but subject to the addition of certain gates.

On Oct. 22, 1859, a stage route

and express route from Belmont to Half Moon Bay and "Spanishtown" was approved by the county of Board of Supervisors. The stage line agreed to run a tri-weekly stage between Belmont and Half Moon Bay with stages leaving Belmont at 1 p.m. each Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Returning stages would leave Spanishtown every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8 a.m. and arrive in Belmont at noon.

Freeman and Cole were the contractors, and A.T. Castor, the agent.

When the stage arrived, it was a big event. If a relative was to arrive, the young folks often walked down the road a little ways, then lay down and put their ear to the ground hoping to hear the stage approaching. The youths had learned this from Indians.

When the stages were full of passengers, their luggage was placed on the top where they usually worried that it might get bounced off. Traveling a century or more ago was considerably different from what it is now. Yet, early people thought they were living in modern times. And most didn't even have horseless carriages then. Those came later.



Many Belmont people have been interested in flying. Belmont had its own little airport for many years, located where the Mae Nesbit School now exists, north of Ralston Avenue and east of the railroad tracks.

The little east and west strip was not paved. It was gravel but there were no rocks, which bothered takeoffs. The rocks would have had to have been larger than 3 inches in diameter to cause a real problem. Many of us have flown to Nome where the runway is unpaved, and the planes land on the rocky runway and it seems like they are landing on ball bearings. The plane rolls.

After World War II, the Belmont airport was closed down and the school was constructed there.

In addition to Mills Field, which later became the San Francisco Airport, there were the Belmont Airport, the San Carlos Airport and the Redwood City

Airport. There also was an air strip in San Mateo.

Most of these little airports have been abandoned and replaced with housing. They were used mostly by flight instructors who taught people how to fly, and also for short rides at a charge of \$3 for a 15-minute ride.

When the first commercial flight occurred at Mills Field in 1927 there was a gathering of people there for the celebration. I among them. As we stood shivering and waiting for the plane to take off, I heard one aviator comment to another, "Perfect place for an airport. Wind blows strongly from the west. All we need to do to fly is to have someone remove the chocks from in front of the wheels. Then we can go straight up."

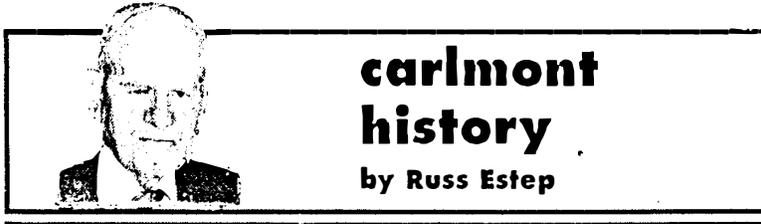
The planes were small, but not that small. I realized the man must have been joking.

When passenger traffic increased over the years, the San Francisco Airport had to be larger. The central terminal was dedicated early in 1950.

Our Chamber of Commerce decided that Belmont should be represented. Vera Millard was secretary of the Chamber and I was director. We went to the celebration. Belmont was honored when they let us sit in the front row of chairs. Up in front of us, a speakers platform had been erected. On it was a general and an admiral, and Mayor Robinson of San Francisco.

Robinson said the central terminal was the "airport of the future," that it would never need "to be added onto for at least 25 years." How wrong he was. Work commenced the following spring to enlarge the airport, which was renamed, "San Francisco International Airport."

The work seems to go on forever. Presently, the terminal appears to be very competitive with other international airports, and we in Belmont should be proud that we live only nine miles away from it.



The Belmont Chamber of Commerce has been working for the good of our town for many years.

When the northbound train killed the man in the car at Harbor Blvd., the Chamber immediately began working to get a crossing guard placed there. The Chamber didn't succeed until another man was killed at the same crossing soon afterward. One train had been traveling north, and the other train was going south. Both were killed the same day. Crossing guards were installed after the second accident.

A similar accident occurred at Ralston Avenue soon after the watchman was taken away. He would sit in a tiny building on the west side of the railroad tracks and as trains approached he would walk out with his red flag stopping traffic. There were no accidents during his stay. The Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in getting the job done in a hurry-up manner. It appeared there wasn't money enough for the job, but when the Chamber began its investigation something kicked loose and money was found. No one has been killed at the Harbor Blvd. crossing since then.

Another improvement for Belmont came when Mr. Juel Christensen became Chair of a committee to have landscaping planted along the entrance to Belmont from the new Bayshore freeway. He first collected donations from Belmont citizens, and continued talking with state officials until the work was begun. In the interim, trees and shrubs were planted by some local individuals including the Christensen Nursery.

Presently, the entrance to Belmont looks very attractive and we are glad the work was done thanks to our Chamber of Commerce.

Several years ago, Old County Road has no lighting. Mr. Loyd Malech of the Chamber was appointed as chair of a committee to look into that.

Before long, he had arranged with the proper officials and P.G. & E. to install street lights. Now that area is usually safer at night.

For many years, Ralston Avenue was only paved with two traffic strips in the middle. The sides were gravel and dust. Merchants often wished something would be done to get the sides paved. Then the Chamber jumped in and worked with the proper officials until work began. Ralston Avenue was soon paved entirely and the merchants had less dust and they relaxed.

For a long time, Alameda de las Pulgas turned south from Ralston Avenue near where the Bank of America is located. The Chamber then decided to start a fund-raising drive to have the street straightened. The Chamber succeeded when the Carlmont Village Shopping Center was built. Mr. Roth was a cooperative.

West of the Alameda, Ralston Avenue used to be narrow and dangerous. It was our Chamber of Commerce that noticed this and worked with city officials to have the street straighten and widened.

Belmont has been very fortunate over the years to have had people in the Chamber who worked together and with the right people to help build our city up to what it is now. We salute them.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

A Belmont man came into my office recently who wanted to tell me about his wonderful trip to the Grand Canyon.

He said he rode a donkey down the steep trail to the Colorado River. I doubted that he had done this because donkeys haven't been used for human transportation in this country since the gold rush. However, the donkeys are still being used in southern Europe.

I tried to visualize this tall man riding a donkey with his feet dragging in the dust. It was my opinion that he must not have known the difference between a donkey and a mule. Mules are much larger.

To confirm my opinion, I phoned a ranger station at the Grand Canyon. The ranger laughed and told me he couldn't recall that donkeys had ever been used there for people to ride down the steep trail. He said mules are used and they are much more sure-footed.

Ranchers breed a mare to a jack and get a mule. Mules cannot reproduce. A male donkey is called a jack and a female a jenny. Early California miners used to be seen with a donkey carrying a bedroll, frying pan, coffee pot, cup, gun, and pick and shovel.

Early Californians referred to these men as jackass miners. They would be seen working a creek as their donkeys grazed nearby. As they traveled, they usually walked behind their donkeys, poking them with a stick now and then to make them move faster.

If they happened to hit pay dirt, they often headed for the nearest saloon and bought drinks for the house. Then everyone would follow the miner back to where he found pay dirt and begin staking their claims.

Mules lives were different

from that of donkeys. Mules were work animals and pulled a farmer's plow or worked to pull a freight wagon. If the load was to be pulled in mountainous areas, the leaders usually had bells fastened onto their hames. The purpose of the bells was to let oncoming travelers pull off to one side so a freight wagon could pass on the narrow dirt road.

Because the road through Belmont had no narrow and sharp turns it is doubtful whether freighters passing our town used the bells on their leaders. Bells weren't needed here.

There are some old newspaper articles telling of early freight wagons being pulled by mule teams along El Camino Real.

Just as teamsters drove horses, the teamster driving mules rode the off mule and guided his team with a jerk line. He also used the word "Gee" for a right turn and the word "Haw" for a left turn. His mules learned quick because they are smarter than horses.

Mules have very low withers and the teamster's saddle would slip forward as he traveled. To hold his saddle in place, he would usually use a crupper under the animal's tail to help keep his saddle where it belonged.

A mule will also draw in his breath when the cinch is tightened. So the poor teamster had to dismount very often to tighten his cinch.

Mules are intelligent. When a teamster traveled on a mule down a trail and came across a large tree that had fallen on the trail their mount would not jump the log as a good horse would.

The mule would raise his feet and place them on the log, and then stand there. It was too much effort to complete the jump. Sometimes, the rider fell off because of the sudden stop.

It didn't take men long to learn the peculiarities of a mule.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There are people in Belmont who have become experts in one thing or another.

Some raise dogs and know which kind is which. As for me, I cannot describe most of them. I do recognize a collie and a bull dog. During my five trips to the East Coast, however, I never did discover whether that area had a different kind of dog, or species, than we have in Belmont, and which might not be anywhere else.

We often see residents walking their dogs, holding them securely with chains. The different dog I mentioned doesn't need to be restrained and won't get away.

The McManus Kennels on Old County Road care for many dogs. Most are house dogs and only need to be fed occasionally. The kennels take good care of the animals. Many are left there for days or weeks while their owners are on vacation or away on business.

Many things have been produced in Belmont such as the chrysanthemums. Tons of them were shipped to the East Coast just a few years ago. Belmont growers supplied the world market.

They were grown on both sides of Irene Court, and on the north end of a large hill located between the railroad tracks and Bayshore. The entire hill was used for fill dirt when the Bayshore Freeway was built. It was all redrock and made for excellent fill dirt.

The hill had two names — Newhall Hill and Redrock Hill. The Newhall family lived on the south end of the large hill. A

Japanese family lived on the north end of the hill.

About 45 years ago when I was a Lions Club deputy district governor and attending a club meeting in San Francisco, I sat by a Japanese man. He told me had been born in Belmont, on Newhall Hill. He had been interned in southern Oregon during World War II and because he was a young boy, he had enjoyed the experience. He said it was very cold in the winter, but that he and the others had plenty of warm clothing.

He said he had been up and down the Bayshore Freeway many times since, and always wondered what had happened to the large hill. He thought he might have been mistaken about it. When I reassured him the hill had really been there, he relaxed and seemed to think he had worried about his memory needlessly.

The Japanese man said that when he was a small boy he and his brother used to try to catch fish in the little creek that flows down from the Ralston Dam; however they never caught any fish.

He said fishing in the little creek was about as productive as fishing in a washtub. He also said the most restful and nicest time of his life was spent here in Belmont.

One of the most exciting times was the day when he caught a foot long lizard, he noted. When he took it to his house, his mother cried, "Get that water dog out of here." He wondered why she referred to it as a "dog." He later learned that was what they were called.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

It has been a few years since the government's "Freedom Train" visited Belmont. Many of us saw some historical items, including the Father Serra Bible and the Portola Diary.

We viewed the Governor Alvarado Letter, the Ide Proclamation and the Commodore Sloat Proclamation — made after he raised the American flag at Monterey. There was also Mr. Sutter's letter announcing the discovery of gold at Coloma, as well as an old newspaper account of the gold discovery.

The original gold spike and the sledge which drove it were on display. The spike was driven at Promontory, Utah on May 10, 1859 when the transcontinental railroad was completed.

A manuscript by Bret Harte, and a first edition of some of Mark Twain's stories were displayed.

Most of us Belmonters knew how fortunate we were to have an opportunity to see these historical things which also stirred school children to be more interested in American history. Many visit our museum in Twin Pines Park and see items that were used by early Belmont people.

California has grown to adulthood during the last century. We see museums in many cities where things are on display from earlier generations.

Students should think about how their forefathers lived. When they arose in the morning, they fed their horses before doing anything else. Next, they built a fire in the cook stove, and found they had to bring in more wood.

They had to replenish the wood pile by harnessing their horses and going out to cut dry wood where possible.

Then they milked the cow or cows, and strained the milk through a cloth. They then peeled potatoes, fried an egg, ate breakfast, washed the dishes and discovered the water bucket was empty. They had to walk a quarter mile to the spring and bring back a bucket of spring water.

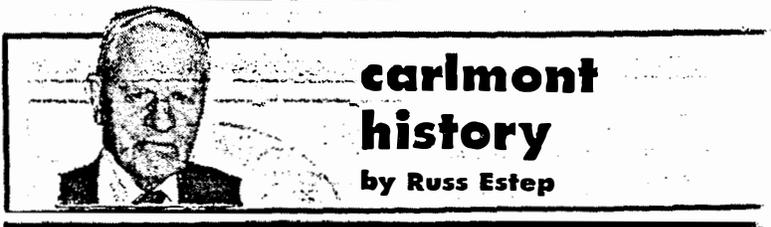
Then the cow's calf was let in to get his breakfast while the rancher harnessed his team. After breakfast, the calf was let go to the pasture, and the cow let go to the field.

Then he would hitch his team to the two-horse plow and start plowing his field for a crop. This would take all day. Both he and his team would be tired by sundown. He would drive the team to the barn, unharness them, feed them some hay, then milk his cow and cook supper for himself.

When the wall telephone rang, he would turn the crank a short turn and answer, only to learn that some of his livestock had escaped from his pasture and were eating a neighbor's corn crop.

Our forefathers worked, worked, worked for long days and had only a straw-filled mattress to sleep on at night.

This is how many early Californians lived; not in Belmont, however. Belmonters' lives were easier because they had water wells with hand pumps, and chemical toilets weren't so far away in the woods.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many Belmont and San Carlos people aren't aware of the background of the area in and around Carlmont High School. First, it was a part of a huge Spanish land grant, a 34,200-acre area that was the largest of all the grants within our county.

When California became a state in 1850, the rancho was subdivided. There were squatters on it who thought the government owned all the land. Many were allowed to purchase what they occupied for a high price and at high interest. A Puerto Rico attorney named Sidney M. Mezes had acquired the land from Mrs. Arguello for a legal fee to help straighten out her titles.

Over the years, the land where Carlmont High School is located had several owners. The land nearby was purchased by Tommy Valerga. Tommy had visions of subdividing it, but he eventually sold his interest. He is now retired and lives on Club Drive. A street was named after him near Carlmont High School.

Tommy was not related to former Mayor Edward D. Vallerga. Their names are spelled differently: one with one "l" and the other with two "ls."

Before the high school was constructed, a man owning the land raised prunes. Many of Belmont's and San Carlos' youth picked prunes during the harvest. They were picked up off the ground and put into 25-pound boxes. The pickers received 10 cents per box for hard, dusty work.

When Belmont was first incorporated in the late 1920s, the owner of the land sued the city. He claimed that his land was included in the city limits without

his permission. Three years were required to settle the suit.

Belmont's first employees weren't paid during these three years. When the suit was settled and Belmont really became a city, everyone was paid the back pay they had coming.

While Tommy Valerga is retired in San Carlos, Ed Vallerga is retired in Paradise, about 20 miles east of Chico. He has a beautiful home there and enjoys living where there are more trees and cleaner air. Both he and his wife, Marjorie, are amateur radio operators and they are in touch with other hams throughout the world. It's a good hobby for retired people.

Ed is in charge of civil defense for Butte County, and is on the air with other hams there regularly. His antenna extends to the top of a very high tree which helps transport his signals.

Some people moving to Belmont seem surprised when they learn that the hills were brushy years ago. Only oak trees and brushy hills were to be seen. Most trees were planted by our early settlers, and records mention that as many as 1,000 were planted. Other settlers planted many more trees.

Belmont has had some very civic minded people running our city and those people are to be commended for what we have now.

It was Ed Vallerga who put up Belmont's first Christmas decorations on a tree that is now long gone in the first block west of El Camino. We all appreciated that. Ed always tried to help our city and our people. He is missed here in Belmont.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

People in Belmont have become accustomed to some unusual sounds over the years — particularly when Marine World Africa USA was located here.

At night, the park's lions could be heard quite plainly in some parts of Belmont. We became so accustomed to their howling in the eastern section of Belmont that we finally were able to sleep again.

Strangers, though, wondered how a city such as Belmont could provide sounds so common to Africa. Since Marine World moved away to Vallejo, we find our city is more quiet.

Another sound we no longer hear is that of roosters crowing. Old-timers will remember how some people became disturbed by that and how our City Council appointed Al Penna as the official chicken inspector. Al did a good job and everyone could soon sleep.

Before the railroad company changed its steam engines for a more economical diesel type, most Belmont people had become accustomed to the steam whistles. The sound was somewhat musical and pleasant to hear. Following the change, some claimed that the whistles on the diesel engines were startling and offensive. A few months later, the railroad company adjusted its whistles so people could sleep again.

Some Belmont boys stripped down early automobiles and removed the mufflers. That noise didn't help many people sleep

either.

We also had a dog race track in Belmont. It was located east of the railroad tracks near Ralston Avenue. Some of the dogs howled at night at certain times of the month. Their howling wasn't especially calming to people's ears.

Then there was the little airstrip north of Ralston Avenue and east of the railroad tracks. Some pilots thought their planes would climb faster without restrictive mufflers. Some of them would fly about the city and when coming low, they would "buzz" their girlfriends' houses, or parents' homes. They often made quite a disturbing racket. When the center two lanes of El Camino Real were paved, we then heard horses clomping along as they passed through town, and the wagon brakes squeaking as the driver brought his team to a stop. Many people owned a milk cow and one or more horses, and in the early mornings, the cows would usually bawl and the horses would neigh.

Belmont was, and is, the location of hospitals specializing in the treatment of nervous disorders. Quietness for these patients is imperative. After being in Belmont a while, many patients are reported to be fully recovered. Of course, Belmont's hospitals give the best of care.

Does the environment here have something to do with it? As you can see, I'm not a psychiatrist.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

When people don't approve of something nowadays, they often picket. Old-timers used to have fistfights and duels now and then.

One duel occurred here in 1852 between two very prominent men: State Gov. John McDougal and Mr. A. Russell, publisher of a San Francisco newspaper. McDougal didn't like what Russell published about him. In fact, Russell called McDougal a crook, among other things.

If the two men had been younger they might have settled the matter with a fistfight. But they were too old, as they had already passed middle age. So they chose guns. The location was said to have been Old County Road and Ralston Avenue.

Each chose their seconds, and examined the other's pistol. Then when ready they stood back-to-back, took 10 steps, turned and fired. Although they hated each other, it is probable that neither wanted to kill the other.

Both men were nervous and their hands were shaking. McDougal was missed but Russell was shot in one of his hands. Blood flowed. The men shook hands and blood was seen on McDougal's right hand. The men were satisfied and went away, pale but glad the duel was over. Following this, Russell's articles in his paper about the governor became a little less

caustic.

McDougal lived a while in Belmont -- possibly in Twin Pines Park in the small house where our Parks and Recreation Department is located.

McDougal apparently wasn't very well liked and some people thought the man was as the San Francisco paper claimed him to be -- an untrustworthy politician.

Belmont once had a school named for McDougal. It was a grade school and had a good reputation for scholastic achievement. Some students who graduated from there are said to have gone on to great achievements.

The school is closed now. Apparently, not enough babies were being born in Belmont to keep the school in operation. It operated for a while as the Charles Armstrong School, but that is gone now. The building is empty.

Because of lack of students, several other Belmont schools have also been closed. Nearly all California cities are growing and the time will come when more schools are needed in Belmont.

Many of us hope another school will be named after Gov. John McDougal. Who knows? Perhaps he wasn't the rascal some claimed he was. After all, he was California's second governor.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Everyone in Belmont and San Carlos probably has been east of here and have seen the hundreds of windmills on the Altamont Pass. Sometimes they are all turning and other times they are not rotating. No one has explained why.

P.G.&E. purchases the generated power. With so many windmills, there must be considerable power — maybe more than a hydro powerhouse.

Ten years ago, a Belmont resident wanted to install a power generating windmill in Belmont. He intended to place it on a tower that would have been 70 feet tall. Neighbors objected.

For lack of specific mention in the city code, the city Council considered such a windmill in the category of radio antennas. Dozens of neighbors attended a council meeting when the matter for a permit came up. They spoke at the microphone and convinced the voting council not to approve the windmill.

The applicant told the council his device would generate 800 kilowatts which would be enough to supply his needs.

There are other individuals in California who have power windmills, and they report that they have no need for P.G.&E. power anymore. They can provide their own. The state and federal governments allow tax credits for people using wind power, like they do for solar power in Arizona.

Until windmill power became prominently used, the most

economical power came from the hydro power plants. The water flowing down a long pipe into a generator pelton wheel could be used again and again after producing power. The wind still blows after turning a windmill and nobody loses anything.

However, a 70 foot tower would seem unnecessarily tall. Even the towers at Altamont Pass aren't nearly that tall. In time, perhaps wind power will be handled like cable T.V. Someone will construct their towers on a nearby hilltop and install cables to people's homes to bring them electricity.

Remember how some water pumping windmills squeaked? Some Belmonters probably didn't have time to lubricate them, or else some were afraid to. What a racket some of the mills made!

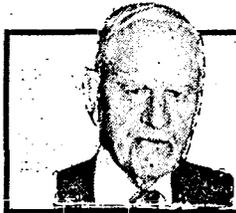
Often it was a matter of waiting for a visit by a son-in law or other relative. Young people could usually climb safely. Windmill towers used for pumping water from water wells weren't very tall — only 20 or 30 feet high. Yet to elderly people, that was too high to climb safely.

Commercial windmills such as those on the Altamont Pass may have permanent lubricating devices. It could require an army to care for them if they needed lubrication every day or week.

On Oahu in Hawaii, there are hundreds of power windmills high on the Pali. The wind blows constantly and strongly there, and the location appears to be

ideal.

With wind power and solar power however, there doesn't seem to be any source equal to hydro power for places where millions of kilowatts are needed. Windmills used for generating power may be suitable for small amounts of electricity, but for cities the solution still seems to be hydro power.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Most Belmont citizens understand that Belmont is an old California town which has links to the Spanish past. Some verification of the Spanish heritage came when the old Caldwell Tavern was demolished a few years ago. The tavern had been at the northeast corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue for about 90 years.

Researchers of the old building found some very old coins. One coin was an authentic Spanish real, and such coins were called "pieces of eight." The "real" name came from the word royalty.

According to old records, the real was minted in Potosi or the Lima mint as they were in use at the time. These coins were minted especially for use in the Spanish colonies, but were common in California in the late 1700s and early 1800s. They were minted in eight, four, two, one and one and a half denominations.

The reals were used in California missions and likely by the Arguello family when this area of California was a huge Spanish land grant. After the Caldwell Tavern was built, it is possible that a cowboy purchased some drinks there and the coin slipped down between the plank floor.

California joined the Union Sept. 9, 1850, and before that many

easterners had travelled the continent or come by ship around Cape Horn. They probably brought American coins and were confused at what they found there when they arrived.

Also found under the floor of the former bar in Caldwell Tavern was an old Bolivian 1830 two-shilling silver coin.

The real that was found was about the size of a half dollar. On it was a likeness of King Charles of Spain, who ruled from 1789 to 1808. Also reportedly engraved on the old real coin were the words, "King Charles IV by the grace of God, King of Spain and Indies."

Following discovery of the two old coins, collectors swarmed to the area where the hotel had been demolished. However, there were no reports that they found anything.

Other interesting things found in Belmont were items of Indian descent along the creek in Twin Pines Park. Many of those items are displayed in Belmont's museum, such as arrowheads, stone bowls and mortars. These were used by Indians for pounding food such as acorns. Acorns can usually be picked up under oak trees in the fall here.

The Indians made a palatable mush and also a drink from acorns. Indeed, during World War

I many people made their coffee from acorns. It wasn't too bad, either. Coffee was generally not available, nor was sugar. For sweetener, many folks used white "Karo Syrup." Karo is a trade name and can still be found in many stores. The syrup is clear white and is probably made from corn.

But let's get back to the Mexican cowboys. If they had a few reals in their jeans and were loaded with acorn whiskey, they probably let the cattle scatter.



When the developers were active in Belmont during the 1920s and naming streets, they called one Villa Avenue. Likely, they were thinking of residences and pretty little villas, but some Belmont people were thinking of something different.

At that time, "General" Pancho Villa was leading Mexicans below the border and causing considerable unrest. He had a number of ragtag followers.

The houses built along Belmont's Villa avenue were quickly sold. The location near Ralston Avenue and the shopping area available attracted the buyers.

Mayor Edward D. Vallerga purchased a home on Villa Avenue, as did Geraldine Conley. Geraldine's husband (Jim Conley) was a real estate speculator who had lived at the far end of Christian Drive. Before he passed away, he owned dozens of lots in Belmont at one time.

Geraldine (called Jerry) still lives on Villa Avenue, but Vallerga is living in Paradise, about 20 miles east of Chico.

At the corner of Villa and Ralston Avenue there used to be a small coffee shop where soft drinks were sold. After Prohibition was approved by the voters, the coffee shop was well publicized and discussed everywhere.

One day, as I passed by the little cafe, I noticed a sign tacked up in front. It proclaimed that "when Prohibition comes to Belmont, here's where you can wet your whistle." The sign was crude and on cardboard. Maybe one of the boys from across the street at the St. Joseph Military

Academy had put it up. When I passed by the following morning, the sign had been taken down and was nowhere to be seen. Someone had probably put it up as a joke.

The Baker Construction Company built most of the houses on Villa Avenue. They sold for \$7,800 and up. While Belmont hadn't experienced much inflation until then, it soon arrived and house prices rose. Lumber prices and nail prices also increased as did labor. Builders probably scratched to get by.

Ralston Avenue was just a gravel road for many years. Yet some Belmont boys stripped down an early automobile and used it to coast down Ralston Avenue from the hilltop to El Camino Real. They reported they were clocked by a policeman at one time and had rolled far above the speed limit. The boys must have had good lubrication for their wheels to roll as far as El Camino Real, especially on a gravel road.

Bert Johnson, a Belmont old-timer, was one of those youths. He is about 87 now and still healthy. This speaks well for Belmont's good climate. People tend to live longer here.

Growth in Belmont has continued steadily and our city is being well-planned. Our city government has been a model for other American cities and we should be proud of what our city has done.

Some other cities have had recalls of council members, but Belmont has not had to suffer through this as far as I can recall.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There are several very well-known residents of Belmont who have since expired. You might have read about what they had done, but possibly never met them.

One was Mr. Keith Davey. He was president of the nationally known Davey Tree Surgery Company. He lived for many years in a house built in 1890 on Davey Glen Road, which was known as the "Ross House."

Mr. Ross was a well-known attorney who had purchased the land from the Foothill Development Company. He then had the house constructed. It still stands and is a beautiful place. It is surrounded by trees and shrubs.

Davey loved the surroundings and he lived there alone except for a housekeeper. He passed away several years ago. He was a stout man who drove a Lincoln Continental, and he had advertisements running much of the time in National Geographic Magazine. He sometimes came to our Chamber of Commerce luncheons and was friendly and jolly. Everyone there enjoyed his company.

Of course, everyone in Belmont knows about William C. Ralston having lived here. His large house is owned by College of Notre Dame. Portions of the upstairs are used as offices, and perhaps some of the sisters may live there. The house has 50 rooms and tours may be arranged by calling the office.

Ralston entertained President Grant, King Kamahamaha and many other prominent people.

Ralston had made considerable money in the Comstock Lode in Virginia City. He spent much of it in California, having the Palace Hotel built and the first drydock at Hunters Point. He owned a large ranch in the Central Valley, owned the California Woolen Mills and many other things.

If he were alive and owned them now, he would likely be complaining about his huge property tax bills.

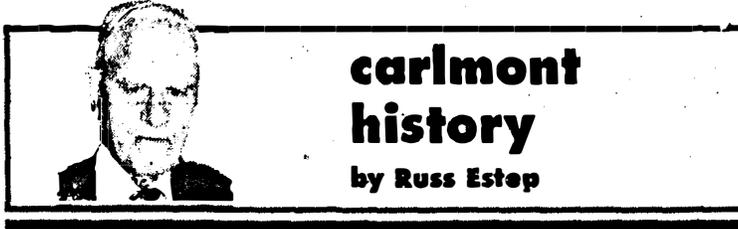
Another well-known Belmont resident was Mr. Philip Habib, who recently died of a heart attack. He was appointed Under Secretary of State and had been in the government service for more than 30 years.

At Habib's funeral service in the Church of the Immaculate Heart, Mr. George Schultz commented that Habib had been an excellent man for his job and that he was a towering figure in American foreign affairs.

One of the Olympic winners used to reside in Belmont, and may still live here.

We in Belmont are proud that we can rub elbows with some very well-known and important people. They were attracted to our area because they looked around and found this to be the best part of California to live in. They chose the best spot to settle down.

(Editor's note: Russell Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the city of Belmont. His column is published each week in the Enquirer-Bulletin.)



I always see cars racing up and down El Camino Real all the time and I often think about what El Camino would be like if people had no cars.

Only a century ago, people didn't even have horseless carriages. When they wanted to go some place in a hurry they usually went on horseback. If they needed to haul something such as their groceries, they took a buggy or surry.

Things were much different then.

Generally, Belmont's citizens had good riding outfits. Most didn't need chaps because they rode along the roads or trails. Chaps protected ranch people from tearing their jeans, yet they weren't needed here.

According to old records, the local people rode English style. They didn't ride like cowboys because they were gentlemen. It's not that the cowboys weren't gentlemen. There's no doubt some were. Some were pretty rough gentlemen, in fact.

When they rode, the cowboys had their horses so well trained that when the cowboys moved their bridle reins to one side or the other the horse felt a slight pressure on his neck and responded. Cowboys seldom had to pull on the bridle bit.

They held the reins in their left hand and looked askance at newcomers who used their right hand, which was kept for the quirt.

When we see "city" riders, we always notice that they keep the bridle rein in each hand, guiding the saddle horse as though they are driving a wagon. It

looks graceful, however.

Cowboys learn very early to keep their toes turned in so they won't catch on a bush and break their leg. City riders never seem to follow this practice.

Both city riders and cowboys sit straight in the saddle. It not only looks better, but the person doesn't become so tired by evening.

It seems to be a common practice throughout the entire world for people to mount on a horse's left side. Horses become frightened if mounted on the right side. They think something is wrong and usually twist around to inform the rider that he is doing something he shouldn't be doing.

When a cowboy carries a lariat, it is always fastened on the right side of his saddle where it can quickly be reached and used.

When a cowboy dismounts, he usually lets his bridle reins hang down and doesn't fasten them. His horse will seldom run away.

City horses must be tied.

Neither city riders nor cowboys need to stick spurs into a horse. This is done at rodeos, but the horse may only need a touch of a spur to understand what the rider wants.

Most young ladies rode side saddle. Years ago, it was not considered proper if they rode astraddle.

We don't see horseback riders much anymore. Riding is done for pleasure now, not by necessity. Everyone uses automobiles.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont's very early residents were much the same as early settlers in eastern America. They were religious, and they wanted a church they could attend on Sunday.

Word traveled around and Mrs. G.M. Smith responded. In researching old records in Redwood City, page 488 in Book Eight of Deeds states, "Deed dated Nov. 25, 1868, covering sale for \$1, by Susan E. Smith, widow of G.M. Smith, to the most Rev. Archbishop Joseph S. Allemany, all of Block Six in the Smithfield Tract, bounded by Fifth, Sixth and F Streets in Belmont. Mrs. Smith was married to J.D. Creigh on Nov. 26 of that year in Belmont by the Reverend A.L. Brewer.

The old copy of the San Mateo Times and San Mateo Gazette of April 15, 1876 states, "The Episcopalians are constructing a church in Belmont. It is twenty by thirty feet with a wing, and is intended to have a capacity for seating one hundred fifty persons."

The church soon became filled every Sunday. It was first located south of Ralston Avenue between Old County Road and the railroad tracks.

The little church was used for many weddings and baptisms, yet was found to be too noisy. Trains passed by very closely and sometimes it was difficult to hear the minister. In 1935, local citizens moved it across the railroad tracks to where we find it now on Fifth Avenue.

An item in the Times and Gazette dated July 1, 1882 states that the cross was placed on the

steeple that day. Then an item from the same newspaper dated March 31, 1883 states that the bell tower for the little church was finished the week before.

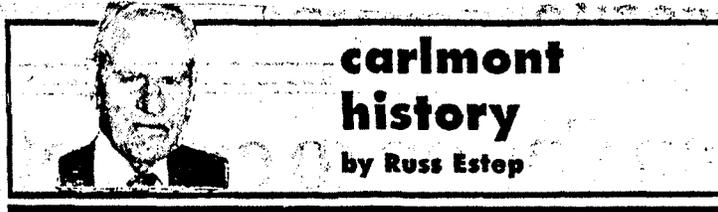
On June 16, 1888 a wedding was held in the little church. It was the day when Dr. Stuttmeister and Miss Augusta Janke were married there. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. A.L. Brewer.

The church is a historic structure and a plaque was placed on it several years ago.

A new and much larger church has been constructed next to the little church. It is filled with Belmont citizens every Sunday. The minister is the Rev. Auelua and he is appreciated and very well-liked.

Catholics built a small church near the entrance to College of Notre Dame. It soon was too small and a much larger church was constructed at the Carlmont Village Shopping Center. It, too, is filled every Sunday and many beautiful weddings have been held there. I almost forgot the Catholic church in Sterling Downs, and the little church at the end of Bishop Road, and the Baptist church across from Carlmont High School. Perhaps there are others.

Anyway, it is certainly a fact that Belmonters attend church on Sundays and do try to live good lives. Everyone is friendly and the crime rate appears to be below that of many other cities. Belmont citizens are proud of this record. They are good people.



When we go to Mission Dolores in San Francisco, we see graves of some early settlers from the Peninsula. If we visit the old cemetery on Woodside Road west of El Camino Real, we see names on some tombstones of people who had lived in Belmont. They were the pioneers.

An early pencil sketch of Belmont made in 1890 shows a few buildings, all east of the railroad tracks. The sketch shows the two-story school, the Episcopal Church, Hammerson's blacksmith shop, the Grand Saloon, the O'Neill house and two other buildings. Movement west of the tracks soon followed. Records show several houses, however, west of the tracks, even at that early time.

More than a century ago, there were laborers who came to Belmont and never intended to settle here. They just wanted to work for those who were already here. When they died, there was no money for funerals, and no one to care.

San Mateo County established a small cemetery in an area where nobody would notice and buried those bodies in the plot. It was out on a short street off Christian Drive to the west. There are some wooden crosses, and other bodies are marked by redwood stakes with numbers. The county refers to it as the "Pauper Graveyard." The dry grass is tall and nobody takes care of the graves. -

When some Belmont citizens do not want a funeral, they ar-

range to have their remains cremated.

State law controls the disposal of human ashes. The ashes may be kept for a year, and notice of where they are placed during the year should be reported to the authorities. Ashes cannot be placed on public or private land, and some ashes are scattered out at sea.

One woman I know placed them on her fireplace mantle. She told me she talks to her husband, and likes the ashes to be close by. I jokingly asked if he ever answered, but felt guilty after asking. She has a right to retain her husband's ashes if she wants to.

It has been customary for centuries for men who go to sea to be slipped off the side when they are injured and die. They used to be sewn up into canvas before the funeral ceremony. Nowadays, the bodies are kept frozen until the ship reaches a port.

An onlooker at a sea burial once told me the captain didn't have the proper text with him as the body slid down the canvas chute. It made a big splash as it hit the water. The captain then said, "Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust." The onlookers laughed and the captain said, "Get back to work, you fools. What are you laughing about?"

(Editor's note: Russell Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the city of Belmont. His column is published each week in the Enquirer-Bulletin.)