

*Ref Desk
Belmont
History*

Vol. 3

SAN CARLOS/ BELMONT HISTORY
By
Russel Estep

(From Enquirer-Bulletin 1984)

BELMONT LIBRARY
1110 ALAMEDA
BELMONT, CALIF. 94002

INDEX

BELMONT, CALIF.
1110 ALAMEDA
BELMONT, CALIF. 94002

1. That Fine French Food Restaurant in San Carlos.
2. Belmont Had A Song.
3. Belmont People Like To Gamble.
4. We Used To Have Store Deliveries.
5. How The Peninsula Symphony Was Started.
6. Ralston's California Theatre.
7. Charles H. Cook— One Of Belmont's Mayors.
8. The Many Owners Of The Old Ralston Mansion.
9. There Is No Longer A Pacific City.
10. Those July 4th Memorial Park Picnics In 1923.
11. Development of Belmont Country Club Properties.
12. Road To The Coast.
13. Belmont's Early Picnics.
14. Belmont's Early Neighbor.
15. Starting A Museum.
16. San Carlos' Excellent Chamber of Commerce.
17. Merritt Hosmer, Outstanding Citizen.
18. Do Names Given a Town, or Person, Effect Either's Future?
19. Belmont's Historic Old Log Cabin.
20. Those San Carlos And Belmont Indians.
21. The Fine Service Clubs in San Carlos And Belmont.
22. Notre Dame Helps Belmont.
23. Our Welcoming Ladies.
24. Belmont's Famous "Wally" Benson.
25. Our Alameda de las Pulgas.
26. Belmont's Drive-In Theatre.
27. Pullman's Property In Belmont.
28. Collecting Artifacts In Belmont.
29. Where The Lumber Came From.
30. The San Carlos Lots get Smaller and Smaller.
31. When Improvements Came To Belmont.
32. Some Of Our Restaurant Names.
33. Belmont's Fine Auditorium.
34. Our Local Children's Home Society.
35. Why Some Nearby Areas Aren't In Belmont.
36. Our City Centers.
37. Ancient Indian Bones Found In Belmont.
38. The Sounds in Belmont Are Different Now.
39. Belmont's Walking Tour.
40. The Building Of Moffitt Field.
41. The Comstock's Belmont Heritage.
42. Some Business Errors.
43. Caring For The Elderly.
44. Boats Converted To Restaurants.
45. San Carlos and Belmont Paint Manufacturers.
46. Coyote Point-- Belmont's Recreation Area.
47. The Last Survivor of the Virginia City-Truckee Railroad.
48. The Kohl Mansion.
49. The German Consul's House in WW-1.
50. Mr. Ralston's Two Sons.
51. Belmont Squabbles.

SC/Belmont History

Russell Estep

Since everything that happened yesterday becomes history today, people in San Carlos and Belmont will be interested in what happened in San Carlos 11 years ago. It may seem a very short time to some, but it was 11 years ago when the LeComte family came to this area from France. They own and operate the Champagne Restaurant on El Camino Real in San Carlos.

Steve LeComte learned cooking in France so specializing in genuine French cooking comes natural to him. Steve's country, however, had been Belgium near the French border. It was Raymonde LeComte's country which had been France.

Both LeComte's traveled extensively before coming to San Carlos. After living in dozens of other places, they chose San Carlos and seem quite happy here.

Raymonde's first husband was superintendent of perhaps the world's most terrible prison — the

his sister, Marie of Hungary.

After suffering under the Nazi occupation of Belgium in 1943, Steve went underground. He escaped via France and Spain and made his way to England where he joined a Belgium army. In 1944 his plane was shot down in the Netherlands. He was soon evacuated to England for medical treatment.

Recovering just as the war ended, he went back again to Belgium

French prison on Devil's Island where France sent their most dangerous and unruly convicts. She lived on the island while her husband was there as superintendent. Much later she came to the United States and became an American citizen in 1968.

Both of the LeComte's ancestors were famous people in Europe. One of Steve's ancestors was a general and statesman. Following the war between Spain and France, this particular ancestor's army victory cost him his head. That was a long time ago and I don't think French or Belgium generals' heads are chopped off anymore whether they win or lose.

Steve's third great-grandfather operated a famous restaurant in Paris for many years but moved back to Belgium when that country became independent. The town where he lived contained the royal residence of King Philippe II and

where he found his home country badly destroyed. He worked for awhile in a bank then went to New York to take part in the Belgium Village folk dancing at the World's Fair.

Steve came to San Carlos in 1972 and opened his little French Champagne Restaurant where many San Carlos and Belmont people have enjoyed French cooking.

SC/Belmont History

— Russell Estep —

On Friday, March 13, 1931, the Belmont Chamber of Commerce held one of their minstrel shows. It was in the school auditorium. Since there was only one school in Belmont, it wasn't necessary to mention that it was the Central School, the one that used to be where Safeway is today.

The inflation we have today becomes somewhat amplified as we read prices on the program of 1931. The Peninsula Hardware, for instance, advertised radios for \$1.39 and \$1.49. Presumably, these had to be crystal sets.

The Gordon Cafe advertisement George Roussel, L.A. Barrett Jr. and a few others.

One song they sang was helped along by all Belmont residents attending the show. The music isn't known, but the words went like this:

"B" for the best place you'll find anywhere

"E" for the enterprise that's showing there

"L" for locations for homes by the score

"M" for the many things we have in store

"O" for the only place to come to stay

"N" for the nicest folks you'll meet each day

"T" for the trails of romance you'll find there

Other advertisements on the last page of the old program: Fred Johnson says his Belmont Garage

states that a family dinner was 50¢, with a half order for children.

The Belmont Service Station advertised car repairs at one-half price during the gas war. J.P. Ainsworth was the operator.

H.T. Longstreet, operator of the Belli Monti Grocery, advertised that their specialty was homemade chocolate cake, but that they also sold groceries, cigars and candy.

Those taking part in the minstrel show were Stuart Ward, E.J. Hearstner, M.J. McDonough, H.W. Hannibal, Ray Kelly, C.A. Morrison, Bert Johnson, H. Kohlmoos,

handles everything automotive. Mr. M.J. McDonough states that his Shady Inn has the coldest soft drinks in town. Not to be outdone, Burke's Cash Grocery states that "it pays to buy at home."

Now 52 years later, the Belmont and San Carlos Chambers of Commerce may not always suggest "buying at home." The citizens of both cities shop in each town and are just as proud of their own locality as were the old-timers, but perhaps they are glad that they have access to shopping areas nearby. Are city lines drawn as tightly as fifty-two years ago?

There are more people now than there used to be. And who knows? If someone composed good music for the old Belmont song, it might become as popular as the songs about San Francisco and New York.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

At a recent meeting of senior citizens in San Mateo County, I was surprised to hear many discussing gambling. They were interested in Reno and South Shore where they took free bus trips and were handed 20 silver dollars.

One lady said gambling was wonderful and that she had a good time. Some talked about going to Bay Meadows race track. San Carlos and Belmont people may have enjoyed good times there — even when they have lost money.

In the late twenties and early and mid-thirties, the stands at the old Belmont Dog Race Track were usually filled. That track was located where we find the Homeview subdivision south of Ralston Avenue and west of Bayshore Highway. A larger dog track opened in 1932 in the same area. The later track was operated by the Bayshore Kennel Club.

Curtis Davis, of Staunton, Ill., came to Belmont in 1931 to manage the dog track. He was with the International Racing Association for 14 years and understood the operation of a track.

The actual operation, however, was under the leadership of Tom Keene and Pete O'Connor. Before they came to Belmont, only the \$5 option paramutuals were available in the state, but they brought in \$2 options and they reported instant success. Their dog race track was one of the most successful in California.

Davis' hobby was raising prize dogs and he is shown in the old file photo with one of them.

Another old picture that was apparently taken when the track opened in 1932 shows Jack Fisher, head track judge. Also C. L. Jordan, Belmont Mayor, as well as M. Johnson, dog track employee. The long-time San Mateo Times publisher, Horace Amphlett, is also in the old photo.

I passed the Belmont Dog Track many times in my Model A Ford car but never seemed to have time or money to stop. As near as I could tell, the dogs raced around the track behind a long revolving metal arm terminating at its far end with a bicycle wheel or possibly with some rabbit meat rubbed onto it. A rabbit model moved

lifelike above the wheel.

There was opposition to the track from non-gamblers. The Belmont track closed and was moved to an area just south of South San Francisco. San Carlos and Belmont senior citizens began going to Reno

and South Shore.

Some senior citizens say they enjoy their trips to Nevada, although many years ago they had just as much fun right here in Belmont. Some even say they wish they had dog racing back again.



Curtis Davis with one of his prize-winning Irish Setters.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

It is relaxing to just lay on the grass sometimes in the summertime and look up at the trees. While I was doing just that a few days ago in the little park beside San Carlos City Hall, I couldn't help but hear two men talking on a nearby bench.

One man pointed toward a woman who was pushing a grocery cart along San Carlos Avenue with only a carton of milk and a loaf of bread in it. The man exclaimed, "I'm living on my social security and barely manage to live, and groceries cost much more because of that!"

"Yes," the other man agreed, "there is a law against people stealing those carts, but for some reason it isn't being enforced. She probably will leave the cart out in front of where she lives. Maybe the store will get it back, or maybe not!"

I lay there thinking about what I had overheard and thought back to 60 years ago when San Carlos and Belmont deliverymen brought groceries from their wagons and later Model T cars.

Some, however, had different make automobiles. For instance, Harry Kirkorian made deliveries from the U.G.A. store on San Carlos Avenue in a four-cylinder Chevrolet 50 and 60 years ago.

Davidson Groceries made free deliveries and the Redwood City

Ice company delivered ice cakes before the time of our refrigerators.

Perhaps some old timers will recall other early deliverymen who drove a horse in a spring wagon as they yelled, "Fish, fresh fish." Others would drive by tooting a cornet as they alternated it with, "rags, bottles, sacks."

Many Belmont residents received deliveries from Benny's Meat market on Ralston Avenue where the Santa Barbara Savings building is located.

The Emmett and Waltermire General Store also made some deliveries. They were located in what we refer to as the "pink building" at Ralston and Old County Road. If you ordered enough soda water, the Janke Soda Works sent its horse and spring wagon.

Now that San Carlos and Belmont merchants no longer make free deliveries, some citizens seem to take advantage of some stores by taking grocery carts off the store premises. We may travel along nearly any city block in the downtown areas and see several abandoned carts — their replacement costs having been added to the cost of groceries which we must buy.

We must wonder whether the stores should go back to what was done 60 years ago and make deliveries or continue adding cost of their carts onto what we buy?

SC/Belmont History
 — Russel Estep —

Probably everyone in San Carlos and Belmont has been to the Kennedy Center in Washington to hear symphony and in Boston while Arthur Fiedler was alive to hear the Boston Pops orchestra. Actually, both San Carlos and Belmont have had outstanding musicians right at home.

In 1949, Vincent Guida and John Parsons helped to get a group of musicians together to start an orchestra. Needing a conductor, Vincent Guida came up with the

answer. He had become acquainted with Aaron Sten, a fine musician and an experienced conductor.

Sten attended the Moscow Conservatory of Music. He started very early and won a Canadian award for his music when he was only 11 years of age.

Sten soon started a small orchestra — one was from one of the oldest title companies in the county, Cliff Woodhams Sr.

Practice at first was held in his home. Later the small group practic-

ed in Guida's real estate office. He said that some clients who came to ask about property would remain to listen to the music. Woodhams' instrument was the clarinet.

The man tooting the tuba was John Parsons, another fine musician.

Later a San Mateo group of musicians disbanded and some of their group joined the San Carlos group. Now Sten really had to wave his arms.

His orchestra had become a large one.

A name was batted around and finally all decided to call the group the Peninsula Symphony.

When talking to Woodhams it always came out that he was especially proud of the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra and also of another family

event. It was his son, Clif Woodhams Jr. who was named the "best baby" in the Panama Pacific International Exposition that was held in San Francisco in 1915.

The orchestra became so large that a room at Sequoia High School had to be rented for rehearsals. Perhaps this decision brought elbow rubbing with some students for several of them also became well-known musicians.

The present Peninsula Symphony Association is going strong, and the person answering their telephone lives in Belmont. Their telephone number is 592-0476.

San Carlos and Belmont residents feel fortunate and proud to have this talented group of musicians here.

1
1

SC/Belmont History

Russell Estep

Probably everyone in San Carlos and Belmont has been through the California State Historical Mansion formerly owned by William C. Ralston. Located at the end of a long tree-lined driveway where the street turns up to Notre Dame College, the national landmark is owned by the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Although Ralston's home was in Belmont, his interests became widespread. He often entertained world-renowned figures at his 50-bedroom Belmont mansion. He continually tried to enlarge upon his entertainment and finally built the California

lease. Captain Hinckley retained title to the land. Possibly this was the first land lease in California although land leases have always been commonly used in Hawaii.

Ralston's California Theatre opened January 18, 1869. It was an instant success and Ralston was reported to have sat in a box on opening night surrounded by influential friends.

Nothing appears in old clippings telling whether Senator Sharon, who later took over Ralston's holdings, attended the California Theatre. Ralston helped Senator Sharon in being elected a senator from Nevada and an officer in the Bank of California.

Old records show that when Ralston's Bank of California accounts were \$4.5 million short, Sharon came up with the funds. However, he then took everything Ralston had owned and there was no loan

theatre in San Francisco in 1869. He wanted this to be more lush than the other two theaters in San Francisco so that his friends might be more comfortable when attending and have more enjoyment.

Ralston was known to have been a great speculator and developer. We must wonder whether he was bothered if he learned that Captain Hinckley, from whom he obtained land for the theatre, had only paid \$45.00 for the land in 1845? Ralston signed a land lease with Captain Hinckley. He agreed to pay him the sum of \$12,000 per year for a land involved.

Among things Sharon received was title to the Palace Hotel. Upon acquiring it, he increased occupancy by collecting one dollar per night extra from all occupants and for this amount he let them stay at the former Ralston mansion in Belmont if they wanted to. All 50 bedrooms of the former Ralston home in Belmont were kept filled for many months following Ralston's death due to publicity about him.

Another important asset which Sharon acquired was control of the Western Union Telegraph Co. Old clippings do not tell what Sharon did with this asset. Old records indicate that although Ralston controlled Western Union, he was working to start a competing company. For what reason we do not know. Could he have had a stock manipulation in mind? Like the old records show, Ralston was a great promoter.

SC/Belmont History

— Russel Estep —

We often think of Belmont's outstanding mayors when we hear of Mayors LaGuardia and Jimmy Walker of New York. I'll place all their names in my hat and pull out one. Here it is. Charles H. Cook. He was our mayor more than twenty-five years ago. Let's see what made Charley tick.

When Cook was mayor, the crowds at council meetings became so big that the city hall had to be expanded. There were times when even the larger council meeting room was crowded.

The position of mayor in most cities the size of Belmont wasn't a full-time job. Charley earned his groceries by manufacturing metal wheelbarrows. His factory on Old County Road turned out more wheelbarrows than any other factory in the country.

While Cook was Belmont's mayor, Fred Nelson was city manager. The two worked well together, and many improvements were made in Belmont.

One such large improvement was placing utilities and the paving of streets in the Haskins subdivision, north of All View Way and west of Sequoia Avenue. There are many new, large homes there now, adding to Belmont's tax input.

Cook was very civic-minded, and he missed very few meetings of the Belmont Chamber of Com-

merce. While president, he arranged for two San Carlos ladies to fly in the annual Powder Puff Derby. The planes left that year from the San Carlos Airport. Charley had Belmont, California, painted on the local entry. The ladies did very well and came in fifth.

That same year the chamber of commerce purchased a Santa Claus suit. Since nobody would agree to wear it and play Santa Claus, Cook volunteered. Another chamber of commerce member pulled a small red wagon along Ralston Avenue during the Christmas season, and Cook passed out hard rock candy to people along the street. A heavily built Santa, he seemed to be having as much fun as the Belmont children did.

He liked going to the mountains and owned an attractive cabin at Pinecrest Lake, about thirty miles east of Sonora. He said he often took along Belmont's city problems and read much of the time while at his cabin. Arriving home in Belmont, he said he felt well prepared for the next council meeting. Some local people wondered how he kept his "batteries" so well charged!

There have been many outstanding Mayors in Belmont, and Charley Cook was but one name of many we could pull out of a hat.



Former Belmont Mayor Charles Cook is surrounded by two women who entered the Powder Puff Derby in 1956. Russel Estep, left, was president of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce at the time. The local contestants placed fifth in the derby, which started at San Carlos Airport.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

There had been many owners before the Sisters of Notre Dame moved to Belmont from San Jose and bought the Ralston property. Some people in San Carlos and Belmont don't know it, but years ago Belmont had a girl's school comparable to Oakland's Mills College.

In 1898 when the girl's school owner died, the property was sold. Jennie Bull had purchased the former Ralston mansion from the Sharon estate. She died of a heart attack after only owning the school two years.

Following Bull's death, Dr. A.

M. Gardner purchased the property and operated a sanitarium there from 1901 until his death a few years later.

But going back to when Bull acquired the Ralston property, Senator Sharon had only owned the property for 10 years, then he died.

Before that, William C. Ralston owned it for only 11 years, then he died. Before Ralston's ownership, Count Cipriani had owned the property 11 years then moved away to Italy.

Cipriani purchased the property from Sidney M. Mexes who owned

it for only three years. Mezes later died in Belmont just before his home burned north of the Notre Dame College.

But back to Bull's private girl's school.

She was the wife of Alpheus Bull, a mechanical engineer. A native Californian, his father was born in 1819.

What a wild and different area he must have found here. The Arguello family were still operating their large cattle ranch and living at their hacienda on Cedar Street in San Carlos, a block north of San Carlos Avenue.

No one has ever mentioned in old records or clippings what a short time the various owners of the large Ralston mansion had it. Each seems to have lived there a comparatively short time -- all but the Sisters of Notre Dame who have owned the Ralston property more than 60 years.

They all appear healthy. Of course they have God on their side. That probably helps.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

San Carlos and Belmont people enjoy the Marine World. It is a pleasant place to relax. People here on the Peninsula have needed such a place, and there are many who regularly use the facilities. Of course there are other parks.

Each time when passing the Pop Burton Park in San Carlos I see groups playing baseball in the afternoon and evenings. Accordingly many Belmont people go to Twin Pines Park for picnics on weekends.

Few people realize, however, that earlier people had the same desire to visit one of the parks on days off from work.

More than 60 years ago — in 1922 — those of us who were in this area enjoyed Pacific City. It was built beside the bay, just west of Coyote Point in Burlingame. It was advertised as being the greatest fun community since Coney Island.

Its construction costs were several millions of dollars. There used to be a pier extending out from the shore where people fished. A bay cruise boat was docked there and it was fun to take rides on it.

Among attractions at Pacific City

were a merry-go-round, a dance hall, restaurant, roller skating rink, ferris wheel, children's slides and swings.

The bay wasn't as dirty then as it is now and there were no wind-brakes. Sometimes if you lay on the beach, it wasn't long until you wished that you had brought along a beach blanket or auto robe. There was no talk then about hepatitis but people stayed away because of the dirty smell and the strong cold winds.

Plans for Mills Field were possibly first thought of by someone who had visited Pacific City. When Mills Field first opened in 1927 I was there and overheard one pilot comment to another, "What a perfect place to put an airport. All we need to do is to take off the brakes and we go straight up." Prevailing winds are constant at the airport and where Pacific City used to be. The wind comes down from the

slot in the hills west of San Bruno Mountain.

Although Mills Field later became San Francisco International Airport, the Pacific City folded. It failed because of the awfully polluted bay waters and cold winds. San Carlos and Belmont people stopped going there.

They found other parks and amusement places more desirable. Pacific City folded in 1923 when it was an infant only one year old. You might say it was hardly "dry behind the ears." Financially it never stood on its own feet.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

There are many people in Belmont and San Carlos who were not here 60 years ago. They may not have heard of the July 4 picnics held each year at Memorial Park in the redwoods.

On July 4 crowds began to gather near Belmont's first fire station in early morning. They lined up back of Bert Johnson's car for the trip. Many of the roads weren't paved yet, and some drivers wore what they considered to be "old fashioned" dusters.

Each family took along food of

various kinds which they spread out on tablecloths spread on the ground under the trees. Everyone gathered at lunch time to enjoy the restful repast. No one went home hungry.

During the day there were sack, foot and egg races. Swimming was enjoyed by the young folks in a dammed-up place in Pescadero Creek. One place was really deep enough so that two of the boys could show the girls how they could dive. One, however, always did belly smackers and splashed.

Local people were indebted to Johnson for locating the beautiful spot. He was a scoutmaster and had taken boys on hikes to the park location. Picnic chair was usually Elwood Curtis. Johnson reports that Elwood always managed to contract merchants and get them to donate beer, ice cream and prizes.

Ralston was park superintendent at that time and claimed he was always very lonesome and glad when the fourth of July rolled around.

Johnson reports too, that both San Carlos and Belmont would appear deserted each July 4. Everyone would travel to Memorial Park. The day was something for everyone to look forward to.

Memorial Park picnics were repeated year after year. Apparently they are still continuing. When I visited the park, I couldn't even find a spot where I could eat my brown bag lunch so just sat in my car and ate it. There seemed to be thousands instead of a few dozen folks there that day.

To reach Memorial Park you can go down the coast to Pescadero, then drive inland a few miles. Or you can drive west from Skyline, on the I a Honda road. After passing through La Honda turn left at the west edge of town and go three or four miles to Memorial Park.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

Beginning in 1924 when people used to comment that Miller, Monroe and Lyon avenues were the smoothest streets in town, their insinuations made me shudder. As far as the three developers of the Belmont Country Club Subdivisions were concerned, they seem to have been honest operators. They brought development to Belmont and had buses bringing customers here from San Francisco on weekends. They gave each a tree lunch, then took them around the brush-covered hills. Lots sold quickly.

The Union Paving Co. was employed to pave the narrow streets and when the development failed, that company acquired title to hundreds of vacant lots. They held title to some until World War II when further development brought another generation of buyers.

The little real estate office where lot sales were handled still remains at the corner of Alameda and Covington, although it has a differ-

ent real estate name painted on it now. It is across the street from the Congregational Church.

The church building was built by the subdivisions for a clubhouse. Below it, on the downslope eastern side, was their nine hole golf course.

Monroe, Miller and Lyon incorporated their subdivisions but the falling stock market in 1929 didn't help much. The company went belly up. Some homeowners found it necessary to pay Union Paving Company to retain clear title to what they had purchased. When they constructed their houses they believed all street assessments would be taken care of by the developers.

When the clubhouse opened the developers threw a party. Prominent people from San Francisco and most cities around the Bay attended. One group of singers were the Wooley Sisters, known then as "The Sunshine Sisters." Natalie and Marylee were on the staff of KPO along with L.R. Tucker, "Big Brother," for three years. Tucker

was master of ceremonies on the Children's Hour after Orrin Brown goofed while conducting the children's program. Orrin thought the microphone was turned off after finishing his broadcast, but it had remained on. His comments resulted in his replacement.

The three Sunshine Sisters were well-known in the east, having been on WCAO in Baltimore, while their father was stationed as an army officer at Fort Hoyle, Md.

Natalie is deceased, but another

sister, Roma Mauregard, lives in Belmont. She was at the grand opening celebration of the Belle Monte Country Club Clubhouse.

There were only a couple of singing groups at the grand opening. Many of us had enjoyed The Sunshine Sisters on KPO, and we join in hoping they received remuneration for their program. Since the grand opening occurred near the start of the large development, it is likely they were paid.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

Before the Spanish Expedition of 1774 turned westward to the coast from what is now Belmont, the local Indians had already used the route for hundreds and probably thousands of years. The terrain had proven to be a natural way to travel to the ocean. Later people improved the old route and then much later straightened parts of it and paved it. But it is still a slow winding route.

By road, Belmont and San

Carlos are about 20 miles inland from the ocean. However, an author named Lyman once wrote a book about Belmont's William C. Ralston and told how Ralston's guests were lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves on the Belmont beach. There are some who laughingly say Lyman's name should have contained two syllables.

After Angelo opened his hotel in Belmont Jan. 1, 1851, a need soon developed for transportation

to the coast. At that time Half Moon Bay was called Spanishtown and Belmont was called Waterview. Early sailing ships anchored offshore at Spanishtown and unloaded cargo onto lighters.

The old cemetery sign beside the road as you enter Half Moon Bay states that the first burial occurred in 1820. If you examine the tombstones you will see that the names were engraved in Spanish. California hadn't yet become a part of the United States. That didn't occur until Sept. 9, 1850.

The first horse-drawn stage-coaches began operating to the coast from Belmont on Oct. 17, 1859. They made the trip three times a week leaving Belmont at 1 p.m. and arrived at Spanishtown at 5 p.m. The trip required four bumpy hours. The returning stages would leave Spanishtown at 8 a.m. and arrive at Belmont at noon, three times per week. Freeman and Co. operated the first stages.

Belmont's first hotel keeper was also the first stage stop proprietor. Charles A. Angelo sold his hotel and stage stop business to Marcus

Flashner in 1853. Being an Englishman, he decided to go to British Columbia to try to improve his finances. Next we read in old records that he was jailed for embezzling \$10,000 in Victoria, B.C. Maybe he should have stayed in Belmont.

By 1875, as more people came to the Peninsula, the need for better coastal services caused a 17-year resident of Belmont, Mr. Janke, to start a new stageline to Spanishtown. He became a partner with F. Pruner who owned some horses and a livery stable. They advertised \$1 one-way fares for the four-hour ride to Spanishtown.

It has been more than a century since that happened, and although we have inflation, the present one-way fare to Half Moon Bay on the SamTrans bus is only 50 cents. They get you there in 25 minutes and the bus ride is pleasant, not bumpy. The SamTrans buses run every hour.

The ocean beaches are more accessible than they were 100 years ago. Maybe Lyman should write another book.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

When researching historic events on the Peninsula, I have found many group names, such as clubs and societies, which are no longer heard of. Some of these groups held picnics during the late 1800s at the Janke Picnic Grounds in Belmont. How such large groups could have been in Belmont at any one time is a mystery to me. Yet they were here.

Of course everyone has heard of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Their picnic was the largest. When their group came to Belmont for their annual picnic more than 8,000 people attended. An old item says that 7,000 came from San Francisco and another 1,000 from the Peninsula. What a crowded place the Janke Picnic Ground must have been that day! Belmont had other large picnics, and now we wonder where everyone found standing room.

The steamer Mare Island brought 800 persons from San Francisco to another picnic on May 11, 1873. The old record states that the vessel came up Belmont Creek, and that it only drew four and a half feet of draft. The channel has been made deeper since then by the promoters of the Port San Francisco during the depression. Incidentally, they failed to change Belmont's name.

Another old item tells that the Ignatian Literary Society came to the Janke Picnic Ground in Belmont by train from San Jose in the late 1800s.

Then on June 17, 1873, the Bunker Hill Society came to Belmont for a picnic. They arrived by train from San Francisco. It is in-

teresting that they were celebrating the battle of Bunker Hill because when Belmont people have been to Boston, they have been informed by their tour guide that there was no battle of Bunker Hill — that the battle took place on another nearby hill. Apparently, they did anything for a picnic in Belmont.

On July 26, 1874, the Germania Rifles held their annual picnic in Belmont. A public target was provided and many expensive prizes were offered to expert riflemen. A 20-piece band furnished music while young people attempted to be the first to climb a greased pole.

On May 9, 1874, the Laurel Leaf Literary and Social Society came to the Janke Picnic Ground for their annual picnic. An old account states that a good time was had by all, and that they found Belmont to be a wonderful place.

All these clubs and societies seem to have disappeared except the Odd Fellows. The IOOF is still around and going strong. That lodge is one of the country's oldest. Their motto is "Friendship, love, and truth."

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

As the Arguello widow began disposing of her huge Spanish land grant of 34,200 acres, she sold some land adjacent to Belmont to Robert Mills. It was on the north side of our town. The sale was recorded as being from Mrs. Arguello and her attorney Mezes to Mills.

The sale took place Sept. 9, 1857. The deed description indicates the land extended from Country Road to a large rock, and says the land adjoined Laurel Creek. Although I have searched for the rock I haven't located it. It may be that the rock has been removed.

The location shown would have been a part of Hillsdale. The Mills home was reported to have been large and two-story with a large porch. It was located at the west end of what we now call 44th Avenue.

Other old records tell that Robert Mills had been born in England in 1831 and that he arrived in what later became San Mateo County in 1855.

Although Mills was listed as a

farmer, and he operated a dairy, his trade had been "glazier." Old records indicate that he was a good businessman—honest, thorough in his work and finished whatever he started.

With this background, it is no wonder that Mr. Ralston hired him to install all the glass in the mansion he constructed in Belmont and

for the Palace Hotel he constructed in San Francisco. People who rubbed elbows with Ralston seem to have had some of his great wealth rubbed off onto them. Mills was no exception, and within a very few years he was classified as being a very well-to-do person.

When Mills married the widow of L.T. Murray, he learned that she had inherited a large fortune from her late husband. This estate, when added to what Mills already had, brought his assets up so that whatever he did reach the newspapers. He soon became very well-

known on the Peninsula. Then it happened!

It seems that Mills had "been over the backyard fence" and the lady had become pregnant twice. She had a son and a daughter and claimed Mills as their father.

The son and daughter sued Mrs. Miranda Mills for a part of their "father's" estate. Whether they won the lawsuit isn't available in old records. Mrs. Mills retained title to her 215 acres as late as 1909, so the outcome of the lawsuit apparently didn't cause her to lose property.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

In San Carlos, the Lions Club was very successful in getting a museum built and furnished. They have many very interesting old items on display. If you haven't seen it yet, you will find it by the fire station on Laurel Street.

Now the Belmont Lions are hoping to establish a museum in their city. First, however, they need to raise some money. There are many ways they can do this. In some cities, money has been raised just by contacting heirs of early

citizens. They haven't discussed names of early Belmont settlers yet. Here are a few of them, although the accuracy isn't guaranteed because sometimes individuals provide dates when their memories are fading.

Old records show that L.L. Burd came to Belmont in 1891, but nothing further seems available about the man.

Then there was David Barre, born in New York in 1830 and came to Belmont in 1854. He later

married a daughter of Christian Bollinger. Christian Bollinger arrived in 1854 also, and farmed where the lakes are, west of Belmont, before his land was flooded.

Hamilton Rowell arrived in Belmont about 1884 and built the American House Hotel at the southwest corner of Ralston Avenue and Old County Road.

Simon Monserat Mezes came to Belmont in 1853, and both Mezes and Monserat Avenues were named in his honor.

Carl Janke came in 1853, W.A. Janke in 1855, and Carl August Janke in 1864. Michael Daly (who later developed land near San Francisco known now as "Daly" City), came in 1859.

Hannibal Pullen came to Bel-

mont in 1854, and Count Ciprian in 1853. William C. Ralston arrived in Belmont in 1864. Senator Sharon came in 1875.

John Schmoll came in 1859. Henry Newhall came in 1868 and owned the south end of Belmont Mountain, referred to locally by some as "Newhall's Hill."

Usually, the early citizens' names are placed on brass plaques. The plaques are then attached to a permanent wall in the new museum for all to see. Dates of their arrival are under each name.

The Shasta Historical Society in Redding has used this method to raise money, and their museum on Rio Drive is one of California's best.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

San Carlos, like most cities, has had a very good Chamber of Commerce from the start. It started in 1925 when the city was incorporated. Fred Drake was the first chamber president. Drake had been one of the developers of San Carlos, and had a real estate office at the corner of El Camino Real and what is now San Carlos Avenue. Drake was civic-minded and many of the first improvements came about because of his presidency.

Drake was assisted by Ed Burton, B.C. White, Henry Wrigley, Port Heflin, Jim Martin, Charley MacMahon and Phil Noerager, all businessmen within the new city.

The first project the new Chamber of Commerce worked on was to have a sign placed at El Camino Real and San Carlos Avenue letting folks know there was really a city here. At the time, San Carlos Avenue was called Cypress Street and they soon were successful in getting that name changed so as to give more identity to the new city.

Their first meetings were held in "Webb's Koffee Kup."

Their next project was to arrange for someone to pick up the San Carlos garbage, at the rate of 50 cents per week for each property owner or business.

From having early offices on Cherry Street, the Train Depot, and City Hall, they presently have beautiful offices at the Eureka Federal Savings building at 1250 San Carlos Ave.

The president is Bill Lindeburg, a manufacturer on Industrial Way. Presently there are 340 members of the San Carlos Chamber of Commerce, a number exceeding most cities of our size.

The executive board consists of Bill Lindeburt, J. Ben Stolpa, Ed Hilton, Phil Shecter, Hal Tanforan, Tom Davids and Beverly Hoberg-Woods.

An employee for the last 27 years, Pat Webster, is their efficient office manager.

These people work for all of us and it has been through their hard work that San Carlos has come a long way ahead of many cities of its size.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

As in many communities, there have been some men in Belmont and San Carlos who have donated their time for the good of the community. In Belmont there were Ed Hannibal, Ray Kelly and Al Fagerburg, among others. Each of these men spent more time helping local citizens than they spent in their working positions. A monument should have been built for these men.

In San Carlos, among others, was Merritt Hosmer. All these good men have passed into the great beyond, and their communities miss their presence. They were

pillars of their communities.

Merritt Hosmer came to San Carlos in 1903. His home was just one of the 12 houses within the small town. Merritt was young when he arrived here. Several years later he lived at 520 Elm St. The house wasn't new when he moved into it, for it had been built in 1886. His wife, Lucile, had been Lucile Callan, whom he married in 1940. They raised one son, Bill.

Merritt served 14 years on the San Carlos City Council. He also served as a trustee for the Sequoia Union High School District.

He was a member of the Lions Club and seldom, if ever, missed a meeting. He was a charter member.

At the time when he was first elected to the city council, San Carlos had grown, and had a population of more than 3,500. There

were problems to be solved, and Merritt was a leader in solving them.

He served as San Carlos police commissioner for several years with an unblemished record. An insurance office provided his living.

His insurance office was adjoining Sharkey's service station on the north side of San Carlos Avenue, in the first block.

He had many hobbies and served as treasurer of the Audio Engineering Society. In World War II his name was signed on many draft registration cards. Also, he had accepted an appointment as head of the San Mateo County Civil Defense group and served them well.

Merritt was the founder of the San Carlos Income Property Owners Association and also served on the San Mateo County Grand Jury for several years.

Many photographs taken by him are on display in the new Lions club museum on Laurel Street. He was considered to be an excellent photographer, as well as an artist. Some of his oil paintings are outstanding.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

How people and towns are named sometimes has effected the life of each. It appears that both people and towns somehow manage to live up to what people call them. For instance, if a baby boy is named "Percival" he may be expected to lead a different life than if his name was "Bill". This is only an example, of course, and doesn't always apply.

It was Fred Drake who gave San Carlos its name. Whether Fred believed King Carlos of Spain was a "saint," we do not know, yet Fred named the town "Saint Carlos." Maybe he thought everyone who lived there would become saintly.

As for Redwood City, it first carried the name "Mezesville" for S.M. Mezes, who accepted the land from Mrs. Arguello for a portion of his legal fee for clearing her land titles when California became a state. The town was later renamed Redwood City because considerable redwood lumber was being shipped from there to San Francisco by ships.

If we look in an encyclopedia we will find many towns named Belmont. Some are on flat ground in the central states, while others are on the east coast. Apparently, many received the name "Belmont" when no mountains were within sight.

When Count Leonetto Cipriani lived in what is now Belmont, there are records indicating that some people were already referring to the settlement as "Belmont." When William C. Ralston came in 1864 and purchased the Cipriani property, Ralston immediately began publicizing his address as "Belmont."

Ralston had many influential friends, one of whom was Anson Burlingame—the first United States Ambassador to China. Old records tell of Ralston and Burlingame buying 1,050 acres north of Belmont. The date appears to be 1866, nine years before Ralston's death.

Anson Burlingame is reported to

have died in 1870. He left his half of the acreage to Ralston. Further old records indicate that Ralston then bought Burlingame's half interest from Burlingame's widow. Developers later divided the land and began selling 10 acre parcels. Many wealthy purchasers came and built large homes. They named what became a town, Burlingame.

In 1776 Spanish explorers established a mission and fort at what became San Francisco and they named the settlement "San Francisco." They were honoring "Saint Frances." No doubt they would turn over in their graves if they heard some people referring intimately to their "saint" and calling her "Frisco."

Saint Frances is perhaps the only saint in the world with a nickname. However, few if any, local people call her that. They have respect for Saint Frances and they wonder why everyone doesn't. Some wonder if, psychologically, their Saint's nickname has contributed to some adverse happenings in San Francisco.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Esrep

To preserve our heritage is important and especially to our descendants. Children should not be denied the chance to see how earlier people had lived. This is watched carefully in many communities. It should be watched in Belmont and San Carlos. Have you ever walked the wide paved trail along the creek in Twin Pines Park in Belmont? At its easterly end there is an old log cabin.

This log cabin was said to have been an early stage stop in LaHonda and was moved to Belmont in 1931.

Its windows have been removed and it has no doors anymore. It rests beside the creek shaded by tall trees.

The logs were hewn in such a way that they fit well together, yet small spaces in between were caulked so as to keep out the cold during wintertime. There is a fireplace at one end and a porch on the side toward the little stream known as Belmont creek. The creek is a live creek, flowing down toward the bay from Waterdog Lake up in the western hills.

Belmont should consider itself fortunate in having this old log cabin. Surely good uses can be found to cause more people to visit it. Its logs appear sound. Many other old log cabins survive and cities care for them in their old age.

For instance, we have all been to Oakland's Jack London Square and visited his little log cabin moved there from the Klondike. Its location is at the east side of

the Square, near the Last Chance Saloon, beside which is the Neptune Society office. Oakland is proud of this cabin. Annually thousands of tourists go there to visit it and its nearby buildings.

Fewer people have probably seen the log cabin in Nome beside the Bering Sea where Jack London wrote "Call of the Wild." It too, is maintained and kept sound by the Nome City Council.

No doubt thousands of persons have also visited Fairbanks where their Chamber of Commerce is housed in a log cabin beside the Chena River.

Another old log cabin attracting thousands of tourists each year is the three-story old log cabin in Whitehorse. They tell that the early builder didn't like to put on roofs, so just kept adding logs until he could no longer lift them higher. He stopped when his cabin became three-stories high, which made it a skyscraper in the early days.

By adding windows and doors, the Belmont log cabin could be used for a city museum, or office for the Chamber of Commerce. Surely it would attract out-of-town people and they might write home telling what they had seen in Belmont.

It seems sad that something so old is neglected. Sort of reminds us of how Eskimos leave their old people to die and be eaten by wolves as they continue onward with their dog teams or modern snow mobiles across the frozen tundra.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

More than a thousand years ago the Indians living in Belmont and San Carlos had need to dispose of their trash. They are known to have shucked shell fish near the side of the bay. Great piles of shells were discovered there by the Spanish.

Supposedly the reason why the local Indians named the little "cut in the hills" on Ralston Avenue, "Devil's Canyon" was because from there they could see reflections from the shells, believing the Devil must have had something to do with the mysterious lights.

These local Indians weren't nearly so advanced as eastern or mid-western tribes. These local people had plentiful supplies of venison, shell fish and acorns. They didn't even need to struggle for their living. It was all here and readily available with the result that they were listless and without much energy. They weren't known to be travelers. They had everything they needed at their finger tips.

When the Spanish Arguello's came and occupied their large land grant in 1795, women were hired from the local tribe to do cooking and washing. It is probable that dinner was often late.

Spanish priests converted many Indians, although from what isn't

known, it is possible that they also understood the positive as well as the negative. Possibly they believed in something greater.

Priests at San Francisco's Mission Dolores converted hundreds of Indians — some from the Peninsula whom might have migrated to San Francisco out of curiosity.

Also, the missions at San Jose and Santa Clara were hiring Indians and converting them. Since the Indians preferred to eat and rest most of the time, it is no wonder that the missions weren't completed for many years after they were started. Some even required 20 years or more for construction.

It is known that as the Indians made tile for the roofs, they bent the mixture across their upper legs. This is why old mission tiles aren't uniform.

It is interesting to note that 130 years after other people replaced the local Indians, these newer people dredged up shells left by Indians in the bay and transported them to Petaluma. There these shells were ground and used for chicken feed. It has been reported that this made the egg shells harder. These later local businessmen had found it necessary to utilize Indian left-overs so as to purchase their own food. Some call this advancement.

SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

Since the beginning of settlement in 1795 there has been the need now and then to raise money to help our community.

Both San Carlos and Belmont have endeavored to supplement taxes by groups raising funds.

Their service clubs have helped. The Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis always aid. Without them, and other service clubs, our local com-

munities couldn't provide many things which have been needed.

Possibly the most successful fund raiser has been announced in Brisbane. They allowed San Francisco garbage to be placed on mudflats, near their town, then sold the property to developers. News items have told of Brisbane receiving \$38 million recently.

With this large sum in the city coffers, it might be that citizens of Brisbane will not need to pay city taxes for awhile. One multi-story office building has been completed on the fill-land, and many more large buildings are being considered. They will all find themselves taxed, and this too, should help Brisbane.

Many years ago Belmont accomplished something similar, and presently we find the Kumam Corp. preparing to develop land where the Sea Scout's have their headquarters, where a garbage dump used to be.

In Sacramento, a few years ago, a law went into effect that land around the bay could no longer be filled unless a committee approved the project.

The citizens of San Carlos have raised considerable money by putting on their Chicken's Ball. This accomplishment allows citizens to work together and helps the community.

The San Mateo County Arts Council has improved the old buildings at Twin Pines Park in Belmont, at no cost to the city.

The Lions Clubs of both Belmont and San Carlos have given Christmas baskets to needy families, provided eye glasses for needy students, and in general helped their communities.

The Soroptomists have also worked hard and have helped both cities, as have the League of University Women, and the A.A.R.P. and Senior Citizen Groups, and League of Business and Professional Women.

San Carlos / Belmont History

Russel Estep

Many persons from across the country refer to Peninsulans as "Prune Pickers." In fact, while the Santa Clara Valley had their thousands of acres of prune orchards students often worked in the orchards and packing plants. Now with better opportunities for education, things have changed, both for the students and for the cities of San Carlos and Belmont. The prune trees are gone and condominiums built in their place.

Since the incorporations of San Carlos and Belmont more than 50 years ago, each city has tried to find ways to increase their revenue. Belmont had the good fortune of the College of Notre Dame moving here from San Jose in 1922.

Following the move, it took the college a while to increase their enrollment. Presently the enrollment is more than 1,400.

The students come from many far away places, including England, South America and Iran. Latest reports indicate that students in Notre Dame College also have originated from as many as 31 American states. The foreign students become Americanized at the College of Notre Dame, although we often hear them speaking their native languages while in our shopping areas.

The college itself, spends money for its operating expenses, and last year alone, they spent almost \$7 million here. Beside this, the students often are visited by their parents and other relatives, who stay at motels, and spend money. It is estimated that these people spent over \$55,000 last year in Belmont.

With one of the only four-year colleges in San Mateo County located here in Belmont, our local youths are easily able to gain "their smarts." Perhaps this accounts for the very high incomes the I.R.S. finds in San Carlos and Belmont.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Both San Carlos and Belmont have had "Welcoming Ladies" who greet newcomers. New persons arriving in a community appreciate this. This tradition had been established a long time ago. More than 4,000 years ago there were, no doubt, Indians who met the Minoans who are believed to have visited Massachusetts and built those rock houses.

East of Mexico City, there have been people who met those who came and built the pyramid of the sun. Surprisingly, it is almost an exact duplicate of pyramids in

Egypt. When the Danes traveled up the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes, and across them westward, they were likely met by Indians.

Our welcoming ladies find themselves busy and warmly accepted. Arriving tourists, or settlers, appreciate them.

In San Carlos, Jan Kinsley started her City Hostess Service back in 1948. She has been at it ever since and loves meeting newcomers.

Speaking of newcomers, she was surprised once upon ringing a doorbell to find the lady who opened the door was named

Mrs. Newcomer!

Jan says she welcomed one family three times in San Carlos. They moved away, then returned, not having found any other place they loved so much as San Carlos.

Jan says she is averaging fifty-five visits per month to newcomers to San Carlos. Her husband, Don, has joined her in the work, and has been helping since 1963.

They also have two helpers in their office, Doris Wright and Ruth Milhisler.

Jan's office started the Newcomers Club in San Carlos. This

gives new residents a chance to meet other people in town, and this has helped make San Carlos into the friendly community we see today.

In Belmont, Mrs. Irene Gough, has been a fixture for years. Irene regularly meets all new people arriving in Belmont and enjoys her work.

With tight money making it difficult for buyers to purchase their homes, we find more renters than formerly. Many of these renters say they expect to become homeowners when interest rates are lower sometime in the future.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Far out on the west side of Belmont there is a short street named Benson Way, located between Hallmark and St. James Avenue. This street was named in honor of Wallace Benson. Wally, as we affectionally called him, was a city councilmember, and mayor for many years. In fact he was our mayor for 12 years.

I first knew Wally more than 35 years ago. He sometimes drove a large car for a wealthy patient who was living in Twin Pines sanitarium.

Wally, like Winston Churchill, always had a cigar sticking from his mouth. It became his trademark. Probably he was the only councilmember who had the distinction of always smoking cigars.

Wally lived with his wife on Frances Court in Belmont, where they had moved to in 1946.

Wally was a native of Louisiana, although he soon lost his southern accent after moving to California.

After working for the Twin Pines patient, Wally started with the Argonaut Insurance Company in San Francisco, and was soon promoted to special agent, then to vice president. His work with Argonaut lasted 25 years, until his retirement.

Upon retirement he moved to a condominium on Chestnut Street in

San Carlos for awhile, then to a convalescent hospital in Laguna Beach, where he died in December 1983, one month ago.

Wally left our City Council in 1966. During the time he was active here he also served on the West Bay Rapid Transit Committee. He was active on the Government Research Council, and he was an active member of the San Mateo County Development Association. He also served on the San Mateo County Planning Commission, and the Council of Mayors of San Mateo County.

Wally Benson replaced Ildo Rosellini as Belmont's mayor in December 1955 when Ildo resigned. Charles Cook was the one who seconded Wally's nomination to become Mayor.

While Wallace Benson was mayor there were some who commented that he was too busy to keep his cigar lighted, that they had noticed it's fire had died out. Wally was very active and busy working for Belmont for many years and his own fire was well stoked. He had enthusiasm for Belmont, and tried to do everything he could for the good of the community. It is and proper that "Benson Way" carries his honorable name. We shall never forget Wally Benson.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Here in California we hardly realize how many of the names we use originated from the early Spanish who were here ahead of us, some as early as 1769. If we travel to Mexico we find many store and street signs are easily recognizable. People moving here from other parts of the country seem not to be aware of this.

When a couple from Rhode Island were in my office last week to look at my house listings I drove them to see a house on the Alameda de las Pulgas. They liked the house and asked what the strange street name meant. When I told them the name meant, "Avenue of the Fleas" they suddenly needed to look further before buying. They wouldn't even listen when I told them the fleas were long gone, and not even the flea's grandchildren were here now. They said, "let's look at something else."

It is true that early Spanish explorers found many fleas on their dogs and themselves after they slept in some abandoned Indian huts.

Later, as our Peninsula became settled, the name Alameda de las Pulgas was retained for a street which extends from Crystal Springs Road in Hillsborough, down to Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park. At that point the road continues on southward as Junipero Serra Boulevard.

The Avenue de las Pulgas may not have been the exact route traveled by the Spanish explorers, but if they traveled along its present route they would have crossed streams where they could have watered their livestock, or made their own overnight camps.

With people increasing very fast, the street is much too narrow in places. San Mateo has widened much of their portion of the old route, but Belmont and San Carlos haven't yet widened their portion. Menlo Park has widened and improved some of their part of the historic street, but Atherton hasn't improved theirs.

Probably no one in 1769 could have even dreamed that a trail for pack horses would ever become a

much traveled boulevard. The Avenue de las Pulgas carries nearly as many cars daily as does Santa Cruz Avenue and Raiston Avenue.

The time will come someday when the old street will become a six or eight lane expressway.

We must hope the name will never be changed. A touch of the historic past should remain so future

generations may remember those brave explorers who were here long ago. The Spanish wanted future people to remember, for they named the 34,000 acre land grant here "Rancho de las Pulgas." Now it comprises Menlo Park, Redwood City, Atherton, San Carlos, Belmont and San Mateo. What a "spread" the Spanish land grant contained!

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Here in California we hardly realize how many of the names we use originated from the early Spanish who were here ahead of us, some as early as 1769. If we travel to Mexico we find many store and street signs are easily recognizable. People moving here from other parts of the country seem not to be aware of this.

When a couple from Rhode Island were in my office last week to look at my house listings I drove them to see a house on the Alameda de las Pulgas. They liked the house and asked what the strange street name meant. When I told them the name meant, "Avenue of the Fleas" they suddenly needed to look further before buying. They wouldn't even listen when I told them the fleas were long gone, and not even the flea's grandchildren were here now. They said, "let's look at something else."

It is true that early Spanish explorers found many fleas on their dogs and themselves after they slept in some abandoned Indian huts.

Later, as our Peninsula became settled, the name Alameda de las Pulgas was retained for a street which extends from Crystal Springs Road in Hillsborough, down to Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park. At that point the road continues on southward as Junipero Serra Boulevard.

The Avenue de las Pulgas may not have been the exact route traveled by the Spanish explorers, but if they traveled along its present route they would have crossed streams where they could have watered their livestock, or made their own overnight camps.

With people increasing very fast, the street is much too narrow in places. San Mateo has widened much of their portion of the old route, but Belmont and San Carlos haven't yet widened their portion. Menlo Park has widened and improved some of their part of the historic street, but Atherton hasn't improved theirs.

Probably no one in 1769 could have even dreamed that a trail for pack horses would ever become a

much traveled boulevard. The Avenue de las Pulgas carries nearly as many cars daily as does Santa Cruz Avenue and Ralston Avenue.

The time will come someday when the old street will become a six or eight lane expressway.

We must hope the name will never be changed. A touch of the historic past should remain so future

generations may remember those brave explorers who were here long ago. The Spanish wanted future people to remember, for they named the 34,000 acre land grant here "Rancho de las Pulgas." Now it comprises Menlo Park, Redwood City, Atherton, San Carlos, Belmont and San Mateo. What a "spread" the Spanish land grant contained!

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Drive-in theatres and miniature golf courses have had their places in local history. Some will recall the miniature golf course that was on the east side of Laurel Street in San Carlos. Others will recall the once-popular Starlight Theatre located on the north side of Harbor Boulevard in Belmont.

Things change, and now everyone seems only interested in computers.

One of the first drive-in theatres on the Peninsula was here in Belmont. Another was built on the west side of Bayshore Highway in Palo Alto. That too, was long ago.. was long ago.

It is surprising to learn that when the Starlight was operating in Belmont, 30 percent of their customers drove there from San Francisco. Such theatres were a novelty. People could sit in their cars and enjoy the movie, and didn't need to hire a babysitter.

Two brothers, James B. Howell and Thornton Howell owned the Belmont Starlight, together with I. B. McMonagle.

The theatre was licensed under Patent No. 1,909,537, held by Park-In Theatres, Inc. of Camden, N.J.

The Howell Engineering Co. designed the theatre, and G.O. Wooten is said to have been the architect. John Larsen of Los Gatos was the general contractor.

The theatre was designed to hold 700 cars, most of which contained two or more persons. Admission was 54 cents plus tax, and children were admitted for only 21 cents including tax. Construction was finished, and the Starlight Theatre was opened in September, 1947.

Robert L. Lippert Theatres Co. were engaged to manage operation of the theatre.

A motorized canteen was driven around among the cars offering soft drinks, sandwiches, ice cream, etc.

The idea for drive-in theatres soon took hold, and eventually there were several thousand drive-ins throughout the United States.

The parking spaces were all slightly elevated for the car's front

end, so everyone could view the screen without any obstruction. People needed only to back their cars a little, or go forward a little, to adjust their view.

Car speakers were located on posts beside each parking space, and each speaker had a volume control. People were cautioned when

leaving, to replace the speaker on the hook on the post.

Presently TV allows everyone to view movies in their homes, and even housed theatres aren't as popular as they used to be.

We miss our Starlight Theatre. A computer company occupies the historic site. This seems to be the present trend.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Trains, like many other things are declining in use, but for long trips across the country, roomettes, or compartments, are in occasional use instead of the famous Pullman cars. The Pullman family had owned 11 acres, and a log cabin hunting lodge, at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas, in Belmont. -

Mrs. Annette Alexander later purchased the Pullman property and once allowed our Belmont Chamber of Commerce Directors to use the lodge for a meeting. She had it well-furnished, and we enjoyed the privilege of meeting there. Her chauffeur later allowed a log to roll from the fireplace and the lodge was destroyed. Mrs. Alexander then sold the property for the Safeway store, and a portion of the land was sold for a Greek Orthodox Church. Most of the beautiful trees were cut to make room for the construction.

Following Mr. Pullman's death, Mrs. Hattie Sanger Pullman, died in Pasadena in 1921. Two daughters were mentioned in her will. They were Mrs. Harriet Pullman Carolan, wife of Francis Carolan, and Mrs. Florence Pullman Lowden, wife of an Illinois governor.

Harriet Carolan and her husband owned 400 acres in Hillsborough, where they had a 99-

room mansion built. It is still standing there, vacant, on Remillard Drive. A later owner found it too costly to maintain, and tried to give it to the city of Hillsborough, but the gift was declined. Still other owners later subdivided the acreage. Two grandchildren of the Pullman's lived in Belmont as late as 1922.

The Pullman sleeping cars had bunks which opened down from the car's upper walls. They were unlike the ordinary sleeping cars which had upper and lower bunks, enclosed with curtains.

The Pullman bunks were curved so they offered a pleasing appearance when closed during the daylight hours.

Cost for an overnight in a Pullman car was more than the railroad company's cheaper sleeping cars. Mattresses in the Pullman cars were of superior grade, so travelers could get a good night's rest.

Mr. Pullman's invention of his sleeping cars allowed people to cross the continent easier. As we cross the continent now in five hours, as we eat a meal and view a movie, we miss what no longer happens. It used to be real pleasure to ride in a Pullman car, and to be lulled to sleep by the forlorn whistle of a steam locomotive. A sound seldom heard anymore.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

When the old Caldwell Tavern at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue was demolished to make room for a Shell Service Station, (where Wendy's restaurant stands) some Spanish coins from the early 1800s were found. The tavern wasn't there that early, but Spanish people likely kept some coins awhile.

Yet before the Spaniards lived in the area there is proof that much earlier people had lived in Belmont. When an excavation was being made north of Ralston Avenue, on Old County Road very ancient bones were found. Examination of these old bones proved that they were different in shape than Costano Indian bones, so they must have come from considerably earlier people. The date when they were uncovered was June 1890, and the excavation was for a new house for George C. Ross.

Many things have been unearthed when excavations have been made. Another was those old square nails that were found on the east side of Old County Road where Belmont's first school house had stood. Those

square nails are a rarity now-a-days.

During World War II, Louis Morton found an old horseshoe where Hammerson's blacksmith shop had been, at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. Lou took it to his real estate office and nailed it above his door — open side up. He told me that way it would hold his luck, something like when we had a new moon that curved upward. Lou always said then it never rained, because the moon held the water. Lou became a well-to-do man, so we must presume his superstitions helped him. He never walked under a ladder, or let a black cat cross in front of him. He explained that he was just careful.

Old records indicate that persons walking the old trails within the Janke Picnic Grounds (Twin Pines Park) often found coins with early dates.

It is interesting speculation that items unearthed in San Carlos and Belmont were different from those unearthed in San Francisco. When excavations for new high-rise buildings are made in San Francisco's

older areas, there are usually many collectors there watching the work. One told me they look for "Dead Soldiers," which he explained meant old whiskey bottles. He said that was all they usually found, but he said the 150-year-old bottles could be sold to other collectors for considerable money. They are rare and worth collecting.

One peninsula collector commented to me that some Belmont and San Carlos people go to the foothills to mine for gold, and that they don't see the forest for the trees. He said many wonderful opportunities for them exist right here at home, which most of them seem to overlook. Our Peninsula has a great history.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

People have asked where the lumber came from when the first houses were built in San Carlos and Belmont. In 1850, and before, there weren't any houses in San Carlos, except the Arguello's, and apparently only Angelo's Hotel in Belmont. However, neither San Carlos nor Belmont was a town yet, although Christian Bollinger who lived where the lakes are west of Belmont, was listed as living in Belmont. His house was made of sawed lumber.

John Coppinger was the first arrival in Woodside in 1835. Soon after he arrived he received a land grant totalling many thousands of acres. It was named Canada de Ramundo. He quickly built a sawmill to provide lumber for other settlers.

In 1838, James Pease arrived from Scotland. He bought land from Coppinger and soon had a sawmill operating.

Even Dr. R.O. Tripp, who had arrived in 1850, soon saw the need for redwood pilings and arranged to have great quantities shipped by schooners from Mezeville to San Francisco.

Another early Peninsula arrival was Charles Brown who arrived in 1837. After buying some of the Coppinger land, he too soon built a sawmill.

Very soon there were 15 sawmills operating in the Woodside area.

Old records tell that the first sawmill in the Woodside area was built at the intersection of Portola Road and the La Honda Road. It was on the flat area near the creek, east of the Portola Road.

Of the 15 land grants in San Mateo County the last to be recorded was in 1846 when "Rancho San Mateo" was granted. It was granted to Cavetano Arenas. He didn't keep it long and soon sold it to W.M.D. Howard. Descendants of Howard may still reside in Hillsborough.

When driving along Skyline

Boulevard, large redwood stumps of age are sometimes three feet are often visible. Some measure eight to 10 feet across. Second growth trees have usually sprouted from the large old stumps, and second growth trees 150 years in diameter.

In early San Carlos and Belmont bandages on hands usually indicated who was building a house.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

80

As the population in San Carlos and Belmont increases, the need arises for space for more people. Those with the original large acreage subdivided their property and sold smaller portions to others, and the later people had less land to move around on.

Everyone who has visited Mt. Vernon was told of George Washington's 4,000 acres. Presently, the D.A.R. ladies own 400 of the original acres, including the house. All the rest was subdivided many years ago.

Here in San Carlos the original owners, Arguello, and later Mezes, were the first property owners. Later, Senator Phelps arrived and bought part of what became San Carlos, and Brittan bought most of the rest.

Senator Phelps sold 175 of his 3,500 acres to Timothy Hopkins, a land developer, who began offering small tracts out of it. Hopkins had his acreage surveyed, and divided up so he could sell it. He had dirt streets marked out and a map made. His small plots only contained an acre and an acre and one half.

In 1899 two boys on a bicycle ran into Senator Phelps and he is reported as having died from the accident. Phelps' son, George W. Phelps, then began subdividing the remaining land into five and 10 acre plots.

William W. Hull came to the area and purchased land west of the railroad tracks, and built a house and brick yard where the present day Hull Drive is located. The Hull home was framed between two large palm trees, and was an attractive house. His brick yard was nearby and old-timers will remember seeing large piles of bricks there.

Another early developer was the San Carlos Land Co., who bought some of the land and again subdivided it. It was they who built the San Carlos train station, and they are reported to have brought expert stone masons here who had built Stanford University for Leland Stanford.

In 1907 the San Carlos Park Syndicate was organized, headed by Bill Woolsley, acting as secretary, and their manager. The company bought many unsold lots from the San Carlos Land Co., and they began selling small plots.

It was they who bought, and brought, the Ohio State Building down the Bay from the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. It remained until the 1960s, when it caught fire.

Then, in 1915 Fred Drake, a well-known Redwood City real estate man, looked over San Carlos.

A few years later he built the building at the south-west corner of San Carlos Avenue and El Camino Real. He became very active in the development of San Carlos.

Although much of the White Oaks area remained a hayfield until World War II, other areas in San Carlos were subdivided, more than in some cities. Many lots were surveyed to be only 40 feet wide, and there was to be only a four foot side setback.

San Carlos people get along well and many prefer this cozy arrangement. It seems that lots get smaller and smaller.

In 1896, several things happened. New improvements started to come to Belmont. An old newspaper has an item dated Jan. 9, 1896 stating, "The spirit of improvement and a San Mateo contractor simultaneously struck this town, and it now rejoices in several yards of concrete walks. One can now walk dry shod in front of Yount's, Emmetts, Hammersons, places."

This would have been at the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. Where there is a positive, there is always a negative, so following this, it is probable the Emmett store could no longer sell their popular "foot scrapers."

Then on Jan. 23, 1896 this old newspaper states that a greater improvement came to Belmont. The San Mateo Electric Light Company extended their power line to Belmont, and some citizens had electricity. They laid away their kerosene lamps.

Then on Dec. 24, 1896, local people held a meeting and organized what they called "Council of Chosen Friends in Belmont." The council was made up of 35 members.

They held an election at their meeting and chose officers for the first term. Elected were J.H. Thomas, R. Spencer, Mrs. W.A. Emmett, W.F. Swift, Mr. Doane, Mrs. W.R. Schneider, Miss L. Roussel, Miss M. Roussel, Miss Fannie Allen, Will Yount, James Allen, A. Roussel, Mr. Schneider, J. Clark and Clarence Day. These people didn't call their organization a Chamber of Commerce, yet they all agreed to work to help the town.

Old records seem not to indicate very much happening afterward, until June 12, 1902, when George Winter built a saloon for W.A. Emmett adjacent to Emmett's store on Old County Road. This new building was reported as being 20 feet in width, and 50 feet in depth. It is probably still standing, for there is a little building with those measurements adjacent to the large old pink building.

The next big happening in Belmont came when the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur moved to Belmont from San Jose, in 1922.

The next report of consequence came May 29, 1923 when the first movie came to Belmont. The announcement reports that the latest movies were shown weekly in the Belmont School.

Belmont was growing, and on May 17, 1923 the Southern Pacific Company moved their train station a few feet farther away from the tracks so passengers would have more room while waiting for a train.

Another old clipping tells that in 1923 a telephone was installed in Emmett's store: it being the first in Belmont.

Soon the Bay View Heights subdivision was started, the Belmont Country Club subdivisions were started and Belmont took off like a modern-day rocket. The population in 1930 was slightly over 900 while today it is about 27,000.

It may be that the "push" given by the early-day group really started Belmont along the right track to the city it has become today. Our present Chamber of Commerce people are working together to keep the momentum moving ahead in the right direction.

We should all be thankful that Belmont has these public-spirited people working for our city. Their efforts are appreciated.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

It has always been necessary for restaurant owners to carefully choose names which attract the public when opening a restaurant. Usually they succeed. In earlier years, this wasn't so essential. There weren't many places to choose from.

The first eating place in San Carlos and Belmont was the old Angelo's Hotel. It was located at Ralston Avenue and Old County Road in 1850. Of course Old County Road was then known as El Camino Real.

The old Belmont Hotel and the American House, near Angelo's, began offering dinners during the years following Angelo's opening.

Soon, several coffee shops opened in Belmont, and by 1900 there seems to have been at least three places where people could eat. Chain operators didn't appear until after World War II.

The Villa Chartier opened on Fifth Avenue in Belmont during World War II, but later moved to San Mateo. When in Belmont it was located in the home of Mr. Chartier, and customers enjoyed their meals when eating on the glassed-in front porch.

Also during World War II Rupert Taylor came from British Columbia and opened "The Gables" restaurant on El Camino Real in Belmont, about a block north of Ralston Avenue.

During this period, "Bondy's" in Belmont was a popular place. After Mr. Bondeson moved to San Francisco, "Ed's Chuck Wagon" took over. Meals were served cafeteria style at a counter.

Later, Al Malatesta came down from San Francisco and opened his "Iron Gate" restaurant, after placing heavy iron gates at the entrance.

Another favorite eating place, starting after the Carlmont shopping center was developed from land where the St. Joseph Military Academy used to be, is the "Pine Brook Inn." It is crowded at meal time. When large concrete pipes were installed to handle the creek's rise during heavy rains, the restaurant owners had a pump instal-

led, and a small brook still flows atop the large buried pipe. Customers can still look out at the flowing water when eating. It is relaxing.

Then there is "The Van's" restaurant on the hillside near Belmont's north end, west of El Camino Real. That building was brought down the Bay following the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915. The building had been the Japanese exhibit building during the World's Fair. Many of us visited it there. In Belmont, reports are that for a time the building was a bootlegging outlet. The restaurant is still operating and customers can enjoy a view of the bay.

There are many other eating places in San Carlos and Belmont. Most are very good.

On the El Camino Real in Belmont we find the name on a restaurant which, if we think of TV advertising about choking, might be referring to safety. The restaurant is named "Swallow." Presumably their customers shouldn't need help. It is a good place to eat.

In San Carlos, one prominent and successful restaurant is "Salvatore's" on El Camino Real. It has had several owners, and several names: one of which was "The Gold Platter," changed from "The Dog Platter."

When it carried the name "The Dog Platter" their business sort of declined. Who would invite a girlfriend or mother-in-law whom one wanted to impress to eat at "The Dog Platter?" Names chosen for a restaurant appear to bring success or failure.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

In December, 1955, the Notre Dame Auditorium was finished, and opened. It doesn't seem so long ago.

The beautiful auditorium cost \$200,000., and today it would probably cost \$1.5 million.

Mr. Vincent Raney was the architect. He lives in Belmont, up a steep driveway, north of Ralston Avenue, in a beautiful home he designed.

Before the large auditorium was built, Belmont had no such facility. Belmonters are fortunate to have the auditorium here. Many concerts have been held in it since its opening, and the first one was outstanding. A special concert by a 25 piece section of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra provided the music.

The auditorium had seats for 728 people, and all seats were filled the first night. Mr. Alfred Graziani, who then lived at 1513 Ralston Avenue, was master of ceremonies for the first nighters.

The building covers 12,000 square feet, including dressing rooms, foyer, box office and space for equipment.

Since its opening, many world-renowned artists have appeared, much to the delight of Peninsula residents. People from neighboring cities attend the various func-

tions, and the auditorium is much in demand. At the time it was built, it was one of the finest auditoriums in California.

To finance the construction, various ideas were proposed. To furnish the seats and equipment, several fund raisers were tried. One was suggesting donations of \$100. for each seat, with the contributors name to be placed permanently on a brass plaque at the back of the seat.

At the time, Mrs. Annette Alexander owned the present Belmont Hills sanitarium. She was liberal in helping community projects, and her name was placed on the back of one seat near the right side of the center row of seats. While at the opening night concert, I found myself sitting in a seat she had donated.

That year, 1955, seems to have been a banner year for Belmont. That was when Ildo Rosellini turned the Mayor's office over to Wally

Benson, and when the Barrett School was planning a \$350,000. expansion, and the vast San Juan sewerage area plan was being promoted, and the city council approved the city hall annex, making the city hall larger, as we know it now; Mr. Fred Nelson was city manager (or administrator) and there were many major changes in Belmont.

All the above helped our city to grow, but among the improvements, the one we enjoy and appreciate greatly is the Notre Dame Auditorium. We are all glad it is in Belmont, and that it has been here almost 30 years.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

All of us who have been to the arctic have observed Eskimos raising children for other than their own families. We have seen how they love and care for orphans. This need has existed everywhere for thousands of years.

To fill this need the Children's Home Society was organized in 1891. An auxiliary of that group was organized here in 1962.

Charter members in the Carlmont Group were Mrs. Ceres Schroeder, Mrs. Arthur Tonsager, Mrs. D. Robert Ward, Mrs. Frank Plaisted, Mrs. Ernest Nelson, and Mrs. Max Carmen. They wanted to help with counseling, and to help childless families find the right children to adopt. Only persons in San Carlos or Belmont were eligible to join the local organization. Mrs. Ceres Schroeder was elected the first president.

After several meetings, in which by-laws were prepared, the first official meeting was held at Mrs. Schroeder's home. In addition to the earlier organizational group,

others present were Mrs. Tom Pardoe, Mrs. Don Allen, Mrs. Phyllis Ricklefs. Also Mrs. Milard Harvey, Mrs. John Hofheimer, Mrs. C. Laughhead, Mrs. Clarence

Gilroy, Mrs. C. Neary, and Mrs. N. Plazec were present.

The group met in members' homes each month. Also before the Art Council took over the Twin Pines Park building, many art show meetings were held there; some to raise money.

The San Carlos-Belmont Auxiliary is a branch of the larger Northern California, and east bay group.

To help with their projects many fund-raisers were tried. On May 25 of this year a golf tournament will be held at the California Golf Club in South San Francisco. It is open to all golfers but reservations must be made.

In addition to helping place parentless children, and adoptees, the group helps with counseling families having domestic problems.

The Carlmont group presently has 16 members, plus 65 associate members, and six sponsors who have each paid in \$150 for their life memberships. There are also four "Townsend Club" members that include firms and individuals who have donated \$500, or more, to the multi service group.

Babies available for adoption aren't as plentiful now as formerly. The Auxiliary has helped many handicapped children and ethnic young people to find homes.

As you grow older and older and nearer the Pearly Gates wouldn't it be nice to arrive and tell St. Peter that you were already an "Angel?" Then you wouldn't have to stand in line. Wouldn't that be something!

SC/Belmont History By Russel Estep

Newcomers frequently ask why the large hill west of the El Camino Real at the south end of Belmont, isn't within Belmont's boundaries.

About 40, or so, years ago when a developer wanted to start building there, only San Carlos could provide the water supply. Belmont would have had to purchase large pumps which would have been very costly. The Belmont County Water district didn't have the money; so the area became a part of San Carlos. There are some people who refer to people living on Buckland Avenue, as "living on San Carlos Mountain".

Another area that seems confusing to strangers is the area across Bayshore Highway, near Marine World. While the Sea Scout Base is within the Belmont boundaries, Marine World, and Redwood Shores are in Redwood City.

When developers wanted to develop what had been mud flats, many tests were made of the underlying soil. Some engineers claimed the entire area might change to soft mud similar to the density of gravy, if a hard earthquake should come. The development was held up for several years, until finally approved. There have been no problems.

That area was unlike Brewer's Island, adjacent to it on the north, where Tom Therkeldsen raised his dairy cattle on his 400 acres. His

land was above high tide. Jack Foster built Foster City there.

Although many Belmont citizens claimed they would like to include the mud flats in their city, approval was finally given to Redwood City at the request of Leslie Salt Company, who were the owners. Redwood City claimed they could service the development better. Construction was started and streets paved and hundreds of condominiums and new houses built.

It seems that these newcomers didn't have enough children to justify building a large new school for all grades. Belmont bought six acres of the undeveloped mud flats for use as a future school site. They are still holding onto it.

However, in all the large Redwood Shores development approximately 220 students are being bussed by Sam Trans to Belmont and San Mateo schools. Redwood Shores is within the Belmont School District. The Belmont school parcel is being partially used for a small park.

Belmont's boundaries will limit the spread of future housing, but like San Francisco, which is about all built upon, Belmont may have to go "high rise" someday. They might end up having the highest buildings on the Peninsula, for people do hear about Belmont coast-to-coast and many want to live here. They will keep coming.

SC/Belmont History

In 1850, the first intersection in Belmont was at Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. Of course those street names were different then. Old County Road being El Camino Real, and Ralston Avenue simply being the road to the coast.

In San Carlos the first intersection preceded Belmont's by many years; theirs being San Carlos Avenue (then Cypress St.) and the El Camino Real, now Old County Road, the Arguello's driveway having been San Carlos Avenue from 1795 onward.

Traditionally, the main intersections have been considered the heart of most cities. San Carlos was held pretty much to this concept.

When the crest of Brittan Avenue and Crestview was to be subdivided, the plans called for a shopping center on the hilltop. A few years later the shopping center was canceled and we find condominiums at the south-west corner of the intersection. San Carlos has retained their city center near the train depot.

When some east coast people came into my office and wanted to know where the main intersection of Belmont was, they laughed when I told them it was Ralston Avenue and El Camino Real. They said they had been out to the Carlmont Shopping Center, and to the shopping center on the east side of the railroad tracks, then they had found a sign saying, "Belmont's Business Center", south on El Camino Real near San Carlos. They seemed amused.

Of course the main intersection concept has applied temporarily in

some cities. Consider Mission Dolores in San Francisco. Where would San Francisco's city center be if lower Market Street hadn't been developed? And Redwood City's, had it remained at Main and Broadway?

We seldom hear of one important intersection in Redwood City. For more than a century people referred to the Woodside Road Crossing and El Camino Real, where Main Street turned northward, as "Five Points". Since the concrete overpass was built, we seldom ever hear of "Five Points" anymore. Maybe it's because no one is delayed at the intersection.

In Belmont, the busy intersection at Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue was well known 134 years ago. Then, only 65 years ago when Bertram Johnson and his friend, Keko Pennington raced their little racing car eastward down the Ralston Avenue hill, across the intersection, they seldom had to worry about meeting traffic. Presently, with shopping center activity, more and more cars use the intersection.

It seems logical to think that in only a few years both Belmont and San Carlos will have so many citizens that there will be multi-story office and store buildings along many streets. Belmont's various shopping centers might be connected with one another. Then people might again say that Belmont's city center was El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue. Who can say what's ahead? I'm unable to.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

For a long time we have been told that Indians had lived here before the Spanish came. Proof has finally emerged right in downtown Belmont.

Indian bones and other archeological relics have been unearthed.

The discovery was made when the excavation started for a new office building on Sixth Avenue, near Ralston Avenue.

Several old houses were removed to make way for the building, and the ground was cleared of debris. Then the bulldozers moved in and began scraping the cleared ground. Soon they had made indentations below the surface a few feet. Then, lo and behold, they found ancient bones.

There were sea shells in abundance, and now we know the local Indians didn't eat all the shell fish beside the bay. They brought some home to their crude camps, where Twin Pines Park is located. Why they buried people so close to their camp might indicate the person or persons had expired during the hard winter rains. This is speculation.

Presently all construction work has stopped while the Holman Associates, Archeological Consultants, look for more bones. Their company has Randy S. Wiberg and Bill Slater, boring holes down four feet with a post-hole digger, testing what might be there.

So far, human bones, shells and pieces of hard, slate-like rock have

been found. Thousand of years ago Indians were known to have made their crude tools from such rock.

With plenty of shell fish by the bay, deer close by in the hills, good drinking water flowing down by their camp from the large spring which fills the reservoir built much later by Mr. (William Chapman) Ralston's Chinese laborers, the local Indians had at their finger tips what Belmont citizens strive a lifetime for— independence and nothing to worry about.

It has been reported that the local Costanos Indians weren't war-like. They had everything they needed right at home. It may be that they weren't continually attacked because other tribes in Central California also had no need for more than their own local environment could provide.

Randy Wiberg and Bill Slater say that they are only going to make test holes where the piers for the new building will be.

If there should happen to be other burials within the scope of the new construction, they won't be disturbed. We trust that occupants of the new building won't find doors that squeak and walls that creak at times when no earthquake is taking place.

We also hope they won't suffer bad luck. Randy and Bill are doing everything possible to prevent such problems.

SC/Belmont History

Mr. William C. Ralston died in 1875, over a 100 years ago. When he lived in Belmont there were very few people in the area. The new railroad had been completed from San Francisco to San Jose. The Belmont railroad station had burned in December 1872. A freight car was placed on a siding to be used as a temporary freight depot. The station wasn't replaced until February 1873.

During this era President Ulysses Grant was a guest of Mr. Ralston at his large Belmont residence. Although Mr. Ralston liked to drive his fast horses and race the trains from San Francisco to Belmont, old records indicate that President Grant came to Belmont by train. He was accompanied by his secret service guards all of whom stayed at the Ralston mansion while here.

The only traffic the group would have have seen was an occasional buggy or wagon traveling along the El Camino Real; which was our Old County Road. The steam train the president was traveling on went at the terrible speed of 25 miles an hour, but because it slowed for crossings (there were no crossing guards or arms yet), the trip from San Francisco took one and one half hours.

Steam trains were a necessity at that time—not yet a novelty. No one could have visualized that in a little over a century other people would travel 60 miles to ride a steam train at Felton, as many people do now.

Near the Belmont train station was a new saloon, opened by Ranger and Francis, who named it the "Grand Saloon". One must wonder whether President Grant visited the place? He was known to be a heavy drinker. The saloon was near the depot.

Other important events during this same era was an election in Belmont July 26, 1873, voting for a tax to maintain a free school east of the railroad tracks.

On December 20, 1873 an announcement was made that a cemetery consisting of 10 acres was to be started west of Belmont on a knoll referred to as The Mounds. Probably the location of the indigent burying ground near Christian Drive. It's still there.

On May 17, 1873, an announcement was made that Thomas Reed was erecting a large dairy barn 60 by 100 feet in size, in Belmont.

A social ball was given at the Belmont Hotel Jan. 17, 1874, and tickets, including supper, were \$2.

Mr. Ralston's visitors stepped off the train at the newly rebuilt depot, then rode in Mr. Ralston's hack up unpaved Ralston Avenue to the large residence. The only sounds they heard were dogs barking, chickens crowing, an occasional cow bawling, and a steam engine's pleasant whistle.

They must have found Belmont relaxing. We wonder what they would think if they were here now?

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Something great has happened in Belmont and it was brought about by the American Association of University Women.

Specifically it came about through the Historic Preservation Study Section of the above group. The group has compiled a pamphlet describing buildings of an historic nature in Belmont. This is something that has been badly needed. San Carlos has had such a booklet for several years, and it is in great demand.

The Belmont booklet not only lists 16 places to visit in Belmont, but tells what to look for, and a short history of each place.

Since Belmont of earlier years was concentrated, you can make the walking tour in a short time. But, wear walking shoes.

WALKING TOUR

Buildings described in the wonderful new pamphlet are the Church of the Good Shephard, 1936—5th Avenue, the Victorian Cottages at O'Neill and Sixth Avenue, the old Emmett house at 943 Ralston Avenue, the American Hotel, 703 Ralston Avenue, and the Belmont Hotel, 951 Old County Road.

Also, the Emmett General Store at 700 Ralston Avenue, the location of the old train station which was demolished years ago, Janke's Beer Garden, 1245 Ralston Avenue—including information about the mansion—and the log cabin in Twin Pines Park.

Still more—the Jen's house on Ralston Avenue and South Road (location only), Havard House 700 South Road, Alexander Sanitarium, 1301 Ralston Avenue,

William Chapman Raiston's home at 1500 Ralston Avenue, his carriage house, the Victorian house at Frances and Notre Dame Avenue, (2nd from corner), the Belmont Country Club club house, 725 the Alameda de las Pulgas.

Then there is "Little Belmont," where Mrs. Raiston lived for a few years following her husband's death, Alameda and Ralston Avenue, Sharon's Lake built by more than 100 Chinese by hand labor for Mr. Raiston's irrigation supply, and the "Teahouse" now the Van's restaurant at 815 Belmont Avenue.

INTERESTING

The pamphlet contains some very interesting reading about each of the historic buildings, and also contains two pages about Belmont, and how it came about.

Also, there is a map of downtown Belmont, with the locations plainly marked so anyone can walk by the historic sites.

No doubt these very excellent pamphlets will be available at the Belmont Chamber of Commerce office, and other places within Belmont.

Whether you take the walk or not, you will find the pamphlet very interesting. It is a "must" for all Belmont residents.

The American Association of University Women have worked for several years to publish this pamphlet and they must be highly commended.

We, in Belmont thank them, and we will be forever grateful for the work they have done for our city. They are a great group of ladies, and we are lucky to have them in the community.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

As more and more newcomers move to San Carlos and Belmont the percentage of those who were here before they all came becomes much smaller. If we should ask 500 people if they were here before the Sunnyvale Air Station (Moffitt Field) was built, we would receive a negative reply from about 499 of them.

It would be hard for them to visualize that that area was all planted with row crops. The road passing through was two lanes.

In 1931 the government needed a west coast anchorage for the dirigible Akron. They purchased the large fields and contracted to have the first large hangar built. It was to be more than 1,000 feet long, and 211 feet in height. The two smaller hangars were built during WW-2 to accommodate "blimps" that searched for foreign submarines off our coast.

FIRST DIRIGIBLE

When the first big dirigible arrived, the large hangar wasn't yet finished, so the dirigible was tethered to a mooring mast, and allowed to shift with the wind, with the stern fastened to wheels rolling on a large circular track.

Just about everyone on the Peninsula at that time went to see the big airship.

Next, the government needed housing for the men stationed at the new airbase. They contracted a Texas company to construct the buildings you see there with the tile roofs. All the other buildings were built later. I was one of the carpenters who helped to build those first buildings.

The project took a year and half. Until the floors had been poured we had to work in the adobe mud. The winter was rainy and at one

time, it snowed an inch.

HANGAR ROOF

That morning the contractor thought it would be dangerous for us to work on the buildings, so I took advantage of the time and climbed a zig-zag set of steps inside the large hangar to get up onto the roof. Arriving there, I walked the length of the large hangar, and was much interested in the wonderful view across the prune orchards in Santa Clara Valley. Probably I was lucky not to have slid off the curving roof, but I had fun.

Later, the Akron was wrecked and another dirigible came to the new airbase. The latest airship was the newer and larger "Macon." It, too, was wrecked off California coast a few years later. The government then gave up building dirigibles. WW-2 came along and Moffitt Field was needed for airplanes, not dirigibles.

Several accidents happened later at the large airbase, and I happened to witness one. As I drove along Bayshore after the war a plane coming in for a landing fell on the golf course as it approached the runway.

CRASH

Another accident happened when an officer in charge of the airfield had a blinking sign constructed at the approach end of the runway. The sign blinked "wheels" over and over. A pilot from Texas arrived late one night, and thinking that was the place to put his wheels down, he landed on the sign and demolished it.

Our newcomers probably haven't known about all these things, and when they pass by Moffitt Field they may look around and think of some of the things we earlier "pioneers" have known about and have seen.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Old records show that a son-in-law of Adolph Sutro had lived in Belmont in the Splivalo house for a while. Mr. Sutro was the engineer who prepared a drainage plan for the Comstock Mine in Nevada, when the shafts became flooded with hot water.

The Comstock mine had been William Chapman Ralston's first source of money. Silver was in demand, and the price high. Some reports state that Mr. Ralston's income from the mine was more than \$40,000 per week.

Everything was going good for the mine until hot water broke through into it. All mining had to stop. Prices of stock fell, and many people suffered financial ruin. Then came Adolph Sutro to the miner's aid, and a long tunnel was dug from the Washoe Valley eastward into the mine shafts. The water gradually lowered so the mine could be worked again.

It is very interesting to tour the Comstock mine, located between Carson City and Virginia City. Tours are available throughout the week. Several shafts are kept in condition to make it safe for tourists.

The Comstock mine was one of the largest sources for silver during Mr. Ralston's lifetime. He died in 1875, but before that the mine was employing several hundred miners.

One man whom Mr. Sutro employed to help with his tunnel was Sandy Bowers. Sandy became very wealthy from bonuses he received, and when work was finished, he built a large house on the west side of Washoe Valley. It is presently a National Historic landmark, and a Nevada Historical building. It is open to tourists throughout the week, and maintained by the Histo-

rical Society in the area.

But back to Mr. Sutro.

Mr. Adolph Sutro built his home on the top of the cliff near San Francisco, Cliffhouse, where he lived until his death. The Cliff below his house was later sprayed with concrete to prevent landslides down onto the street across from the cliffhouse. No one could locate where Mr. Sutro's remains were buried, until twenty years ago, when workmen repairing the concrete discovered an urn buried half-way down the vertical cliff. It contained the name of Adolph Sutro.

While he lived at the cliff-top he had Sutro Baths built north of his home. They are gone now, but when there, the manager displayed some items not often seen. One was a steam motorcycle. Another was a seven-foot high "Ox", said to have been the largest oxen in the world.

The era of Mr. Ralston and Mr. Sutro must have been an exciting one, and people in Belmont were a part of what was happening.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Here in San Carlos and Belmont there have been some errors in judgment, just as in all communities throughout the country.

One in San Carlos was the large race track that was built near the railroad tracks and completed in November 1921. When it was destroyed by fire on April 18, 1923, it was never rebuilt. Apparently its construction was ahead of its need, and the developers had guessed wrong.

Another nearby error was when Pacific City was built at the bay-side in Burlingame in 1922. The site wasn't the right one, with the strong winds and un-cleaned-up bay. Both the site and timing were wrong, and it folded in 1923.

Another error that received considerable publicity happened in San Jose in 1881 when a group raised \$3,500 to build a 237 foot high metal tower to light San Jose. They placed it at the intersection of Santa Clara Street and Market Street. There were to be a group of six, 4,000 candle power arc lights at the top of the tower's triangle, and several other arc lights on the four legs. This was to light up all of San Jose, but that didn't happen, even though San Jose was a small town then.

The tower legs were anchored at each of the four street corners.

FOR THE BIRDS

Birds were attracted by the bright arc lights and often flew into the tower. People walking by sometimes paused to feel the dead birds if they happened to be edible and warm.

From the area of North 17th Street the lights could be seen but

no lighting benefit came from the lighting arrangement. The only areas actually benefitted were those in the first block at the intersection.

In 1889 the Electric Improvement Company was formed and they obtained a street lighting franchise. In 1891 they convinced a San Jose court that the tower was on public property without a permit, and if they could use it this would benefit everybody.

Then in 1902 a company calling themselves the United Gas and Electric Company took over the previous company, and they placed new electric lights at the top of the tower and down each of its legs.

DIDN'T HAPPEN

Now, they said, all of San Jose should be brightened at night. But that didn't happen either.

Finally, on Dec. 3, 1915, during a tremendous storm with 8 miles per hour winds, the tower blew over. It fell southward on Market Street, reaching nearly a city block.

When word came at 11:55 a.m. at my school, all the boys jumped on their bicycles at the noon recess and raced to see who could reach the area of the tower first. I was almost the winner. The fallen tower had missed a new 1915 Dodge car that was angle parked beside "Hart's Store" by about three feet. The car wasn't damaged. No one was hurt — probably because of the heavy rainstorm, few were on the streets.

The tower was never replaced. Someone's idea for lighting a city hadn't worked. It was another business failure and an interesting one.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Most people here have always had a choice in obtaining necessary care when they become elderly. Even though San Carlos and Belmont have what is probably the most favorable climate in the world, there are actually a few people who grow old, and a few who become helpless.

For those who become helpless, San Mateo County gives help at the Crystal Springs Rehabilitation Center. Its location is west of Belmont where Ralston Avenue and Highway 92 intersect. The buildings are those north of the road, in the little sheltered valley where prevailing winds aren't so strong. It was first established July 1, 1876, as a poor farm.

The establishment was changed to a hospital in 1918. Then in 1954 the operation was changed to a rehabilitation hospital.

THE STAFF

Miss Alistine Gilyard is their administrator. She is an efficient lady who thoroughly understands the needs of her 124 patients, and she sees that they receive good care.

She is assisted by Peg Ward, director of medical social services, for the past ten years. Julie Levens is director of special services. All are efficient, kindly ladies, dedicated to their work and patients. Several volunteers come in to help and they are much appreciated, especially to write letters for the disabled, and to bring cheer to those who never are visited by relatives.

Since the patients often need clothing, both for men and women, donations of these items are appreciated. Any personal items too, such as tooth paste, tooth brushes, pens,

writing paper, books are a few other items often are in short supply.

"FATHER RIKER"

Within San Mateo County and surrounding counties, there have always been rest homes where those who can pay are taken in. One of the first of these was probably that operated by "Father Riker" at Holy City, on the old highway between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz.

Father Riker accepted "all the money anyone had" and agreed to board, and care for them during their lifetime.

His "Holy City" had several small cottages, and a larger meeting room, as well as a souvenir shop beside the old highway.

Displayed outside, was an old automobile with a sign on it declaring it to have been the "Kaiser's personal car" during WW-I. It was tan in color, and was a tutoring car with a cloth top.

There was a small museum also, which attracted many persons passing by, on their to the beach at Santa Cruz.

Later, when Father Riker died, there was no one to take over the establishment and very many old people found themselves not only broke, but helpless. Both Santa Clara and San Mateo County accepted the elderly residents, providing shelter and food. It is likely that some come to Belmont, to the Crystal Springs location. No one starved, or died, from lack of care.

Our county takes care of its people. All San Mateo County citizens chose well when they came to this area to make their homes. Help has always been available if it is needed.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Because both San Carlos and Belmont are in close proximity to the bay, and not far from the San Francisco Airport, and the ocean, it seems some people may be influenced by this.

Take our old Peninsula friend, Hap Harper, for instance. He operated his own flying school here at San Carlos airport for many years. Then he opened a travel agency in Belmont, which he operated for awhile. Next he converted an old ferry boat down at the bay into a restaurant. The last venture seems not to have been very successful, for Hap next had the old boat moved to San Francisco where he attempted to convert it into offices for business people. That too, failed.

The last heard of Hap Harper, was that he had become a flying weatherman. He gave weather reports, and reports about road conditions for commuters from his aeroplane flying above the Peninsula. Perhaps he has left our area and continues to do this elsewhere.

BOAT RESTAURANTS

Others have also converted old boats into restaurants. On the old Bayshore Highway at Burlingame, you will find the "General Cox". It is a restaurant where good meals are served. Its location is not far from "Kee Joon's". But does anyone know the old boat's history? I know a little about it.

Near the start of WW-II the "General Cox" was used for transporting persons from the end of Van Ness Avenue over to Angel Island. For several months carpenters rode the old boat to their work when remodeling the WW-I barracks for Japanese prisoners. Once, while I

worked there as a carpenter, an entire crew of Japanese sailors were brought there for temporary internship.

Reports then were that a San Francisco garbage scow had dumped garbage just when the Japanese submarine surfaced. As the hatch was opened, the scow dumped their load.

A nearby navy ship hurried to the spot, capturing the Japanese crew. When they arrived at Angel Island all appeared to be clean, except about a dozen. Either they must have had garbage dumped over them, or else they were a part of a black gang from the engine room.

NO ONE TALKED

I never knew, and also never found confirmation about what I had seen. No one talked during the war about such things, especially after seeing the cartoon displayed everywhere where a young couple sat on a park bench, and a man resembling Hitler sat at the other end of the same bench as he peered over a newspaper, listening.

The old "General Cox" has had some remodeling. A large dummy paddle wheel has been added to the port side of the ship. Otherwise, the interior appears about as it did in 1942 when it made its daily voyage from San Francisco over to Angel Island.

It was fun to ride the old ship, but everyone was very sleepy when going over a 5 a.m., and both tired and sleepy returning at 7 p.m. But I thought it was interesting.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

In 1795 when the Spanish lived in San Carlos, and for 50 years afterward, their adobe houses were whitewashed. When the sun shone on the early houses the glare could be seen for miles. Lime seems to have been available, although paints as we know them now couldn't be found here.

Later, the American log houses weren't often painted. The first painted house in Belmont seems to have been the Count Cipriani house, which was later owned by William C. Ralston.

The first painted houses in San Carlos appear to have been the Brittan home, and then Brittan lodge nearby at 125 Dale Ave. The lodge was built in 1872 for the Commonwealth Club members for a recreation spot for week-ends. It is still standing, and is lived in, and it's interior is decorated beautifully.

The Senator Nathaniel Phelps home at Holly and Old County Road that burned many years ago was built in the late 1800s and was painted white.

HOUSE COLORS

Presently we should notice that there has recently been a change in house colors. Most new homes are being painted a very pale tan, which is very attractive. The old Fred Drake building at the corner of San Carlos Avenue and El Camino Real has been given a new paint job.

All types of paint are manufactured in San Carlos and a very special kind in Belmont. In San Carlos we find the Kelly-Moore Factory on Old County Road, and the Roy Anderson Paint Co. at 1161 Brittan Avenue. Doug Rees and Craig An-

derson manage the Anderson factory and they specialize in paint for contractors and for wholesale.

The Sem Paint Co. in Belmont was started in 1947 on Old County Road, but the factory burned in 1961. Their president is Don Scranton. His factory is located at the corner of Sem Lane and Shoreview Drive. Don's paint business has expanded until presently he has 26 employees.

ONE OF FOUR

His company, however, has had a transition over the last 12 years, so that now his factory is one of only four in the United States that manufactures only automobile paints. His products are exported throughout the world. Don has a good safety record, which is very high on preventatives.

Other cities in the world have had whitewashed houses also, as well as the early ones here. When a ship on which I was radio officer docked at Curacao in the Dutch West Indies in 1927, I was amazed to peer out a porthole and see all homes within Curacao painted with pastel colored stripes — cornerwise. It seems that the governor complained of the glare from the whitewashed houses and ordered everyone to repaint with pastel colors. Annoyed, the citizens painted 45 degree, foot-wide stripes, on their homes. It was really a sight to see!

I was impressed by seeing what some taxpayers have done to comply with their local laws. I'll bet it shook up the governor.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

An Old Belmont brochure lists Coyote Point as a Belmont recreation area. Many changes have come to Coyote Point since the brochure was printed. Some unusual things have occurred there. While some people and I were enjoying dinner at a restaurant near there recently a sort of fiasco occurred. More about that later.

During WW-II a military camp was located in the grove of trees at Coyote Point. That was removed when the war ended. Then a museum was built. A visit to the Ecology Museum is worthwhile.

Then there is the popular yacht harbor, with its many boats. About 25 years ago a Portland, Ore. client of mine acquired a boat moored at the harbor. It was named the "Seamade". (Not "Seamaid") The owner asked me to keep an eye on his boat since he lived so far away. Soon I had a call from the Harbor-master saying the old boat was filling with water, and that I must do something about it.

EATING CAVIAR

When I phoned the boat owner in Portland he advised me to pay the Harbor-master to pump out the boat and he would reimburse me. The leak continued to get worse. The Harbor-master did very well by receiving money for pumping the boat. I was told that soon the Harbor-master was eating caviar. I had the old boat taken to Redwood City where the bottom was caulked and painted. That ended the fun.

There is a good beach at Coyote Point and wind shelters are provided for those who aren't of the hardy type.

The trees absorb most of the sound from the rifle range at the Point, and you will find the guns blasting away almost all the daytime hours, but that shouldn't bother you.

The first tee of the San Mateo Municipal Golf Course is near the Point. It is a good course, although level. About 20 or so years ago a golfer was hit in the middle of his forehead by someone's ball and the man died. This was before trees

were planted separating the fairways.

JET IN THE BAY

About ten or 12 years ago when listening to a radio in my office a report came that a large Japanese jet had landed in the bay near Coyote Point. Locking my office, I drove quickly over. When I arrived I found the fog so dense that it was impossible to see the Japanese plane. As I sat in my car listening, I learned that the Japanese pilot was afraid to open his plane's door. He thought the plane was floating. What he didn't know was that his plane had landed on the only sand bar in that part of the bay. The sand was but a few feet under the surface.

STUDENT PILOT

Soon the Coast Guard arrived and removed the passengers, who were inbound from Japan. It was publicized later that an entire year was required to repair the airplane, and that the pilot was demoted to student pilot.

But back to that fiasco when three of us were having dinner at the restaurant. We had been seated near the wall, and the table was against the wooden wall. Cockroaches began running across our table. We tried to hit them with napkins with no success. The waitress explained this had happened many times before.

We got up and left with the thought that we had come there for dinner—not to watch a cockroach Olympic race. But it was something different, and different things do make life interesting.

Last Survivor Of Old Railroad

By Russel Estep

We are always discovering interesting folks in our San Carlos-Belmont community and one of these is 95-year-old Jay C. Robinson, a spry fella with some new ideas and a good history-filled life.

Jay lives at 332 Malcolm, but stays with his daughter, Mrs. Lorraine Smith at 81 Devonshire Circle



JAY ROBINSON

some of the time.

He is the last survivor of the men who ran the Virginia City and Truckee Railroad. The train operated from Virginia City, Reno, Carson City, and Minden. The cars hauled primarily ore and lumber, but a passenger car or two was always hooked onto the train. The old wood-burning engine was No. 22, and had a flared-out smoke stack. The train was established in 1875.

Jay Robinson came to California from Chicago in 1908, and was here in time to see the damage caused by the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. He worked for the railroad from 1930 until 1938 and was the company's purchasing

agent, with his office in Carson City.
SHORT-LINED RAILROAD

In those years there were many short-line railroads, most of which are no longer needed. When the Virginia and Truckee Line went into receivership, Jay Robinson moved to Las Vegas. While there, much to his surprise, the city of Las Vegas established a railroad museum, and placed his old No. 22 engine on display. It was given a name—"The Inyo", and has been shined up like new. People who visit the museum enjoy seeing the old engine.

Jay found employment in Las Vegas as storekeeper for the Basic Magnesium Industries where he worked for many years.

He recalls that in 1940 he paid \$2,750 for a piece of land across the Strip from the Pioneer Hotel, and then re-sold it in 1943 for \$6,000. Although it is now probably worth several million, Jay says his \$2,750 profit helped him at the time.

OTHER JOBS

Jay has had many other jobs throughout his long life, one being a librarian for the Christian Science reading room in San Mateo where he worked for many years.

Among his many different jobs, the one Jay enjoyed the most was that with the Virginia and Truckee Railroad. He is their company's last survivor.

San Carlos and Belmont residents are proud that this 95 year old man lives in our area. He is a walking history book about the old wood-burning steam engines that are of interest to us all.

SC/Belmont History

By Russel Estep

Recently I rode with a San Carlos man past San Mateo's Central Park. As we drove along El Camino Real he commented that he was glad San Carlos didn't put up such elaborate fences at tax payer's expense.

I was surprised. I thought everyone knew the history of the Central Park the fence on the east side of El Camino Real, which you might say was built from two million mink.

William H. Kohl was organizer of the Alaska Commercial Company as early as 1867 when the United States bought Alaska from the Russians. His company trapped, bought and sold, mink hides. Kohl's company prospered. It was said that if you bought \$100 worth of his stock it would soon sell for ten times the amount.

Some persons claimed Kohl controlled Alaska and old records indicate that he did control half a million square miles of it. His company established many trading posts in the style of Korzenue the old log cabin trading post where merchandise hangs from the low ceiling so that you must stoop as you enter.

Kohl had been captain of sailing ships before his activities in Alaska. He captained ships operating between Canada and Alaska and it was easy for him to visualize the opportunities Alaska presented. He was there first and soon established a monopoly. In San Francisco he maintained an office at 310 Sansome Street, but he preferred the Peninsula as a place in which to live.

Old records show that he purchased his San Mateo land from Margaret Austin, a widow. The

Thirteen-room house was already there, although he improved it some after taking possession.

His property was from El Camino Real, south of Fifth, to Laurel Street. The large house was said to have been on Laurel Street, south of Fifth. His unusually attractive fence along El Camino Real was there to keep out roaming livestock.

Kohl enjoyed his home and the good climate. When he died in 1904, his son, Charles E. Kohl inherited the property. The son enjoyed the large home until he also died, in 1921.

On July 15, 1922 the voters in San Mateo approved money to purchase the sixteen acres for \$80,000. At last, San Mateo had a city park—Central Park, with its unusual fence along El Camino Real, south of Fifth Avenue.

The fancy fence along El Camino Real remains just as it was when Mr. Kohl lived there.

Alaska seals are protected now. Although Mr. Kohl's Alaska Commercial Company are said to have killed more than two million, it is doubtful if anyone will ever again kill so many animals.

His fine fence along El Camino Real south of Fifth Avenue, in San Mateo shall remain a monument forever to those two million seals and sea otters his company trapped.

Peninsula History

By Russel Estep

99

Home 'Like Something Out Of A Hitchcock Movie'

In 1947 Russell Hanson, then owner of See Realty, asked me to join him in inspecting a home in Hillsborough. Because he said it had been formerly owned by a German consul,

I assumed it was the two-story residence of Fritz Weidmann - WW II Consul.

Hanson said the house we would see was nearly as large as the Winchester house, and more interesting than the Ralston house in Belmont. This increased my interest since the Winchester house is built on seven acres, and the Ralston house has 50 bedrooms.

Upon closer inspection, however,

I realized the house we were going to see had been owned by a German Consul in WW I, not WW II.

A doctor purchased the home in 1918 when the consul was called back to Germany and with every room having an escape route, we found it to be something right out of a Hitchcock movie.

Shoe racks were hinged so they could pass into an adjoining room. Two large bookcases revolved, and at least one fireplace had a door built back enabling people to pass into the next room.

In every clothes closet, racks were positioned so they hid escape paths and the dumb-waiter in the kitchen was actually a door in the opposite wall for passage.

The living room also had several means of escape, with two hidden panel boxes under large plate windows that were large enough for a man to lay down in, then the boxes could be slid on rollers into the adjoining room.

Openings in the floors of the rooms were concealed so they were not noticed, but hid staircases leading to rooms below.

There was also a large bed woodbox beside one fireplace that had a hinged door opening to the outdoors. We also saw a concrete tunnel leading from a downstairs room and ending in a wooded area of the large yard.

Beyond the yard's wooded area there was a narrow Hillsborough street, and in the basement we found a large, concrete tank that was probably used as a reserve water supply.

The San Francisco Chronicle, the Examiner of the era tell of neighbors complaining of hammering at the German consul's Hillsborough residence at the time. The police were powerless to enter, however, because of the consul's diplomatic immunity.

Recently I drove to Hillsborough for another look at the unusual house, but was unable to locate it. Perhaps it has been replaced by a more modern dwelling.

The WW I consul seemed prepared for any eventuality and Hanson was right in saying the house was as interesting as the Winchester and Ralston homes.

In some ways, it seemed to me to be even more interesting.

Peninsula History

Following the death of William C. Ralston in 1875, his wife and their two sons moved from the large mansion to the little gardener's cottage at Carlmont where they lived for two years. William C. Ralston Jr. and his brother Samuel later moved with their mother to Oakland.

William Ralston Sr. was interred in the family plot in the Laurel Hill Cemetery, at California and Masonic in San Francisco.

The two boys grew up in Oakland. Although the younger son was small when his father died in 1875, he learned to worship his father and everything Mr. Ralston had done.

Samuel hoped to make a name for himself as his father had done. After completing his schooling in Oakland he moved to El Dorado County

and tried mining. This proved to be very hard work and he found no returns.

He later purchased a ranch, but was unsuccessful at farming. When he took his own life, his older brother, William C. Ralston, Jr., had the body taken to Oakland, then it was interred in the family plot in the Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Later, when the Golden Gate Bridge was being built, the old cemetery was removed. The city of San Francisco rezoned the old historic site, and when the Golden Gate Bridge was built the tombstones were mostly used for better footings and for rif-raff for the south tower. Now and then someone recognizes a name of an early San Francisco prominent person, and they are usually shocked that the grave markers have been thrown into the bay's cold waters.

Although I haven't located what happened to the Ralston family plots and markers, it just may be that the grave marker of Samuel Ralston was tossed into the Bay. Perhaps it landed by that of his father. Samuel had always wanted to be close to his father.

-By Russel Estep

San Carlos/Belmont History

"Squabbles" Natural For Belmont

By Russel Estep

Recently another Peninsula paper ran a front page new item about squabbles in Belmont. Thirty years ago such an article would have been current. But wait, isn't it natural for people, animals, birds, fish, and everything that is alive to disagree with those around them?

In Belmont this seems to be the case. Some people are all "for" something, others are violently opposed.

Having been familiar with Belmont since childhood (eighty and more years ago), I have saved old newspaper items, and recorded items for a long time. Maybe longer than anyone. The old clippings indicate that Belmont people loved each other in earlier days.

Having written this history column for more than three

years has also required considerable research about Belmont. The result is that I find the personal squabbles only began since World War II. Perhaps a world war wasn't enough, for here in Belmont sides were formed, and little childish battles began.

Since World War II several controversial things have happened in Belmont. The Chamber of Commerce wanted to help the town by planting trees on the north side of Ralston Avenue on the Notre Dame property. After the first row of trees was planted, a proposal was made to widen the street and the Chamber of Commerce planted a second row of trees. Later, still another group wanted more width for Ralston Avenue and the Chamber of Commerce planted the third row of trees. A fourth group stopped the widening of Ral-

ton Avenue, and we still have the three rows of trees on the north side of Ralston Avenue.

Then a group wanted an overpass at Ralston and El Camino Real. I was told the government spent more than \$240,000 for engineering. It went to a ballot, and one group claimed the overpass would be forty feet high. When I inquired about it, knowing that the state engineers set overpass

heights, I was told, "keep still." In the end, the overpass was voted down.

As for Belmont's disagreements, our city manager, Ed Everett, is trying to have people work together. Perhaps he knows that when a positive and negative are together they cause sparks. He has found sparks flying in Belmont, and is working to correct the situation. We wish him success.

San Carlos/Belmont History

"Squabbles" Natural For Belmont

By Russel Estep

Recently another Peninsula paper ran a front page new item about squabbles in Belmont. Thirty years ago such an article would have been current. But wait, isn't it natural for people, animals, birds, fish, and everything that is alive to disagree with those around them?

In Belmont this seems to be the case. Some people are all "for" something, others are violently opposed.

Having been familiar with Belmont since childhood (eighty and more, years ago), I have saved old newspaper items, and recorded items for a long time. Maybe longer than anyone. The old clippings indicate that Belmont people loved each other in earlier days.

Having written this history column for more than three

years has also required considerable research about Belmont. The result is that I find the personal squabbles only began since World War II. Perhaps a world war wasn't enough, for here in Belmont sides were formed, and little childish battles began.

Since World War II several controversial things have happened in Belmont. The Chamber of Commerce wanted to help the town by planting trees on the north side of Ralston Avenue on the Notre Dame property. After the first row of trees was planted, a proposal was made to widen the street and the Chamber of Commerce planted a second row of trees. Later, still another group wanted more width for Ralston Avenue and the Chamber of Commerce planted the third row of trees. A fourth group stopped the widening of Rals-

ton Avenue, and we still have the three rows of trees on the north side of Ralston Avenue.

Then a group wanted an overpass at Ralston and El Camino Real. I was told the government spent more than \$240,000 for engineering. It went to a ballot, and one group claimed the overpass would be forty feet high. When I inquired about it, knowing that the state engineers set overpass

heights, I was told, "keep still." In the end, the overpass was voted down.

As for Belmont's disagreements, our city manager, Ed Everett, is trying to have people work together. Perhaps he knows that when a positive and negative are together they cause sparks. He has found sparks flying in Belmont, and is working to correct the situation. We wish him success.