

Ref Desk
Belmont
History

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HISTORY OF SAN CARLOS and BELMONT
By
Russel A. Estep
(From Enquirer-Bulletin)

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SC/Belmont History

Russel Estep

There were prominent and outstanding people living in San Carlos and Belmont right from the beginning. These men had traveled over much of the world and chose this area for their homes. One such person was a Mr. Dillon who came to Belmont in 1854.

Mr. Dillon was the French consul in San Francisco. His work as consul took him over much of California. Once while in Sonora he met with a problem. Old records tell of his arrest for talking too much. Why filibustering could cause an arrest is something for speculation.

No address is given for his Belmont home. Possibly he resided with Count Cipriani who had assembled his pre-fab house a year earlier.

Another prominent person who came to Belmont very early was Alessandro Garbi. He was born in Florence on March 11, 1828, and he accompanied Count Cipriani to Belmont in 1853. In old records, Garbi is mentioned as having been the first surveyor for San Mateo County.

When Count Cipriani and Garbi arrived, they found Mrs. Arguello had hired S.M. Mezes to clear the title to her 34,200-acre land grant. Mezes was an attorney and finally, in 1856, he succeeded in clearing the land titles.

Apparently Mezes was far-sighted, for when he presented his bill for his legal work, records show that Mrs. Arguello gave him 15 per cent of her total holdings. He

accepted Redwood City and most of Belmont and had a large home constructed in back of the Cipriani property. Mezes died in 1884 and his house burned in 1886.

Next, the old records show that Mezes, Cipriani and Garbi became law partners. Their office was in San Francisco. Since there were no trains yet, they would have commuted by stage coach or carriage.

At first Mezes called Redwood City "Mezesville." The village was small and the few residents were mostly active with lumber shipments from the Redwood City port to San Francisco.

San Carlos was purchased from Mrs. Arguello by two persons. Mr. Brittan bought 3,000 acres and Senator Phelps bought 3,500 acres.

Although these outstanding and prominent families lived in San Carlos and Belmont more than a century ago, both cities have continued to attract outstanding people. The residents of San Carlos and Belmont are above average in many ways. We hear that school children in San Carlos and Belmont are among the top group of California students.

If they get arrested for talking too much, it would only be that they are attempting to tell others what a beautiful and wonderful place this Peninsula is.

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Rancho Belmont — Arroyo San Carlos

By Russel Estep

People in San Carlos and Belmont live in a comparatively new part of the United States. Where our cities are now, there was a large Spanish rancho. Mrs. Adelia Vannier once told me of seeing great herds of cattle being driven through Belmont when she was a girl in the 1800s. She said how cattle were wild and how children were cautioned by their parents to keep a tree in sight to climb when chased by wild cattle. Yet some things that were here then are here now.

Horses shied when they met a horseless carriage only seventy years ago. Trains had steam engines. Roads, for the most part, weren't paved. That didn't come until after World War I. An old clipping dated June 6, 1921, from the Redwood City Standard, states that the Pacific States Construction Co. of San Francisco was erecting an asphalt plant at Belmont which would cost about \$16,000 and the roadbed from Beresford (Hillsdale) down to Redwood City would receive topping. What a wonderful improvement.

In the library may be found a copy of the Redwood City Tribune dated April 24, 1913, stating that the last portion of the Pulgas Rancho had been sold to the Foothill Development Co. It consisted of 438 acres, and was located west of the railroad tracks, and south of Ralston Avenue in Belmont. Sellers at that time were two children of S. M. Mezes, the attorney who helped to clear titles for Mrs. Arguello after California became a state.

Another old item dated September 9, 1924, tells that Monroe, Miller and Lyon, had

purchased 1,000 acres west of Belmont and would build a clubhouse, swimming pool and a golf course. The golf course was to be 18 holes but only nine were to be completed at first, in the little valley west of the Ralston mansion. Cost for the development's improvements were estimated to be approximately \$375,000, and building sites would be sold when roads were completed. The Union Paying Co. were to improve the narrow streets. The development was to be named "Belle Monti Country Club." The item about the

steep hilly terrain states that it is beautiful rolling land. It was north of Ralston Avenue, and west of the Ralston home.

We must hope that none of Miller, Monroes and Lyon's prospective buyers fell off one of the lots.

One thing is here that was here almost from the start. An old clipping from the Redwood City Tribune states that a "Fast Food" eating place had opened in Belmont. The date was September 10, 1924. Some things never change.

Belmont-San Carlos history by Russ Estep

They didn't know what they were missing

When we are held up in traffic on El Camino Real most of us think how nice it would be if there were fewer cars. When the first people traveled El Camino Real there were no cars for they hadn't been invented yet. People traveled by horseback.

Spanish explorers had traveled the route of El Camino Real in 1769 and 1774, but the first Englishman passed this area in 1792. That year Captain George Vancouver passed through this area horseback on his way from San Francisco to the mission at Santa Clara.

The earlier Spanish had carefully mapped the route, but if that hadn't been done, Captain Vancouver could have done it well. He had just been engaged in mapping the Straits of Juan de Fuca in Southern Canada. His old maps are so accurate that they can still be used. Old reports indicate his party of travelers paused for lunch somewhere in this area. No doubt it had to be by a creek so the horses could be watered. There were many

creeks flowing toward the bay, as their party traveled through here.

If the party of Englishmen had encountered Indians they would have found them friendly. Reports are that Cochinitos Indians had plenty of shell fish for food and animals were plentiful, so they had nothing to fight about. Everything they needed was here.

It is interesting to speculate about what they and the explorers didn't have. Things we take for granted hadn't been invented yet. There were no telephones, telegraph, radio, T.V., automobiles, electric lights, gas lights, paved roads, typewriters, fountain pens, plastic raincoats, trains (not even steam engines), electric fans, ball point pens, tractors, computers, or inside bathrooms, in addition to a multitude of other things.

Not having experienced any of the things we have now, the people living then didn't miss them. They were satisfied with what they had and likely felt sorry for persons who lived a century before them for not being able to enjoy what was available in 1792.

To have traveled from San Francisco to San Jose by horseback would have required two days, or else considerable time for the horses to rest along the route.

In 1792, when Captain Vancouver traveled here he would have been many years ahead of the great prune orchards that used to be all over what we call Silicon Valley. There would have been no ranches, no farms; not even the Spanish land grant known as Rancho de las Pulgas. And there were no houses. This part of the west was wild country.

We are all appreciative of the many things that have been invented since our country started, but we must also think of what may come within another century. We are told that automobiles will likely travel above the ground, and airplanes will travel quietly, and individuals will be able to go from place to place more easily.

Like those people who lived before us who were satisfied with what they had, we don't know what is ahead for San Carlos and Belmont, so we are satisfied with what is here. We are glad to be here.

Insular travel on "Peninsular" passenger trains

Several kinds of transportation have been used here on the Peninsula. Stage coaches were used in the good old days. They were succeeded by steam trains during the Civil War.

Another way to travel became popular in the late 1800s and up to the 1940s. It was electric trains, and cars.

The large, fast green-colored electric cars ran from San Jose up to Palo Alto, as well as from San Jose to Berryessa, Alum Rock Park, and out to Saratoga and Los Gatos.

When they waited for passengers to board, their sound was unforgettable as their motors whirred and a belt driven

generator hummed. It made a sound you would never forget. These cars also had

different sounding whistles than anything used nowadays. The sound was crisp and attention-getting. The cars were called "Peninsular" cars, and were unlike street cars.

However, the No. 40 street cars did run from San Francisco down to San Mateo.

Those were ordinary street cars, although they had only the center portion enclosed for use in bad weather. Both ends of the cars contained open bench seats facing outward.

The outside seats were wonderful for viewing the scenery along the route when the weather was warm and pleasant.

When riding the street cars into town the trip took forty-five minutes, because of many stops along the way. But you

landed downtown and not at Third and Townsend where the trains terminated, and where you had to catch another way of transportation to get to Market Street, or the Ferry Building.

The cars to San Francisco ran through Colma, and down Mission Street. This route was the same as the early steam trains had used before tunnels were dug allowing

trains to pass South San Francisco and Brisbane along the bay shore.

The street car route was the same used by William C. Ralston after he moved to Belmont in 1864. He drove his horses and raced the trains from his San Francisco office to his Belmont home. Actually, he often won, for trains stopped to pick up passengers. His only stop was to change horses at the 12 mile house. The was quickly done.

The Peninsular cars carried great crowds of people during the annual Santa Clara Valley Blossom Festival. Viewing the

thousands of acres of prune blossoms from the electric cars was something many residents took their visitors from out-of-town to see. The sight was unforgettable.

When Camp Fremont was at Menlo Park during World War I the fast interurban Peninsular cars were always crowded with soldiers going and coming from San Jose. With its 56,000 population the soldiers considered it to be a big metropolitan area. Menlo Park, San Carlos and Belmont didn't have much to offer them. They wanted excitement.

Carlmont history with Russell Estep

When "Welcome to CA-now go home" was not our state slogan

Before 1927 there was no way to cross San Francisco Bay except by ferry. The Key System and Southern Pacific Co. operated ferries across to Oakland from the Ferry Building. Many people drove around the south end of the Bay via Alviso.

The first bridge was built in 1927 and I was among the first to cross in my Model T Ford. Although the bridge only crossed the south end of the bay, everyone who drove across that day thought the new bridge was very wonderful.

So much publicity had been given the new bridge that most people believed that there would be a large business boom on both sides of the bay when the bridge was completed. An older member of my family thought he might make a profit operating a butcher shop. But he didn't know the business. He found

a job in a shop in San Jose and when a woman asked for porterhouse steak he sold her rib steak and was fired the same day he had started.

Land developments however, did occur at each end of the bridge. Many lots were sold, particularly in the subdivision of Newbridge Park, in what is now East Menlo. Some persons paid what was later considered to be a high price.

Very few houses were built until thirty years later, after World War II. In all those years the subdivision stood idle, with the streets paved, utilities in, waiting for a builder. The builders didn't come rushing in because there were thousands of vacant lots on both sides of the Bay. Many lots were available in Belmont and San Carlos where buyers would have a view. People seemed to prefer

It would be a long time before the Sunnyvale Air Station, (Moffett Field) would be built. That came in 1932 and I worked there as a carpenter. After completion of the Air Base, the lots near the airbase in Sunnyvale received considerable real estate activity. One builder made so much money building near there that he named one street "Easy Street." Still Newbridge Park stood idle.

During World War II Hiller Helicopter Co. opened a large factory in east Menlo Park. Other factories followed, and several large warehouses were built.

Finally, toward the end of World War II builders started building houses. Although the first lot buyers had paid \$2,000 or more, for their property, the re-sales near the end of World War II only brought the owners about \$800 per lot. Several builders

soon followed the first one, and the Newbridge Park area boomed. Presently the area is almost completely built upon, not only with homes, but with factories and large warehouses.

A new bridge has replaced the old one that was opened in 1927. The new bridge is built high so boats can pass under it, and unlike the first bridge, the new one isn't a

drawbridge. Most people operating businesses near the ends of the new Dumbarton bridge appear to scratch to make their living. When the first Dumbarton bridge was built the greatly predicted boom never came. People in business near the bridge now appear not to be living very high on the hog. Those who cross it however, express great appreciation that the new high bridge is there. It was badly needed. All of us appreciate its existence.

Carlmont history with Russ Estep

Belmont was the county seat

It seems that there is always something coming along to stir up things in San Carlos and Belmont (particularly Belmont) to upset the apple cart. From old records I find this had also happened in Redwood City. But it happened many years ago.

Most people have heard how our San Mateo County used to be a part of San Francisco county. Tax collectors had problems collecting taxes down here when they had to travel by horse and buggy. Finally, San Francisco county was divided and our county was formed. Belmont was the first county seat. Then, following an election, Redwood City took away the county

seat. They have kept it ever since 1856, but nearly lost it in 1873.

When you get something someone else would like to have you are likely to have to defend it. Redwood City did defend their county seat and won it legally.

A promoter and land developer named Alvinza Hayward owned a part of what is now San Mateo. A town across the bay was named for him much later. Here on the Peninsula he owned land adjoining Burlingame to the south, and had the idea that if he could get the county seat away from Redwood City, whom had already had it since 1856, his land would be worth

much more.

He cuddled up to coastside property owners, knowing that if he could get a move for the county seat to San Mateo, their votes would count in his favor. The county seat would be nearer their land which should make theirs more valuable.

Next he donated several parcels of his land to San Mateo County, according to old deeds that were recorded.

The land was centralized within his holdings, and would be easily accessible for our county buildings.

Next he cuddled up to the supervisors, and induced them to attempt to move the county seat to the land he donated. They put it on ballots in an upcoming election.

Mr. Hayward's campaign was so extensive that out of the one thousand four hundred votes, he only lost by ten votes.

Again history was to repeat itself, for some persons thought bribery had taken place.

Maybe it did, maybe it didn't, but the supervisors ordered an investigation and a second election. In the second election, San Mateo won by more than two hundred fifty votes. Mr. Hayward was elated.

But that didn't end the situation. The matter was taken to the Supreme Court where the votes of the second election were rejected. The court believed there were irregularities.

Redwood City retained the county seat and they still have it. With roads paved, and transportation so easily available, the short distance between Redwood City and San Mateo has become of little importance.

If Mr. Hayward's plan to move the county seat had succeeded the city of San Mateo's name might well have become "Hayward." The town of Hayward, across the bay, would have been something else. It is all like if our fathers and mothers hadn't chanced to meet, each of us would have been someone else. Sounds confusing. Yet it could have happened.



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Carlmont history

with Russell Estep

Local tales of high water

Many parts of California have suffered from flood problems. Belmont and San Carlos aren't the only ones who have had sandbags.

Seventy years ago the Guadalupe Creek flowing from Los Gatos to Alviso, across western San Jose, used to be a dangerous stream in winter. In 1915 I saw its flood waters cover everything at Alviso, and the flooding was three feet deep on the Alviso road to about where the Bayshore Freeway is now. Many prune ranches were marooned.

Nothing was done to prevent the Guadalupe creek from its disastrous flooding until years later. Then the Lexington dam was built south of Los Gatos to hold back flood waters. This took care of that problem.

Another bad flood occurred in 1955 at Oroville. At that time ham radio operators formed a Net and handled communications. Everything was under dirty brown flood water. Several people drowned. Then the Oroville dam was built, so no more floods.

In 1916 a great flood covered the area of large grain ranches near Williams, Corning, Artois, etc. The water covered the railroad tracks in some places, so trains had to travel very slowly. There was considerable loss of cattle, and other livestock. As a boy I was traveling from San Jose to Redding during that flood,

and the trip took one day and night—the train traveled so slowly.

Farther up the valley at Redding the Sacramento river was in flood stage several years earlier when an alcoholic had cause to quit drinking. Perhaps even floods do some good at time, as this story will relate:

A distant cousin was a red-skinned, red-headed carpenter, and he lived in Redding. During the flood he had been working east of Redding, across the Sacramento river. When he quit work in the evening, and started for town in his buggy, his horse balked part

way across the river bridge. The horse would turn this way and that way, but wouldn't go ahead. Suddenly the bridge portion ahead fell into the muddy flood waters and began floating downstream. Wellie

turned his buggy around and drove back the way he had come. He became sober. Folks said he never drank again. Then Shasta Dam was built to control flood waters. There have been no more floods.

Locally, the Belmont Creek used to flow more directly toward the Bay. It had flooded east of the railroad tracks causing a lawsuit, and its diversion southward east of Old County Road a ways, then straight down to the bay. No more floods there.

The flood waters do occur

nearly every winter in Belmont from runoff from the many hills. Water drains down Belmont Creek, and in 1984 the opening beneath the railroad track at Harbor Blvd. became clogged. There was so much water overflowing west of the track that a Matson Company container full of furniture was floated for two city blocks southward.

Also during high water in Belmont creek several years ago a city workman was trying to remove debris from the creek at 6th Avenue, when he slipped into the raging flood and floated two blocks in the darkness of the tunnel toward El Camino Real. A fireman went after him with a rope tied around himself, and others pulled the two back upstream to safety. Belmont still has flood problems and San Carlos isn't immune. Sandbags are often placed on the west side of El Camino Real in front of stores during wet winters.

The cause of flooding in the two cities appear to be that more and more buildings and the necessary paving do not allow water to sink into the ground like it formerly did. Someday, a solution must be found. More and more houses are going to be needed. More ground will be covered and paved over. No dam can be built here to hold back flood waters. Something must be done.

Welcome back Russ

Carlmont historian Russell Estep returns with the history of the Belmont Hotel

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Goodbye old red barn

By Russell Estep
Belmont Historian

Some people may consider this an obituary for one of Belmont's first buildings.

The old red building, known as The Landmark, will soon be demolished. It has been there on Old County Road for 129 years, and maybe a year or two more. The old red barn adjoining it is one of two old barns left in Belmont. It too, will be demolished.

The hotel and barn were first owned by a Mr. Ellet. There have been many other owners. An advertisement of November 30, 1862 in the Daily Alta Californian, states that a Mr. L. Maxwell had

taken over the hotel. Then in June 1863 Clark and Waltermire state that they have taken over the hotel and drivers would find it a good stopping place where cattle, hogs, and sheep could be corralled free, and feed would be available as well as stubble fields when in season.

Like a very old man, the hotel is physically on its last legs. Unlike the Deakon's one-hoss shay that last 100 years to a day; the hotel has been a "Landmark" for 129 years in Belmont. When William C. Ralston arrived in Belmont in 1864 he may have stayed at the Belmont Hotel as he negotiated with Coant Leonetto Cipriani for property

which he later purchased.

Many prominent people stayed at the Belmont Hotel over its long lifetime. Jack London may have been one of them, as he is mentioned in old clippings.

The Belmont hotel was located a day's drive by horse and buggy from San Jose and San Francisco. Twenty-five miles per day over adobe mirey, rough in summer roads, was about a horse's limit back then.

When the old hotel was in its heyday it was located on El Camino Real (the highway was moved west of the railroad tracks in 1918, an event I remember well, being 15 years old). Early competition for the old hotel was eliminated December 22, 1866 when the Angelo House, located in the center of Ralston Avenue, east of the tracks, burned. After that the Belmont Hotel flourished.

Almost everything men needed was available at the old hotel. Some small rooms on its third floor were reported to be for travelers' pleasures.

On January 17, 1874 a social ball was given at the hotel and many other social events took place when the hotel was newer. One advertisement stated that tickets would be \$2.00 including supper.

When buildings near the old Belmont Hotel were demolished a few years ago some early 1800s American coins were found, as well as several valuable Spanish coins. It is likely that the old Belmont Hotel will likewise leave its heritage of early and valuable old coins, under its floors.

Belmonters will miss the old red buildings and a silent wake might be in order for an end to a part of Belmont's past. We will all miss seeing it.



Photo by Paul Fry

THE OLD BELMONT HOTEL will soon be demolished.



Carlmont history

with Russell Estep

Pumping civilization into Belmont

As towns become cities certain things always seem to happen. For instance, Belmont didn't have any telephone until a phone was installed in Waltermire's store. That was in 1923. Waltermire's store was in the old pink building.

The next great improvement came when the Western Union Telegraph Co. extended their service to Belmont from San Mateo in 1923. Their office—if we can call it that—was in the train depot. Mr. Hardy Hannibal replaced the first operator and was Belmont's operator for many years until his retirement. He was said to have had a "good fist" meaning that his sending was rhythmic and easy to read.

Mr. Hannibal was active in civic duties and when a pumping station was required to provide greater pressure for our water supply it was named for him. That pumping station is located on the north side of Ralston Avenue, near the entrance to the old Ralston mansion. Mr. Hannibal had been a Director for the Belmont County Water District for many years.

An old newspaper clipping from the Redwood City Tribune dated February 24, 1925 tells of the start of our Water District.

The subdividers of the Belmont Country Club Properties found they must provide water for the many lots they subdivided from the nearly

1,000 acres they planned to sell. Articles of Incorporation of the predecessor of the Belmont County Water District were filed for record in Redwood City as Belle Monti Mutual Water Co. The new corporation advertised that they would only provide water for their stockholders.

The three Directors of the new water company were Mr. V. P. Tompkins, Mrs. Irene Rambaud, and Mr. L. J. Miller. They were listed as all being from San Francisco.

The Spring Valley Water Co. had arranged to bring water by use of a three-foot-in-diameter pipe bringing water down from Yosemite. The larger Yosemite pipe had been installed in 1916, to furnish water for San Francisco, as well as Peninsula cities. Pre-

sumably the Belle Monti Mutual Water Co. had arranged to buy water by tapping the Old County Road pipe, for an old pipe had a connection into the large main near Ralston Avenue and Old County Road.

In my files of historic events in Belmont, is a photo of men installing the original water main with their primitive equipment.

On June 24, 1924 by a vote of 98 to 61 the Belmont Sanitary District was formed. Mr. Tom Pennington was elected their first president. The first directors were Tom

Pennington, R. Roussel, Mr. H. Caldwell, Mr. L. Hanson and Dr. Warren.

So in 1924 we find the village of Belmont, with a population of about 700, suddenly had running water, telegraph, telephone, as well as a sanitary district. It was ready to grow into a town. Local people were soon able to look into shop windows, and there would be no need to do their window shopping from a Sears catalog in an outhouse. Belmont was improving.

Carlmont history with Russell Estep

The end for an ancient garage

Another long-time landmark is about to be torn down in San Carlos. Although it's only a garage and well house it is something that has been there since 1912.

That year Adolph Paulsen built the garage and a large house at 408 Elm Street. The house is very well preserved and doesn't really show its age. In fact, the house is beautiful and is furnished with priceless antiques. It is on the upper side of the street where there is a view out across the bay. It is painted white, and surrounded with beautiful shrubs, trees and flowering plants. Even the garage is covered with pretty flowering vines. But the garage must go. It is too near the street.

When it was built in 1912 nobody cared what or how you built.

The road out in front wasn't paved, and it was a single track—adequate for the few buggies and surrys that passed each day. Few people owned automobiles—but the owner of the large house had one.

He had made his money drilling wells. Most of the San Carlos and Belmont wells had been drilled by Adolph Paulsen. Those in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco were also drilled by him.

The Rosek house is so large that when it was last painted 137 gallons of paint used, with no half-filled cans left over.

The two large leafless trees in the front and rear yards aren't dying. They had been brought from South America when they were small. Below the Equator winter comes while we enjoy summer. The

trees might not have been able to adapt themselves to the northern hemisphere. They will leaf out later as they have always done.

Richard Rosek inherited the large house and the large lot from his mother.

When the house was built in 1912 most people on the peninsula were still using barns for their horses, and for anyone to own a garage was something new and the building attracted attention. There were only a few automobiles in this area. Those early cars are referred to now-a-days as being "horseless carriages."

Also, water wells were common and nearly everybody had one. Those, too, aren't being used anymore. The Rosek's well house will be demolished when the garage is torn down.

Richard and Betty Ann Rosek need a larger garage and with our building codes as they are, a new garage couldn't be built in quite the same location. The building setback must be considered. Most of the pretty vines and flowering trees and shrubs beside the old well house and garage must be removed. Progress and building codes must be considered, but everyone is sorry the old garage and well house will soon be a thing of the past. Richard Rosek is in charge of the San Carlos building department, but even he must follow our building codes. No one has said he has been bitten by his own dog. He complies with the building codes very willingly and he loves San Carlos. But changes for progress must be met.



Carlmont history with Russell Estep

“Honey” was her fifth, and the worst of the lot

Only a few years ago there were three nerve rest centers in Belmont. Then one closed, leaving the Alexander Sanitarium and Twin Pines. According to old reports, Mrs. Alexander's Sanitarium was established in 1918. Now we call it Belmont Hills.

Mrs. Annette Alexander was a registered nurse. She managed her sanitarium, and lived in Woodside. When the voters voted not to purchase the Pullman property at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas, she purchased it. The Pullman's had left an old log cabin on the property, and it was well hidden by trees. She invited the Chamber of Commerce to hold a Directors meeting there one time, and being a director, I went along. She had updated the interior and had it very well decorated.

Mrs. Alexander was a long-time director of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce and rarely missed a meeting. She liked to help people and often made large contributions for needed projects. There is a Safeway store now where her log cabin stood.

Later, her chauffeur was resting by the fireplace in the old log cabin, and fell asleep

one rainy night. A log rolled out from the fireplace and the cabin was destroyed.

To show our appreciation for all Mrs. Alexander had done for Belmont, Juel Christensen, Lloyd Malech, and I visited her during her last illness at her sanitarium. We presented her with a plaque. She appeared to glow with appreciation. She died soon afterward, on August 30, 1959.

Others took over operation of the sanitarium and renamed it “Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center.”

The other nerve treatment center was Twin Pines—now a city park.

As a notary public I was called there thirty five years ago. It seemed that a woman was wanting to divorce a patient. In the man's hospital room both the woman and man were friendly with each other, and I heard the word “honey” used many times. When the man had signed the papers, a nurse was called to bring a doctor. He questioned the man, then he signed a statement that the man was aware of what he was doing at the time. The woman was to get a huge property settle-

ment. After we left she confided to me that the man could have afforded ten times her settlement, and that he was her fifth husband, and the worst of the lot.

Dr. Will Rebec started at Twin Pines as staff physician, and he later bought the

property. His mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Rebec, lived in the little cottage back of the sanitarium until her death in 1958.

Dr. Rebec died on September 10, 1941. He is said to have done a great deal to help persons in need of care such as his hospital offered.

Because Belmont citizens seldom agree on anything, we hear that Belmont's psychiatric hospitals were well located. Belmonters are staple and grand people. Many geniuses live in Belmont. Most patients hospitalized in Belmont have come from other towns. Local people here don't need such help.



Carlmont history

with Russell Estep

Picking prunes helped pass summer

The Belmont and San Carlos school vacations will soon be coming. When I asked a San Carlos boy what he intended to do this coming summer, he replied that he guessed he would go to Europe. When I asked a Belmont girl what she would do to spend her summer, she replied that she had a job as receptionist in a doctor's office. Summer vacations weren't like this sixty and seventy years ago.

Young people living on farms or ranches had their summer vacations at home helping their parents. Usually without pay. Other young people would "work in the prunes". Jobs working in prunes were readily available. There was only one prune orchard here in Belmont and many local boys and girls worked in it.

That orchard was where Carlmont High School is now. But comparatively, it was a small orchard. The large ones were in the Santa Clara Valley, which was wall-to-wall prune orchards.

Many people don't know the prunes aren't picked off the trees. When they ripen they fall to the ground and orchard owners have to keep the soil well tilled and soft and dusty so the falling prunes wouldn't become bruised.

Thousands of young people could be seen down on their knees, working in the dust, filling boxes, which usually were the 25-pound size. Ten cents per box was the going rate for workers. By working very

fast the young people could fill enough boxes to earn from \$2.50 to \$3 a day.

From the orchard the prunes were taken to trays, set out on the ground where sunshine

soon dried them. Then they were taken to packing houses where they were graded and boxed and taken to San Francisco for shipment overseas.

Although I never "picked prunes", I was employed for three weeks on a grader at San Jose in 1926. My pay was \$.25 per hour for a ten-hour day. I considered the pay adequate, for all I had to do was to wheel wheelbarrows from the 16 chutes prunes slid down in, across the room, and empty the barrow into a hole in the floor where they fell into large bins below. With the grader shaking hard and fast there was always one or two wheelbarrows ready to overflow. Of course I had to run all day, but being young and very active I thought it was fun. Then I was promoted to nailing lids onto the boxes. This paid \$.35 per hour. Good pay in those days.

The 25-pound boxes came toward me very fast on rollers, with loose lids already placed atop each box. All I had to do was hold the boxes, stamp my foot to set eight nails, four on each end, then turn quickly and put the boxes on a small push cart. The lids were branded Cherbourg, Liverpool, Brest, Southampton, and Havre. Fascinating names that caused

me to wonder what those places might be like. I felt lucky to have the interesting job.

When the season ended, I saved my money until the following spring when I added a little to it, and took a course in radio at the Pacific Radio School in San Francisco. Soon, I sailed as Chief Radio officer on a large ship bound for South America.

I never did see the interesting places where California prunes had been sent, but I saw other interesting places. I am sure that I gained something from my work in the Santa Clara Valley prunes. I wonder if today's youths have as exciting times, now that prunes are no longer raised in what is now called "Silicon Valley?"

One thing is for sure, they make more money. And probably easier.



Carmont history with Russell Estep

Move 'em out — herds of cattle stomp through town

Many years ago when talking to Mrs. Adelia Vannier, she told me she had seen great herds of cattle being driven through Belmont toward San Francisco. She was an elderly lady when I knew her. She explained that she had seen the cattle while she was living in Belmont as a girl. Probably it would have been in the 1880s or 1900s. Some young people have asked me where the cattle were being driven.

There were large slaughter houses on Third Street in San Francisco near Islais creek. Without sniffing much a person could have known they were there from quite a distance.

There were also several large packing houses soon

after in South San Francisco out near the end of the point.

That was a better location than Third Street because the wind usually blew toward the bay taking the odors with it.

Buyers from these meat processing plants would travel to where cattle, sheep, and hogs were being raised, and they made offers to buy them at a railhead, or shipping point. If the growers shipped them to San Francisco or the South San Francisco plants, the prices paid for the livestock were higher. Seventy years ago the going rate for ranged cattle was 5 to 6 cents per pound, delivered to the nearest railroad. There was usually some dickering when

the buyers arrived. Even one eighth cent difference could mean half soles on a family's shoes in place of new shoes. Female members might have to make their underwear from old flour sacks, and not buy clothing.

My father owned a large cattle ranch at upper Oak Run (east of Redding), and he usually sold his beef cattle to the buyers. However in 1920 he shipped three carloads of beef to the Virden plant in South San Francisco and one family member accompanied the shipment to oversee unloading half way on the trip so the cattle might drink. The price paid for his shipment allowed him to buy an additional section of land to add to what he already

owned.

Here on the Peninsula the meat market owners had to go to the South San Francisco processing plants for their supply of meat. It was a common sight to see half an animal hanging rear end up in local butcher shops. Flies didn't bother much like they did in the warm central valley.

Later, refrigerated trucks handled deliveries to local shops. Some shops used meat wagons to deliver to their consumers. A market here in Belmont delivered to Belmont, San Carlos, and Beresford. Drivers of these meat wagons earned from ten to fifteen dollars a week. Good wages for those times.

Soon many small meat processing plants started up. In

San Jose, the San Jose Meat Company were very active.

Locally, our 4H Club members raise animals. These are sold to restaurant owners at our county fair. Very high prices are paid to the young livestock raisers. Restaurant owners serve their own customers excellent dinners following our county fair.

The 4H Club members put their money to good use. Some of them find their profit brings in enough money so they don't need to work for someone else during summer vacations.

The boys wear good shoes, and no doubt the girls never need to sew underwear from old flour sacks. You might say that most of our young people "have it made."

Carlmont history

with Russel Estep



People who have been in San Carlos and Belmont awhile will remember Mills Field. It was named for J. Ogden Mills, whose home was west of El Camino Real, in Millbrae. His house was large, surrounded by trees, and was demolished a few years ago for a subdivision. It could be seen from El Camino Real.

The airport was north of the present terminal, and after their "new building" was constructed everyone thought that nothing could be better. There was a walkway around the waiting room, up above the lobby, and some leather upholstered chairs were placed there to supplement the ones down below on the waiting room floor.

To board a plane (early DC-3) the passengers went through a door, and along a walk that had a roof, and open sides.

That terminal replaced an earlier terminal which didn't offer much protection from the elements—especially prevailing winds.

The earlier terminal had been opened in 1927 and I was there. Then I overheard

one pilot tell someone that the spot was a perfect place for an airport—"all a pilot

needed to do was have someone remove the chocks, and he would go straight up.' The

Speaking of Mills Air Field

wind blows strongly much of the time down from the "slot" at San Bruno. Planes were lighter then, so possibly he wasn't joking.

Most planes were bi-planes and DC-3s hadn't yet been invented.

Air travel increased until the Mills Field terminal was soon crowded. In 1954 it had to be replaced.

The newer terminal was where we find it now: south of the old Mills Field.

The center terminal, with parking out in front, was a great improvement. Everyone thought it could never be improved upon.

I attended the dedication of the 1954 terminal and sat on a folding chair on the bay side of the building, near the speakers platform.

A helicopter circled overhead dropping small plastic bags containing shamrocks from Ireland. Everyone sitting there hoped to catch one, and

up ahead of me on the platform I watched as an admiral jumped over a general to get

a shamrock. I was surprised, to discover such "high-up" people could ever be undignified.

The speeches informed us that this airport would be the airport of the future, and would easily handle traffic for

at least twenty-five years. Yet, more construction began the following year, and hasn't stopped since.

More and more people travel by air, thinking trains and busses too slow. The center terminal had to be completely remodeled in 1984-85.

The new taller tower makes it easier and safer because air controllers have a better view of incoming and outgoing flights.

If you haven't visited the rebuilt center terminal, you have missed a sight worth seeing. The airlines have private VIP rooms on the first floor of the center terminal,

and most are furnished beautifully. Other airlines have equally well-furnished private VIP rooms at the north terminal.

Presently, (1985) the south terminal is being rebuilt, and updated. The work seems to be never ending because people seem to continue to mul-

tiply. And that's why Belmont and San Carlos are growing. We like it that way.

Carlmont History

by Russ Estep

Most people in San Carlos and Belmont think nothing of it when they drive their car across the Bay or Golden Gate bridges. If they go by train to Portland the train will cross a bridge near Martinez without slowing up. But things haven't always been like this.

Following the Gold rush, as California filled with people, it was very necessary to find a way to cross the San Francisco Bay and the water between Port Costa and Benecia. Benecia had been an important place. Our first legislature met there in 1851. Ferrys were put into use to carry both trains and passengers.

Probably the first ferry was the "New World," a side wheeler. It arrived in San Francisco January 10, 1850, after a trip of 150 days around Cape Horn. Because it was a wood-burner, it must have had to put in for wood enroute, and that would have been an almost unbearable chore for the crew. Especially near the equator where the weather was hot and the humidity high.

This first boat was a great contrast with a later ferry that was built in 1922 for the Northwest Pacific. That boat carried 2,300 passengers during the commuter rush hours and traveled fast.

The Southern Pacific and Key System operated their boats from San Francisco to Oakland pier. The Southern Pacific boats were painted white, and the Key System were orange color.

Well-known Frank "Pops" Longo was in charge for 49 years of keeping the Southern Pacific boats operating. He is older now, but is active selling real estate.

Some of the boats formerly operating between San Francisco and Oakland and Sausalito are still in service at out-of-state locations. At least one is at Seattle. It seems amazing how long the boats were in service of the Bay.

The "Chrysopolis" operated for 65 years. The old "Piedmont," with its beamless beam engine, operated for 56 years. The "Berkeley" operated on the bay for many years with its triple expansion engine.

Before trains began traveling around the south end of the Bay and crossing a railroad bridge near the Dumbarton bridge, there was a large train ferry to carry trains across San Francisco Bay. The one I remember best was named the "Transit."

The "Solano" and "Contra Costa" carried trains from Port Costa to Benecia. When a boy, I always left the car and walked to see the engine while crossing the straits.

Finally a bridge was built to carry the trains and the last train to use a ferry was November 30, 1930.

During the World's Fair in 1939 the ferry "San Pedro" carried many people from San Francisco over to Treasure Island. The Key System ferry "Yerba Buena" carried thousand of passengers from Fort Mason to Camp Stoneman during World War II.

All this is gone, and now we hurry to get a cross the bridges, just as though were driving on a highway. We miss the old boats. They were relaxing.

Sandbags have sometimes been used along El Camino in San Carlos to prevent flood waters from entering stores. During 1955 there was a big storm and Redwood City had flood problems that were even worse.

Water was a foot deep on parts of Broadway, and parts of lower

Jefferson Avenue. The present flood controls hadn't yet been installed. The hard rains had continued for days and high tides and strong winds caused flooding. Although the Belmont and San Carlos elevation above sea level is 37 feet, Redwood City is listed as 10 feet.

During the storm, I was showing a

house to a customer in Redwood City near the Bayshore Highway. The home owner whispered to me not to let my customer open a certain door. Suddenly, before I could warn my customer, he opened the forbidden door. He started to step through. The home owner caught his arm. Then I saw the problem. Water had flooded

the large basement. It was eight feet deep. It is unlikely that I could have saved the customer if he had taken another step for I can only swim about eight feet. That's how wide the creek was where I learned to swim. There were rocks upstream and

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downstream.

When the customer and I left the house we drove up Middlefield Road to see another property. When we passed Flood Park the man laughingly commented, "I see they have so many floods they name parks for them." So I had to tell him about Mr. Flood.

James Flood's property was bounded on the west by Marsh Road and south by Middlefield Road. His house sat back away and it was huge. It was painted white, and had a long side and front porch, and a tower on one corner. There was a gate house beside Middlefield Road.

Mr. Flood was a wealthy banker with his office in San Francisco. He was one of those extremely wealthy persons who inhabited the Peninsula during an era when considerable money could be accumulated by those who know how, or were just lucky.

There were several such persons in this area. Although the "big four", consisting of Crocker, Huntington, Hopkins and Stanford were the men who built the first railroad to connect with the east coast, by hooking up with Union Pacific at Promontary, Utah, only Stanford seems to have been the most outstanding here. He built Stanford University, and owned several thousand acres there.

Probably everyone has read about the building of the railroad, but not many have heard that the "big four" weren't paid in cash for all their work. They were deeded every other section of land in northern California in payment.

My father purchased several sections of railroad land in Shasta County for three dollars an acre way back in 1910, and in 1918. The alternate sections were still owned by the government and offered to homesteaders.

People needed to fence their sections, (640 acres) then build a two room house and live in it for seven months of the year for three years. Two of my older half-brothers took advantage of this and proved up on their land and received deeds.

I helped one of them survey and fence his acreage. Using a primitive survey instrument, we only missed the government rock piles at section corners by just a few feet.

Considering the old survey instruments, we were very lucky. Otherwise my brother would have been wasting his time trying to get control of railroad land instead of government-owned land that was available to homesteaders.

This all happened in 1918. Similar adjoining land now sells readily for two thousand dollars an acre. California land is becoming scarce, and people more plentiful.

carlton history

By Russ Estep

What began when Indians lived here on the Peninsula has continued until the present. They left great piles of oyster shells in what we refer to as "the mud flats" along the bay. No doubt they also caught fish to supplement their diet.

During the 1870's the Morgan Oyster Co. established oyster beds along the shore at our part of the bay. Old records show that John Morgan owned, or controlled, more than 3000 acres along the west side of San Francisco Bay in this area.

His first oyster processing building was at Steinberger Slough, and his second building was at Belmont Slough. There, the oysters were processed for shipment by boat up to San Francisco.

Mr. Morgan's oyster business grew tremendously until he had to construct additional processing buildings. Richard Schellens, well-known historian, believed an early oyster building existed until a few years ago. It was at the corner of Spring and Chestnut Streets in Redwood City. It may be gone now, for there is no building there anymore resembling what an oyster processing plant should look like. Of course, alterations can change a building's appearance.

Finally, a sewer line was run from the Reid School at the corner of Alameda de las Pulgas down Ralston Avenue to the bay. This caused pollution of the mud flats. Sailing ships soon were replaced by

steamers on the bay, and more pollution occurred. Mr. Morgan disposed of his property to a cement company, who wanted the shells for making cement. It was this company who furnished cement for the first San Mateo bridge.

Later when the old sewer line was replaced with a new modern, and larger pipeline, the construction came too late. By then it was dangerous for San Carlos and Belmont people to eat any bay oysters.

Bay shipping had picked up until there were 25 ships per day arriving and the same number leaving San Francisco. Other bay cities were also disposing of sewage into the bay. Many who were here then will remember the awful odor at the Oakland side of the Bay Bridge. It has been cleaned up, but too late to save the oyster business.

Also, many will recall the tight grapestake style fence that Morgan Oyster Co. had used around their oyster beds to keep out sea life that would enjoy oysters.

Some San Carlos and Belmont people enjoy fresh oysters but now they go to the ocean beaches to dig for them. Still others go there and walk across beaches where oysters can be found, only to climb into deep sea boats to go far out to catch fish in clean water. There they know they won't find pollution.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Before Mr. Ralston died in 1875, trains were operating here on the Peninsula. It wasn't until 1909 that they were running along the coast from San Francisco to Tunitas Creek, however.

Half Moon Bay was growing and considerable produce was being taken to San Francisco by wagons. When the trains came in 1909 shipping became easier. Also, land developers and speculators hoped to sell vacant lots to San Francisco buyers.

Excursion trains were soon running along the coast. Passengers would view the ocean and many sandy beaches, and the level lots waiting for construction of homes appeared attractive. The train fare from San Francisco was \$1.00.

There were always problems with Devil's Slide during the winter times. When the train route was under construction in 1906 the earthquake caused great damage. Many stockholders were discouraged and some sold their stock. The newly formed company barely managed to survive. No trains slid into the ocean for the big quake came at 5:12 a.m. The trains were only operating during the daytime.

Some of the old train depots can still be seen. The one at Half Moon Bay is located toward the south end of town, and is about half-way between Highway 1 and the ocean. It is being used for a residence. Architecture of the building makes it easily recognizable.

Another of the old depots may be identified at Princeton. It has been added on-

to by a real estate man, but the rear portion that has the tile roof was a train station. Other stations can be found at El Granada and Moss Beach.

After repairs were made to the newly laid tracks at Devil's Slide, the trains continued to operate until 1923. Finally the directors threw in the towel. Yet their name continued to be in the San Francisco telephone book for years afterward. Their corporation continued to exist, although they didn't run their trains.

The train name was the Ocean Shore Railroad. Several investors were well-known at the time. They were J. Downey Harvey, J.A. Folger, H.D. Pillsbury, P.D. Martin, and C.C. Moore.

Their intention to extend their railroad down to Santa Cruz never materialized. Their tracks, however, were laid from Santa Cruz up to Davenport where there was a cement plant. Early chain-drive buses carried their passengers from Davenport up to Tunitas Creek.

Although Half Moon Bay was established by the Spanish in the late 1700's, the area hasn't grown as fast as our side of the mountain. They have the oldest cemetery in San Mateo County, dating from 1820. Sailing ships came there to load and unload hides. Many Portuguese from the Azores settled in Half Moon Bay.

There is no smog and the climate is nearly always cool and pleasant. Someday things on the coastside will break loose and thousands of new homes will be built. They have much to offer.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

When driving along San Carlos Avenue, or Ralston Avenue in Belmont, we pass large eucalyptus trees. Some are more than two feet in diameter. They were brought from Australia, mostly before 1875, as small sprouts.

Most people haven't looked closely under the trees and haven't seen the small square little limbs. These trees are the only trees in the whole world with square limbs! Next time you are out of your car take a look. This is an oddity not found in many places—and we have it right here in our locality.

In nearby Hillsborough the gardeners used to rake the eucalyptus leaves and burn them. Their fragrance is something you will remember. The odor is pleasant.

Of course other oddities have occurred in other California towns. Another I have heard about is the water pipes in Fort Bragg. With metal pipe difficult to obtain when California was young, the early settlers in Fort Bragg hollowed out redwood logs for water pipes. Since Redwood doesn't deteriorate fast, some of the old wooden pipes are still being used.

When I mentioned this to one skeptic he laughed and asked whether I had seen or heard of the Ford Foundation plantation in El Salvador. Since I hadn't heard about it, he offered to explain. His explanation was amusing.

He said the Ford Foundation was raising heartless trees in El Salvador where they owned more than a million acres. He

told me the hollow trees were shipped to many countries and could carry water at a cost considerably less than metal pipes would cost. This I didn't believe, even when he swore it to be true. And I still don't believe it, but I thought what he said was amusing.

Another of our Peninsula oddities happened when the Arguello family owned their 34,200 acre land grant here. Their cattle intermingled with those of adjoining ranchos so livestock had to be branded and their ears marked. Still that wasn't enough.

The owner of cattle needed to "dewlap" the cattle so cowboys could more easily identify them. This was accomplished by cutting the brisket to allow a small bit of skin to dangle below the cow's neck.

Some cattle owners used a four inch bit of skin up high under the cow's jaws. Others used one or two dewlaps farther down under the lower neck. This, in addition to a brand on the cow's hip or side, allowed for fast and accurate identification.

This was very essential since cowboys, or vaqueros, had to be paid an equivalent of \$20 a month. There was no market for beef, but hides could be sold for \$2 each to ship captains who took them to the East Coast to be tanned and made into shoes and boots.

Those people thought inflation was entirely out-of-hand. What, they wondered, was the world coming to?



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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Few persons here on the Peninsula were born here. They have come from many other places and had to travel to get here. Most still have the urge to travel. It used to be a tradition on July 4 for many to go someplace.

In 1912, a group from Belmont cranked up their early automobiles and drove to Memorial Park. Another group still didn't have automobiles and so hitched up their horses to a surry for a trip up to King's Mountain. Still another group from Geary Street in San Francisco rode the train down to Belmont to spend July 4th. All wanted to go someplace.

The Belmont group usually included some from San Carlos. These people congregated on Schmoll Street, which is now Sixth Avenue, before starting the two hour drive to Memorial Park. Roads were unpaved and very dusty. Brown road dust soon covered everyone and their lunch boxes. No one minded because of the good-time that was coming.

Upon arrival at Memorial Park the ladies walked around among the large redwoods for awhile. Then they began

setting out food for the picnic. Everyone ate together—family style.

The boys and girls congregated on the bank of the creek where someone had placed a small earth-fill dam to make a swimming hole. Most came prepared and had brought swim suits, but those who had forgotten hid behind a big redwood and stripped down to their shorts.

The rough trip over caused some to be hungry. Others breathed the cool fresh air and commented how lucky they felt to be alive and to live on the Peninsula.

Following lunch, some of the men played horseshoes, while others started games such as broad jumping and foot races. Bert Johnson was young then and was usually best of the group he participated with. Someone was always a politician and usually wanted to speak. He stood on a stump, and if he was a state candidate, it was said that he "stumped the state."

Everyone was friendly. The people were not in competition as the people liv-

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ing north in the less settled cattle country were. In the cattle country, someone was always accusing his neighbor of letting his animals into a garden, or hay field. Northern people feuded, almost like the Martins and Coys in Kentucky.

Mr. Davenport Bromfield was an old man when I knew him. He had been the surveyor who laid out Burlingame. He once told me about taking his daughters and son to his cabin on Kings Mountain on July 4th. He lived in Hillsborough, and said he had loaded his sons and daughter into the surry and driven up to Kings Mountain where he owned a cabin in the redwoods. He said his family had a wonderful time that day.

Later, Grace Haver, who was one of his daughters, mentioned that July 4th,

the surry ride and that it was one of the most wonderful times she had ever had.

A member of the family who lived on Geary Street in San Francisco described his family's July 4th in Belmont. He thought the trian ride was exciting, and that their day in Belmont was one of his best holidays.

San Carlos and Belmont people enjoy themselves, but when they travel to other surroundings they refer to that as one of the best days of their lives.

Russ Estep, a long-time resident of both Belmont and San Carlos, was appointed Belmont's official historian by the City Comcil 15 years ago. He has been a member of the San Mateo County Historical Society and the California Historical Association for many years.

carl mont comments

By Russ Estep

If you were interested in history as I am, and someone offered you an almost free trip to London, surely you'd accept it. That's what I did. Observations while I was there will interest you.

For instance, the pictures we have all seen of the famous old Tower Bridge across the Thames, has always appeared to have been supported with cables. Yet, we haven't considered that cables were not invented when the Tower Bridge was built. When you are near it you can see that there are no cables, but what looks like them, are long slim lengths of iron welded together.

Upstream about a half mile, you will notice the new London Bridge. It is a wide, flat concrete structure like our American bridges. The old London Bridge was sold several years ago to an American developer and taken apart and moved to Lake Havasu City, on the Colorado River. He paid \$1 million for it. The new London Bridge cost \$3.5 million to build.

Those thousands of chimneys on top of London buildings are no longer in use. Coal burning has been outlawed and everyone cooks and heats with electricity, mostly produced with atomic power plants. I was told that no problems whatsoever have occurred with using atomic power in England.

Out in the country where you might formerly have seen thatch roofs you won't see many now. Insurance rates arose greatly after World War II. Roofs are usually flat tile. However, the "Ann Hathaway cottage" is an exception, and a new thatch roof has just been installed at a cost of \$10,000. It is 8 inches thick

The flight over and back is non-stop in 747-B planes, and they carry about 400 people. You can see the south end of Greenland as well as Iceland.

Their money is no problem since they consider a pound to be \$1.00 and the rest of their money are "pence," each worth a penny or more. Each coin is easily identified. When you ask to cash a \$20.00 traveler's check, they will hand you \$13.00 of their English money. You wonder whether they have made a mistake, but the tour guide doesn't allow

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and placed on top of the old roof. It is said that it will last for 35 years.

At Bath, the 2,000-year-old Roman baths have been cleaned up and tourists crowd in to stare at where the Romans bathed. The town of Bath has about 80,000 residents, and is a pleasant place.

At Stonehenge, barbed wire has been placed around the large stones because people have been chipping souvenirs. You only go as close as about 50 feet from the 3,000-year-old project.

In the Tower of London, you will find the Crown Jewels about 50 feet below the surface. Three crowns, with priceless jewels, are displayed, as well as ancient armor.

Warwick Castle is interesting to walk through, but Windsor Castle is larger and tours are escorted through the portion where the Queen and her family live. Decorations are far more elaborate than seen here.

At Runnymede may be seen the spot where King John signed the Charter, and in the British museum may be seen one of the four originals of the Charter.

The six-lane freeway running north from London carries considerable traffic, all going fast. Speed limit is 70 miles per hour. We may complain about our traffic at times, but in England it is worse. Both mornings and evenings, three lanes of the freeway are stopped for awhile, then move forward inch by inch. Commuters come from as far away as Wyckam, (pronounced Wickam) and that is 50 miles from London. Wyckam is a town of 80,000 in the Avon Valley.

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time for questioning. Anyway, you're there to observe, not to argue. England is a good place to travel to. Try it. You'll like it!

Russ Estep, a long-time resident of both Belmont and San Carlos, was appointed Belmont's official historian by the City Council 15 year ago. He has been a member of the San Mateo County Historical Society and the California Historical Association for many years.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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More From London

Additional things observed by me while in England recently will be of interest to many readers. For instance, the gasoline stations appeared to be self-serve just like we have here. They dispensed Shell, Mobil and Texaco.

The British Museum is getting some interior remodeling and plywood being used appeared to be of superior quality. Since the tour guide said trees disappeared from England 1,000 years ago, the lumber for wooden doors and plywood must come from one of the northern countries.

Scaffolding being used on the exterior of buildings was made from pipe just as over here. Probably a rental company supplies it.

The continental breakfast was interesting. One very cold and hard biscuit was offered, and if you attempt to cut or break it you will find that impossible to do. By biting it, one of your teeth could be chipped. When you set it aside, you may wonder if other London restaurants serve the same.

Along with the biscuit, was a tiny tomato—boiled. Orange juice was thin and I wondered if one teaspoon of concentrate had been used in the glass of water. I could see through the glass.

Coffee and tea were good. The choice of the green apple or pear shouldn't bother anyone for both were too green to eat. You were prepared for lunch served at noon on your all-day tours but in some places a thin sauce had been poured on to it. The sauce was heavily seasoned, and could upset some people. The result being that the first meal served on the return flight to San Francisco would be much appreciated.

Out in the country, I immediately noticed that farm lines do not run straight; they having been established 1,000 or so years ago.

When I was there in mid-July, hay was being harvested. Some had just been cut, other farms had hay in shocks and some had theirs in windrows. Some was baled in bales similar to ours, but other bales were round from being rolled up from windrows and tied.

I didn't see any Jersey cows in the many dairies the tour bus passed. There were many Holsteins and a new breed, black with white faces. We were told they were crossed from black Anguses and Herefords and gave more milk and stayed fat on less feed.

Farm houses were all made of bricks or of rocks and all were two-story. The tour guide explained this was because of lack of lumber. Some were said to be 500 or more years old.

In London some streets were laid out a long time ago and are narrow. It is interesting to watch how close the buses come to each other.

Several tall buildings are seen as you leave London and you are informed that they are "council houses," built for the poor. Some people have written on the walls and sprayed paint where it wasn't intended. The tour guide said that others will not be built.

Because it snows in England, most houses have very steep roofs, usually half pitch, so snow will slide off more easily.

In downtown London, people were rushing here and there. Many were smiling, confirming the expression "jolly old England." It was an interesting place to visit.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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A Redwood City commuter who commutes by train phoned to ask why I didn't write something about that bust of a lady near the train station.

At first, I laughed, then recalled that I had been there when the bust was installed, and that it was placed to honor one of our first settlers—Mrs. Dona Soledad Arguello.

She and her husband, Don Jose Arguello, came to this area in 1781. Her husband had been an ensign in Sergeant Rivera's company. After serving the Spanish government at the Presidio in San Francisco, Arguello was awarded a land grant by the Spanish King of approximately 34,200 acres, in 1795.

The land grant included land north of San Francisco Creek, taking in Menlo Park, Atherton, Redwood City, San Carlos, Belmont and part of San Mateo. The Arguello's lived in San Carlos and their home at first was at the corner of Cordilleras and San Carlos avenues.

In 1821, their home was well established about a block north of San Carlos Avenue, on Cedar Street. What we call San Carlos Avenue was their driveway. Later it was named Cypress Street, and still later San Carlos Avenue.

The Arguellos were large cattle ranchers in a short time and old records indicate that they owned as many as 4,000 head at one time. Markets were not plentiful, and settlers were few. Their market was cattle hides, for which old records show they received as much as \$2 each.

Sailing ships took them to the East Coast where the ship captains sold the hides for a large profit. The leather was used for shoes, boots, and other goods.

After Don Jose Arguello died, his widow Dona Maria de la Soledad Ortega Arguello continued to live on Cedar Street in their hacienda for many years,

but she had problems. Americans were starting their emigrations westward, and some settled on her land.

Her rancho was called Rancho de las Pulgas; the name coming from an earlier Spanish expedition that suffered from fleas while camping in an abandoned Indian village west of San Carlos. Nothing was recorded about the early American settlers suffering from flea bites. Perhaps even in those early years they brought remedies with them when they came west.

Finally, in 1848 the settler problem became so great the Mrs. Arguello needed to have legal help to retain title to her rancho. She employed Simon Monserrate Mezes to clear the land titles.

Mezes was an ambitious young attorney from Puerto Rico, having arrived on the Peninsula via Mexico. He had joined up with Count Leonetto Cipriani and a Mr. Ranke to form their law firm in San Francisco. His agreement with Mrs. Arguello called for her to deed him 15 percent of her rancho if he succeeded in getting her a clear title.

Mezes succeeded, and continued to assist Mrs. Arguello by contacting squatters on her land, offering to let them buy at inflated prices and big interest loans were made when needed—all carried by Mr. Mezes.

The 15 percent he took as his fee included part of Redwood City, and most of Belmont. His home was located north of the Cipriani land; later Ralston's home place. At first Redwood City was called Mezesville, but the name was changed later.

Mezes died in 1884 in Belmont. I cannot locate the death date of Mrs. Arguello, but it would have been not long after her land titles had been cleared. She had been a real pioneer in our Peninsula area.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

One of San Carlos' developers was overly enthusiastic and laid out more lots than he could sell. He had laid out 1,400 lots west of what was then San Carlos and named the area Devonshire Properties.

On Jan. 1, 1932 he lost title to the lots that were still unsold. At that time the Sierra Financial Corp., a subsidiary of Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co., received a deed from the original developer to more than 1,000 unsold lots.

Most lots were R-1, but few were listed as commercial.

The Devonshire Country Club, on the south side of Club Drive near the summit, retained several commercial lots for their large club house. It burned several years later in a spectacular fire that could be seen from most of the Bay region.

One R-1 lot was put to good use very early. A small "country-type" store was established on Devonshire. It is still being operated on a use permit, and is surrounded by houses.

Seldom has a business been operated by so many nationalities. In 1960 the store was operated by a Frenchman whom people called Mr. Mayer. His French name was properly spelled "Meilleur." After a few years of successful operation the business was sold to a Jewish person known to many as

"Murray." He also operated the store successfully and as more homes were built nearby, his business continued to pick up until he could hardly handle the traffic.

The next owner was from Cuba. People called him "Oscar," but no one seems to remember his last name. Some, however, think it was Romero.

Oscar did well in the little store and increased the amount of stock.

Some people seemed to have the idea that the store shouldn't have been allowed there. They complained to the city about it and tried to get it closed. Other neighbors found shopping easy and close by, so the city upheld the store owner. He was allowed to remain.

The store became busier than ever, possibly from the publicity. Some San Carlos people hadn't known it was there. The 7-11's hadn't come to town yet, so the Devonshire store was a handy place to pick up a loaf of bread or some milk when other stores were closed on Sundays and holidays.

The next, and present owner, is David Huang. He is Chinese. He has so many customers from the local neighborhood that he can hardly handle the growing business. The neighbors seem to like Mr. Huang. He is a friendly person.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Since the beginning of San Carlos and Belmont there has been one business that everyone has depended upon. That has been transportation.

At first there was the Hammerson Blacksmith Shop in Belmont where you could get your horse shod, or where you could hire a buggy to go some place too far to walk.

Then came automobiles and their dependency upon fuel. Gasoline was dispensed in Belmont from portable supply tanks on wheels at an automobile repair shop. There were two—one on Old County Road and one, after 1918, on El Camino Real.

Soon both had gasoline pumps, and after that they both used the kind with the glass container up high. They sold gasoline by gravity and the operator didn't need to turn a crank anymore. This was considered to be a great improvement.

Years later pumps were invented with metered devices so the fuel could be pumped from underground tanks by use of electricity. After World War II, the measuring devices became electronic, and finally self-serve outlets have become popular.

Along the way, Belmont and San Carlos each attracted men who sold gasoline. When the Bayshore Highway was built in the late 1920s and 1930s, a service station was established where Ralston Avenue and the Bayshore Highway intersect. Its exterior was made of rocks, and its large sign on Bayshore

announced that it was operated by "Old Sarge." I bought gasoline there many times for my Model "T" Ford car.

Then came Newell Sharkey who operated his station at the northwest corner of El Camino Real and San Carlos Avenue. Everyone in the area knew Newell, and most patronized his station. The service was outstanding and you could have your windshield washed, oil checked, and tires checked while receiving gasoline.

Newell spent a good part of his lifetime running his station, finally selling it and opening the photography store on Laurel Street that he still operates. Apparently selling cameras and film are less tiring than running all day, serving gasoline customers.

Belmont has a pioneer also in the service station business. He was Ray Yonkers. Ray's station was at the northeast corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. Ray was active in the Belmont Lions Club and had perfect attendance for nearly 40 years.

Belmont people liked the excellent service at his station and Ray's pleasant greeting each time they patronized his station. Ray, like Newell Sharkey, contributed greatly to the community and people were sorry when he retired.

Ray is 86 now and living in a convalescent hospital on Hill Street in Belmont. If you happened by, he would greet you with the same old smile and would be pleased to see you again.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

By Russ Estep

Many San Carlos residents don't remember it, but their city had been called "Lomita" at first. I think we are lucky, for the name San Carlos seems a better name for our growing city.

Fred Drake had a lot to do with changing the town's name. He was a historian and it was he who built the Spanish-type building at the southwest corner of San Carlos Avenue and El Camino Real.

Drake was a real estate man and had his office in his new building. He lived at the corner of Cordilleras and San Carlos avenues. He died many years ago, and I have always been glad that I knew him.

Drake came to San Carlos from Redwood City where he had been active in selling the flat lots west of El Camino Real. He became very active in the growth of San Carlos.

Although Drake did all he could to boost San Carlos, the area of White Oaks was mostly a hay field until World War II.

The Mercantile Trust took over much of San Carlos in 1917, and Drake was their representative. He purchased the water reservoir from the bank, and it was he who arranged completion of it. Soon water became available for buyers of the many vacant lots. Still, hundreds of good, level lots were available but few takers.

The San Carlos Land Company had tried to attract lot buyers as early as 1887 to land they had bought from Senator Phelps's estate.

The times were for speculators. Everyone had heard of William C. Ralston's considerable speculations, and many thought "anyone could do it." They were proved to be wrong, and few came to San Carlos until much later.

Would you believe that in 1903 there were only 14 families who had settled in San Carlos? There were more in Belmont. Buyers at that time seemed to prefer hills for a view.

It was not until 1925 that San Carlos was incorporated—four years ahead of Belmont. The incorporation of San Carlos, however, wasn't interfered with as Belmont's was. A property owner of the land where Carlmont High School now stands didn't appreciate being taken into Belmont at their incorporation, so he sued the new city. Belmont's official papers were held up until a court in 1929 allowed Belmont's incorporation to stand.

In some ways, San Carlos and Belmont have followed similar patterns. Following the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915 people from San Carlos bought the Ohio state building and floated it down the bay. Also following the closing of the exposition, Belmont purchased the Japanese Tea House and it was removed to a hillside in Belmont. Presently it is known as "The Van's Restaurant." Before the Ohio state building could be put to use in San Carlos there was a spectacular fire and the building was destroyed.

San Carlos might have been called "Drakeville" or "Lomita," but Belmont at first was known as "Waterview." Probably we are better satisfied with the present names of our cities.

Although there is no competition between San Carlos and Belmont, San Carlos has a beautiful senior center, and Belmont is planning one for Twin Pines Park. Belmonters do wish too, that they had a beautiful city hall such as San Carlos'. That is something for the future. Both cities are up and coming.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Pecking Order

If you listen to Ham radio you will hear the hams discussing this and that until finally one will tell when he got his first license. Then he will tell his age. Others who are listening in the group will immediately give the same information about themselves. It appears to establish pecking order.

Among our older people similar conversations soon occur when they congregate. When the pecking order is established each goes on his way. Of course when you are 90, you might not have much else to talk about. Now and then we run across someone who doesn't follow the usual pattern. This man is Howard Ressler. I pried the following information from him. He is a real old timer in San Carlos.

Ressler took over the Garden Market in 1946. It was on the El Camino Real in San Carlos. He operated that business for three years. Nearly everyone who lived in San Carlos and Belmont knew him, as he was said to have been friendly, and never short-weighted anything he sold.

Following that business he took over Gussie's Meat Market which was located where Salvatore's Restaurant is now. He built up the business, and he worked very hard to keep everyone satisfied. Finally, in 1959, he sold the market.

Howard Ressler had come to this Peninsula in 1942 during World War II from Minneapolis. Until the war ended, he worked for Bethlehem Steel, then

worked as a carpenter.

He will celebrate his 55th wedding anniversary this November.

After selling his market in 1959 he worked 11 years for Kilpatrick's Bakery. Then he retired.

Howard is one of the really good musicians living on the Peninsula. It was easy for him to find employment playing at piano bars at the various officer's clubs, Scotty Campbells, Sir Winstons, and Monti's.

Their business improved and quality of their customers is said to have improved, for Howard often played classical music. The new customers bought more and better food, drank several more expensive drinks, and the restaurant owners prospered.

Now that Howard has retired he spends time playing golf with his many friends, but he still furnishes music for the senior centers. He is a member of the Episcopal church at Elm and Arroyo.

Howard sings in a community choir during his spare time, and says he really enjoys his retirement.

How old is he? He never mentioned it, and I forgot to ask. Howard probably has other things to talk about. He is active. I am sure he doesn't even think about pecking order.

Russ Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the City of Belmont. His column is published each week in the *Enquirer-Bulletin*.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Transportation Evolution

Here in California we have witnessed the evolution of transportation more than people have in some states. For instance, up in northern California people were still traveling horseback, and stage coaches were used until 1918, while automobiles were in use in San Carlos and Belmont.

An old picture postcard in my files shows a flight of very early airplanes flying over the grandstand at Tanforan

racetrack in 1909. No doubt there were many people from San Carlos and Belmont there to watch them.

Belmont residents will recall the little airport that used to be where the Mae Nesbit school is now. I flew out of it in 1943 as a prize for my article telling why everyone should take up flying.

Most of our Peninsula people will remember the flying field where the Friendly Acres of Redwood City is now.

The field was discontinued when developer Bohannen built homes over the landing strip. We have seen airplanes evolve from dual wing crop-duster types of bi-planes, to the multi-engine jets used now.

Most San Carlos and Belmont people watched the Akron and Macon circle over our Peninsula. Many went to the Sunnyvale Airbase to see them up close where they were tied to the revolving mooring mast near where the hangars are now. People in other localities missed seeing these interesting events during the early 1930s.

Trains, pulled by steam engines, traveled from San Francisco to San Jose as early as 1853, a sight not enjoyed by people in other parts of California.

Evolution in transportation continues, and everyone in San Carlos and Belmont continues to be interested. During World War I several well-known aviators served in the air force from here. Forty years ago, one in Belmont was pointed out to me as being an "ace" in France, but I cannot locate his name. He had served during World War I.

During World War II Howard Hughes served for a while in the military and is reported to have landed at Moffett Field several times. It was he who built the world's largest airplane—all out of spruce plywood. It was designed to carry 750 troops.

His airplane was built when metals were in short supply, toward the end of

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World War II. When you travel to Southern California you should make an effort to see the huge airplane. Its wing spread is longer than a football field. A tour of it is interesting.

The huge airplane is called the "Spruce Goose," and it is housed in the world's largest dome building, which is built without any interior supports and covered with aluminum. The large airplane is beside the SS Queen Mary at Long Beach. With transportation faster, and so easy to take advantage of, you could see the world's largest ship and the world's largest airplane both the same day. Like shooting two ducks with one shot, both are worth seeing.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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Old Political Stories

Late arrivals in San Carlos and Belmont likely haven't heard of two events that occurred many years ago. One was a duel in Belmont and other the sudden death of Senator Phelps in San Carlos. Both were widely publicized news items when they occurred.

In 1899 one of the most prominent persons in San Carlos was Senator Phelps. His home was a large white two-story house on the east side of the railroad tracks, just north of Holly Street. There is a blown-up picture of it in the office of Davey Properties in San Carlos. Although it wasn't referred to as a mansion, it was well-built, picturesque, and the largest house in San Carlos. In 1899, two boys riding one of the early bicycles ran into Senator Phelps. He died following the accident.

Presumably his head must have hit a rock or pavement, if there was any pavement there. He had been a popular senator and all who knew him were sorry the accident happened.

The duel in Belmont occurred near the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue in 1852.

The editor of a San Francisco newspaper had been publishing stories about California's second governor, John

McDougal. Gov. McDougal had replaced Peter Burnett, then he lost the election for his second term.

Reports were that he wasn't a good governor, and some claimed he wasn't an honest politician. He later made his home where Twin Pines Park is now, and this was many years before George Center built the present mansion.

Governor McDougal was unhappy about the press releases about his conduct. Both he and the newspaper editor were a bit too old for an old-fashioned fist fight. McDougal challenged Mr. A. Russell, the editor, to a duel.

Each chose "seconds" and obtained their pistols. Time came for the duel and several people came to watch. The order was given by a "second," and their pistols blazed. Both men were nervous, and their hands shook. Governor McDougal wasn't hit, but Mr. A.P. Russell was hit in the hand. Afterward, the men shook hands. Blood from Russell's wound rubbed off on Gov. McDougal's hand, and both men left the dueling area bloody, but satisfied.

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carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Belmont's courthouse

A stranger poked his head in my office door and asked where the courthouse was. I asked if he meant the city hall. He said, "No, the courthouse." So I explained that it was in Redwood City.

He was 129 years too late, but he probably didn't know that. Many people haven't heard that 129 years ago the county seat was in Belmont. The courthouse was at the southwest corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue.

At first, this area had been part of San Francisco County. They found it too difficult to collect taxes with transportation being horse and buggy or horseback, and probably there were considerable taxes left uncollected. So, San Francisco cut off its county at Daly City. This left a big unnamed area where our San Mateo County is.

Belmont wanted the county seat and Redwood City put its hat in the ring. An election was held, and would you believe there were 250 votes that came in from a little settlement where the Crystal Springs lakes are located, and only 25 people lived there?

This caused Redwood City (known as Mezesville) to ask for a new election. That time the votes from the little Crystal Springs village weren't counted. Redwood City received the most votes and has held onto the county seat ever since.

Some people in Belmont are just as happy. Some Belmonters would like our

town to remain just as it was 129 years ago. However, Belmont has grown from 50 persons to 28,700. Redwood City has grown, too, from 500 people up to its present 58,900.

Redwood City's old courthouse has had to be added onto several times as our county population has increased. During the 1906 earthquake the courthouse suffered considerable damage.

Then, in 1933, a large addition was added onto the north side, and a modern large addition on the Broadway side, squeezing the first courthouse up in the middle. The dome remains, however, and the California seal done in small tile pieces on the floor below the dome can be seen.

As for Belmont, the first courthouse building burned many years ago, and it was replaced by the building known as "The Opportunity Shop." Inside the present building will be found almost as many items as most of us have seen in London in the old original Charles Dickens' Opportunity Shop.

Some people from our San Mateo County have traveled to Marin County and visited their beautiful courthouse designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Upon seeing it, they usually wish our county courthouse could be as beautiful. Then they remember that taxes pay for such elaborate buildings, and most decide that we should get along with what we have now. Even though it's in Redwood City.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Earthquake communications

Since the big earthquake in Mexico some days ago, our people are thinking of communications. Many are concerned about their relatives. Prior to the big earthquake, San Carlos and Belmont people have communicated with people elsewhere almost since the beginning of the white settlements here.

Indians who were here likely didn't try to communicate with other tribes. Local Indians had everything that they needed right here and possibly they wouldn't have wanted other tribes to hear about it.

Communications, until fairly recently, had been rather slow. For instance, following the War of 1812. That fiasco couldn't happen now.

In the 1920s the General Electric Co. has a broadcast station in Belmont across the Bayshore highway.

Presently there is KGEI at the edge of the bay broadcasting to Mexico, South America, and China. Theirs is a commercial station with 500,000 watts of power. They have been reported as coming in loudly in Mexico City, so no doubt thousands of people down there having transistor radios listen to them. Ordinarily their broadcasts are one-fourth religious, and 75 percent is news.

They recently announced that they are accepting messages to Mexico City free of charge, but cannot handle two-way messages.

In San Carlos and Belmont, there are many ham operators. Some have powerful equipment and can easily reach Mexico City. All are glad to help by handling messages.

If you happen to listen to the ham 20-meter band you will hear a constant transmission of requests by local people wanting to hear from relatives. You may be surprised to discover how many local people have relatives or friends in Mexico.

By driving around Belmont or San Carlos you will notice many ham beams. The beams consist of an antenna resembling a grandfather size TV antenna. They are directional, and the short elements are pointed toward whom ever they wish to talk to. Beams are revolvable so the Hams can carry on conversations with people all over the world.

The F.C.C. allows licensed radio amateurs to use up to 2,000-watts which is adequate for them to be heard most anywhere.

During disasters such as Mexico's earthquake, most are active and help hundreds of people get in touch with friends or relatives. During the time of the Anchorage earthquake, my own station handled over 927 messages for local persons.

Presently, however, I don't have a beam antenna, nor do I use high power. A single wire of a short length is adequate to reach others Hams throughout the United States and Hawaii.

Communications have always been necessary, but what happened during the War of 1812 always amazed and interested me. Most Belmont and San Carlos residents have seen the old battle ground across the Mississippi from New Orleans. It was there that the Americans whipped the British in a battle, not knowing the war had ended three weeks before that. Communications were slow at that time. That was something that couldn't happen now.

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carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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Many San Carlos and Belmont people have experienced the start of four wars: World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Younger people will be interested in what happens when a war starts.

When World War I started, the feeling was very strong against the enemy, much more so than in the other wars. Nearly everybody had a relative in the military. Those at home started victory gardens and raised vegetables wherever they could.

Soon banners about 16-inches-by-24-inches appeared in house windows. Red stars were sewn onto them to indicate the number of soldiers serving the country from that house. Soon some red stars were replaced by gold stars. These indicated that a soldier or sailor from that house had been killed.

A great singer, Madame Schumanheink, lost seven sons who were killed during World War I.

Food stuffs and gasoline were quickly rationed at the start of World War I. Tires and batteries were scarce and expensive.

Soldiers were to be seen standing on most street corners, principally from Camp Fremont, which was east of the railroad tracks in Menlo Park, and at Palo Alto in the grove of trees north of the stadium. The feeling was mostly against the Kaiser and there was at least one plot to kidnap him and it almost succeeded.

No one knew how long World War I might last so the government asked grade schools in larger cities to provide basic drill training for their 7th and 8th grade students. Mine was provided in San Jose.

The U.S. had entered the war in 1917 and the war ended Nov. 11, 1918. Other countries had been fighting for several years prior to our entry.

There was inflation and scarcity of food. Restaurant meals went up from 25 cents to 50 cents.

Many years went by, and following the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II began. Immediately upon the

declaration of war the quietness became noticeable. The loudest noise was from army convoys traveling north on El Camino Real toward San Francisco.

Blackouts, where no lights were allowed to show from houses, became the order of the day.

Rationing started and gasoline coupons were given to people with cars. Workers with B coupons were allowed more gasoline than non-workers could get with A coupons. Food stuffs, tires, batteries, and nearly everything quickly became in short supply.

The country's feeling against Hitler was strong, but didn't seem as strong as that against the Kaiser in WWI. It was interesting to notice service ribbons on sailors. Especially those sailors who told of being on ships attacked by U-boats from Germany before we entered the war. Shipping of supplies to our European allies had been going on long before our country entered the war.

The first soldier from Belmont who was killed in World War II was Robin Whipple. His widowed mother had been raising her seven-children at their Belmont home, and Robin was liked and greatly missed. Later a Belmont street was named for him. He was one of the first drafted when the war began.

The draft board started only taking 18- to 21-year-old men, and later took 21- to 24-year men, continuing in this manner until age 45 was reached. They they dropped back to age 18 and 21 and took married men without children. Then married men later with one child. Before the war ended they were drafting men with three children if they men weren't working in war work. Then the war ended. I had been too young for World War I and too old for World War II.

During the Korean and Vietnam war there wasn't so much feeling against the enemy, but nobody wanted communism.

We must hope no more wars occur, although down through the centuries this has been hoped and nobody seems to have stopped them.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Many parks in San Carlos and Belmont, and in the surrounding cities, received their names commemorating something or somebody.

The Burton Park in San Carlos was named for Pop Burton. He was very instrumental in helping the growth of San Carlos and he did a great many things for the good of the citizens. So the park was named for him.

Also in San Carlos is the Arguello Park just north of San Carlos Avenue. It was named for Don Jose Dario Arguello who once owned San Carlos. His large 34,000 acre grant included Menlo Park, Atherton, Redwood City, Belmont and part of San Mateo. The city that developed later on his property named a park in his honor.

In Belmont the little park near the Mae Nesbit School was named for Mrs. Annette Alexander who had owned the Alexander Sanitarium—now in Belmont Hills. She had done many things to help Belmont grow in the right direction. She is long deceased.

Although several prominent people had lived where Belmont's Twin Pines Park is located, none were honored by having a park named for them. The park received its name because there were two large pine trees near the entrance, and early residents of the lamas house had referred to their place as Twin Pines.

Also in Belmont, we find the Cipriani School named for Count Leonetto Cipriani who had lived in the area 11 years before he sold to Mr. Raiston.

The Fox School in Belmont carried the name of Judge Fox who sat in on the trial when Belmont lost the county seat to Redwood City in 1856.

The Barrett School was named for Mr. Barrett who had been school superintendent for many years.

Old records indicate that a well-to-do family named Pisis had owned the property where the Sequoia High School is located. The school was built on their property after the earlier school was abandoned on Broadway east of the railroad tracks.

In Belmont, the O'Donnell Park was named for Vincent O'Donnell, who had been Chairman of the Planning Commission for many years, and was very well liked. He helped to make many decisions to improve Belmont.

The Raiston School in Belmont was, of course, named for William Chapman Raiston, as was Raiston Avenue.

There are other parks and schools in the area with names which bring back memories, and speculation as to what the people whose names were used might be like.

When driving my Model T Ford south on El Camino Real in the late 1920s or 1930s I noticed a newly installed sign at what is now the entrance to Sequoia High School. The sign carried the pioneer owners' name, and stated that there was a park behind the sign.

They may have donated the property to Redwood City, but the next time I

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passed by, a new sign proclaimed that Sequoia High School was soon to be there. The earlier sign was no more. I wished I had photographed it.

Russ Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the City of Belmont.



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carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Some early settlers in Belmont didn't remain here long. For instance, Count Leonetto Cipriani came in 1850 then sold his land to William C. Ralston 14 years later in 1864.

Ralston died in 1875, after living in Belmont only 11 years.

Following Ralston's death, Senator Sharon took over Ralston's Belmont holdings. Sharon died only 10 years later in 1885. Then his son, Frederick Sharon became owner of the large house in Belmont, but he only stayed a short while. He bought 580 acres of the rolling hills west of Menlo Park, and had a large house built which he called his summer cottage.

The large house was built north of Sand Hill Road, on a knoll. Many old-timers will remember seeing it. He might have conceived the idea of calling it a "cottage" from the Vanderbilt's enormous "cottage" in New York.

The former Sharon land west of Menlo Park was known for many years as "Sharon Heights." After holding it several years, Frederick Sharon apparently sold it to a subdivider for it is mostly covered with office buildings and stores.

However, the name Sharon remains on Sharon Court, Sharon Drive, Sharon Street, Sharon Shopping Center, and several other indications that Sharon had been around there.

As for the large former Ralston home taken over by Sharon, the Sisters at Notre Dame own it. The large house is a state and a national landmark, and tours may

be arranged by calling the college.

Although other early Belmont residents might not have made such a big splash as Ralston and Sharon, some of them were also pillars of the community, and some stayed in the area longer.

For instance, the Janke family were here in the early 1850s and remained for several generations. Indeed, there are still descendants of the Janke family in Belmont. They are solid citizens, honest, reliable and respected.

Following Ralston's death, his wife resided in Belmont about two years, then moved across the bay.

Christian Bollinger lived west of Belmont and was an early resident, but after the Spring Valley Water Co. bought his land, he moved to San Jose where they named a street for him.

We have other people in Belmont who have lived here 80 years or more. One of these is Bert Johnson, who had been our King during the bi-centennial. He was born here.

It seems when California was a newer state, people came and went more than now. Since our state has become of age, the people often put down roots and stay where they like to live. Most are not in a big scramble to take over that the others have and most are satisfied to relax and enjoy their lives.

Russ Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the City of Belmont. His column is published each week in the *Enquirer-Bulletin*.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

Belmont wasn't the only Peninsula city with problems when citizens decided their towns should be incorporated. Old records show where Menlo Park didn't grab the ball and run to the goal posts. Their incorporation was delayed until 1929.

Actually they had been incorporated as early as 1874, then disincorporated. The few people living in that area found that by incorporating they might have a drainage system built, and the few dusty, or muddy, (depending on time of year) roads could be improved.

There weren't many people in the area at that time, and they included what later became Atherton within their short-term city. There were several large estates very early in Menlo Park.

For instance, the Flood Estate, owned by James Flood, contained some acreage and his huge mansion. When I first saw it in 1920 the size of the huge house amazed me.

He had a gate house at his driveway on Middlefield Road that was larger than many ordinary homes, and when his big house had been torn down the gate house was left there for several years. His acreage is presently known as the Flood Estate, and there are many fashionable homes on the property. Their location makes living pleasant and easy.

Other wealthy persons chose Menlo Park for their homes. In 1876 William Sharon of Belmont constructed a very large house he referred to as his "cottage" north of New York. Probably everyone in San Carlos and Belmont has seen the "The Brakers."

The railroad was built from San Fran-

cisco to San Jose during 1853. The Menlo Park train station is the oldest train station in California, although it wasn't the first built in Menlo Park.

The name "Menlo Park" was given the area by two Irishmen in 1854. The name stuck, until the city's actual and permanent incorporation in 1929. And why not? It was a good name for a city, especially when the area resembled a park with the large bottom oak trees and underbrush everywhere. The location was attractive. Even without improvements.

Following the actual incorporation, the city fathers consisted of 10 persons. A budget of \$300 was approved, and the \$300 was to pay salaries of the 10 persons. They consisted of five trustees, a judge, city clerk, treasurer, a marshal, and one police officer. We must wonder if they had to catch fish on Sundays, for \$30 per month wouldn't have purchased many potatoes.

Things change in Menlo Park as elsewhere, and the large Sharon mansion has been replaced with stores and office buildings. The Sharon name remains as Sharon Heights, Sharon Way, Sharon Drive, and Sharon Court.

Although Menlo Park isn't our closest neighbor, we in San Carlos and Belmont like their city, and everyone in it. As good neighbors we hope they will all come to our cities for their shopping. Wouldn't that be nice?

Russ Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the City of Belmont. His column is published each week in the *Enquirer-Bulletin*.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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In researching old records and reading old newspapers, I have encountered the most amazing story. To me it was very funny.

The item tells about an unusual business that was profitable. Although it didn't happen here in San Carlos or Belmont, it did happen in nearby San Francisco. The time was during the gold rush when thousands of people were rushing to California.

The old news item tells that at that time, San Francisco was already becoming dirty. Thousands of rats ducked undercover when they saw anyone approaching. The rats were everywhere. A plague was feared. No one knew what

they could do to get rid of the rodents. The stories about rats were in the several newspapers of the time. Papers in Los Angeles carried the story.

While waiting in barber shops for a shave or haircut men read the newspapers. Apparently there was considerable discussion about the rat problem in San Francisco. A Los Angeles barber kept hearing the talk and got an idea. He knew Los Angeles, at the time, had cats running about everywhere. Very likely most had no owners. He had noticed that some seemed to be hungry.

Placing a note "back soon" on his shop door, he began catching cats. (Strange folks. But it really happened, ac-

ording to old records.) At first he put them into sacks, then into cages. When he had more than a thousand, according to the story, he took them by wagon to San Pedro, and booked passage on a sailing ship to San Francisco. When he arrived, his cats were making a great racket and all were very hungry.

He booked space in a small waterfront warehouse and placed an advertisement in a newspapers that cats would be available for \$100 each.

Since the rats had been so bothersome and were bothering the citizens, the man quickly sold all his cats and became a wealthy man.

The barber's name is given as "Peter Biggs." He had never had so much money and wasn't accustomed to handling it. He set up saloon patrons all over town, then began gambling. Professional gamblers followed the man and soon invited him into poker games.

If one didn't get all his money, another would try. Soon all his money was gone.

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He was broke. He didn't even have enough money for passage on a ship back to Los Angeles, and he had no more cats to sell. He borrowed his fare to get back home.

San Francisco was free of rodents for awhile. Some people thought a monument should be put up for Peter Biggs. In researching old newspapers of the time I cannot locate anything saying that had ever been done. San Franciscans were grateful to him and some said they wished that San Francisco had a barber who was as resourceful as Mr. Biggs. He saved the town.

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Copies of the Estep columns are bound and available for you to read in both San Carlos and Belmont libraries and in the San Mateo County Historical Society.



carlmont history

By Russ Estep

-37-

Alameda de las Pulgas

One of the first roads in California was the El Camino Real, meaning The Kings Highway. However, a trail made by earlier Indians is known as The Alameda de Las Pulgas. They didn't name it though. Early Spanish explorers gave it the odd name.

Some soldiers along with the explorers had trouble sleeping in abandoned Indian Huts because of fleas. Scratching and smacking fleas, they came from the huts sleepy-eyed and unhappy. Their commanders marked their maps, "Avenue of the Fleas." The name has stuck. And why not? It is a distinctive name and probably no other place in the country has such a name.

Here in Belmont the Alameda de Las Pulgas hasn't always been located where it is now. Up until WWII the historic street curved around the St. Joseph Military Academy. It turned off Ralston Avenue near where the Bank of America is now, and went behind the big super market, then rejoined the present location of The Alameda. The football field was there where the shopping center is now.

The shopping center, comprising 8.2 acres, was built by William P. Roth, president of the Roth Construction Co. He had paid the Archbishop \$11,000 per acre for the land, and everyone thought the price was high. Presently, the land would be worth many times what Roth had paid.

Dedication of his shopping center came in September 1957, and many of us were there for the dedication. Roth realized that the Alameda de Las Pulgas had

developed into a main thoroughfare, and that customers would use it to come there from San Carlos, as well as from Belmont. History has proven him to be right.

Earlier persons had realized the importance of the location at the corner of Ralston Avenue and the Alameda de Las Pulgas. It has been a portion of property owned by Mr. Ralston that was taken over by Senator William Sharon in 1875.

Sharon died in 1885, and soon after that the land was sold to Mr. Reed for a school for boys. They built their first building in 1886 and with more buildings added he ran his school until 1918, when the school was sold to Archbishop Hanna.

The first head master was Father Michael Muslin. In 1920 he had a chapel built, which presently is known as "St. Michael's Church." It is still there, behind the larger church across from the shopping center.

The fantastic growth we have seen in San Carlos and Belmont was helped greatly by access along the Alameda de Las Pulgas. The Spanish explorers and their soldiers who found so many fleas would have wished they might have lived longer had they visualized what has happened since they were here in 1769.

We too, would probably be amazed at what will happen here during the next two centuries. The Alameda de Las Pulgas will still be in use. People may wonder how it got its name.

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carlmont history

By Russ Estep

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Both Belmont and San Carlos have had constant changes, as most cities have had. Some people have said without constant changes there is only death. They appear to be wrong, since both trees and plants change after they die. If we think back to the beginning of Belmont and San Carlos their many changes are quite evident.

Following the Spanish rancho period, smaller ranches and farms were here. Those owners, to make a profit, subdivided what they had. Then, further subdividing brought ownership down to our present city lots. People multiplied, strangers arrived, and roads became crowded.

In nearby Redwood City, (then Mezesville) the road out to Woodside had been a busy one at first. Visualize loads of first growth redwood lumber being hauled along Woodside Road to the port at Redwood City. Wagons were used, pulled by oxen. Drivers walked along beside their heavy loads prodding the oxen with sharp poles, and occasionally picked up rocks to throw at them.

Woodside Road hadn't been graveled yet, and the plain earth roadway was just a single track. Upon meeting a traveler going the other way, unloaded vehicles pulled to the side to let a heavy load pass. If they met on a hill beyond Woodside, the vehicle going up had to pull over.

There were six known sawmills operating soon after 1850 at Woodside. The first one being just south of the Por-

tola Road and the Old LaHonda Road. The location was on the flat east of the Portola Road. The Tripp Store was north of this location.

Apparently the mill operated with steam — or else the creek there was larger than it is now. Presently the flow wouldn't turn a mill wheel except during winter floods.

Other sawmills were located up on King's Mountain. Old pictures show six and eight ox teams pulling large logs across corduroy roads toward sawmills.

Travel on the Woodside Road was different than it is now. Presently, the four lanes seem crowded with cars going and coming. No one thinks of what the busy road used to be like. Many don't care. Some don't ever look back.

It is good to know where one has been, and by looking back now and then a person can see the many changes that have occurred. Belmont and San Carlos suit us just fine as we see it, but earlier people thought they were very modern, and they never could have foreseen our cities as we see them now.

Changes are necessary and will continue.

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carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Medical services have changed over the years and most are improved. When I was born, Oct. 26, 1903, my parents had ideas you may not have heard of. For a fever, a person remained in bed, and a pan of hot water was placed under the bed. Usually the fever was gone after two days.

For congestion a small cloth bag of "assesifetti" was hung around the neck. Because of the awful odor, the congestion soon disappeared. There were many other remedies that are no longer used.

Medical services in San Carlos and Belmont weren't always quite so primitive. Now they are excellent. Two hospitals are available; Sequoia and Kaiser.

Old timers will remember the hayfield on the upslope acreage on the west side

of Alameda de las Pulgas at Whipple Ave. in Redwood City. On Oct. 25, 1950, Sequoia hospital was opened there. It serves more than 170,000 people from the Mid-Peninsula.

Since it was first opened it has been improved and added onto. Presently construction work is going on to make the front entrance look more appealing. Maybe those in charge consider the front entrance improvements similar to baiting a trap. More people will possibly prefer to go there for treatment. Anyway, it will be a grand looking place when the work is finished.

Sequoia has more than 400 physicians, and approximately 1000 employees. These employees comprise therapists, technologists nurses, dietitians,

housekeepers, as well as other professionals to keep the hospital running like a clock.

In addition, there are many volunteers, such as "candy strippers," and the "pink ladies"; there latter work without pay. There are approximately 500 of the volunteers.

Sequoia Hospital has all the very latest equipment, including the new cap-scan, which is built into a large eightfoot circle, with a tunnel where patients can be rolled into. The hospital also has several

other types of X-ray machines, adapted to different parts of the body.

When the hospital was first opened, money was scarce, and people were in-

vited to donate money to furnish some of the rooms. These rooms carry 4 inch by 12 inch bronze plaques on their doors indicating the donors names.

One room was furnished by the Soroptomists Club, another by the Redwood City Lions Club, and there were many others, including many individuals



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Soon after World War II began, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of army camps sprang up. Unlike World War I, when there were only the large camps such as Camp Fremont, these World War II camps were staffed with small groups of soldiers. Even Belmont had one of the camps.

The Belmont camp was on the north side of Ralston Avenue, between the railroad tracks and Bayshore Highway. It consisted of several tar-paper covered buildings.

A few months ago, a man from another state stopped at my office asking if I would show him where the camp had been. He said he had been one of the soldiers who was there awhile before being shipped overseas.

When I took him to the area of the Belmont camp, he tried to figure out just where the building was that he was housed in. He commented that he would never have believed there would be so many changes.

He said he attended an electronics school in what is now our Congregational Church. He laughed when describing his studies there and explained that everything was secretive so the soldiers never talked of what they were doing.

He said many tried to cause local people to think they were "hillbillies." He said he had enjoyed a Christmas at the camp and that he had visited the USO "pink building" at the time to enjoy cake and entertainment by some local people. Then he was sent overseas.

At the start of World War II, a group of carpenters were building those large

government warehouses that are still on the east end of the Bay Bridge where ships load.

One morning as we crossed the bridge about 6 a.m., I noticed a carrier going out with B-25s on the deck. I never mentioned this before, but those were the planes headed by General Jimmy Doolittle, who bombed Tokyo soon afterward.

While building the big warehouses near the beginning of the war, a company of soldiers were lined up near where we worked. The captain inspected them, and called loudly for each man to return to his barracks and pack belongings left over for shipment home.

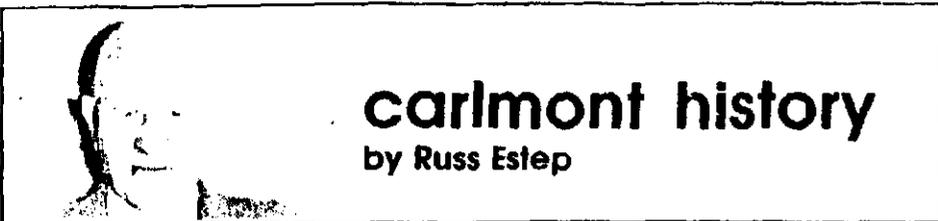
He gave them just one half hour, and then they were lined up again and marched aboard a waiting ship that was to take them to the South Pacific. Probably they were the first men shipped there.

Later our group of carpenters remodeled the grandstand at Tanforan race track so soldiers going overseas could be held there temporarily. During the days while waiting, they were marched up and down El Camino Real.

During those years many things were rationed, and the cooks at Tanforan often offered wonderful steak sandwiches to us as we worked.

We used to look at the soldiers and wonder which would live through the war. We never found out.

Most of the carpenters had families and were not subject to the draft, or were just too old. I came under both categories, with three children, and being beyond draft age. I was one of the lucky ones.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There have always been San Carlos and Belmont people willing to take a chance. Many can be seen at the train and bus stops waiting to go to Bay Meadows race track.

Some win, some lose, but one man commented to me that he realized when seven horses were running, his chances of getting his betting money back was seven to one against him. He said it was his entertainment and he found it fun and exciting to be at the track.

Now that California has legalized the State Lottery, where the odds for winning are probably more than six hundred to one against a ticket buyer, San Carlos and Belmont people still take that chance. Our people have always taken risks.

In August 1931, Curtis Davis came to Belmont. When he arrived he had been working for the International Racing Association for 14 years. He knew the dog racing business.

He worked for Tom Keene and Pete

O'Connor. They had a dog track built north of Harbor Boulevard in Belmont, between the railroad track and Bayshore Highway. It was immediately successful and very well attended. Old descriptions show filled grandstands with many people standing along a fence.

Horace Amphlett, publisher of the *San Mateo Times*, is shown in a picture taken at the opening. Also Belmont's Mayor, C.L. Jordan was present. He was the Municipal Judge at the time.

The new track was equipped with mechanical rabbits which were propelled rapidly around the track just fast enough so the racing dogs could never catch them. Presumably they may have been treated with odor of rabbits, or something the dogs would like.

The track owners produced the \$2 op-

tion instead of the \$5 option as had been popular at other such tracks.

During the great depression many people were out of work. Some said there must be something going on that they should object to, since the dog track was so busy all the time. They seemed to think that if they couldn't work, others shouldn't either.

They began a campaign against the dog track. Fortunate people who worked at the dog track often tried to explain that Belmontrers and San Carlos people needed diversion and some place for entertainment. Others claimed that gambling was wrong—that their neighbors were using their grocery money to gamble on the dogs.

Finally they succeeded in having the future of the dog track put to a vote. The track lost, and the dog track owners moved their track to a new town they had incorporated which would allow dog racing.

They called the new town Bayshore City, and it's location was near the El Camino Real, at the southerly end of what is now South San Francisco.

With California's Lottery now legal, we often see the dog track dissenters purchasing tickets. Time changes things.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont and San Carlos have witnessed history in the making almost from the county's beginning. Many do not realize that Don Jose Arguello was granted his 34,200 acre rancho in 1795, which was four years before George Washington died.

The Arguello s owned what is Menlo Park, Atherton, Redwood City, San Carlos, Belmont, and a part of San Mateo. No doubt it was one of the best ranchos in California, with its good climate, rolling pastures, level land for growing hay, and so many trees for fire wood.

The first Arguello home was said to be at the south side of San Carlos Avenue and Cordilleras. However, in 1821 they moved to one block north of San Carlos Avenue and lived on the south side of Cedar Street. San Carlos Avenue became their driveway down to El Camino Real, which was then east of where the railroad tracks are located.

By 1821 the Spanish era had ended and the large land grant was re-granted by Mexico.

When the Arguello s first came to the area the American Revolution had ended. I have been told that there is one grave in the old Redwood City Cemetary on Woodside Road where a revolutionary soldier's body lies. I haven't been able to confirm this however.

There are many Civil War soldiers buried in that cemetary. There was an excellent monument of a civil war officer

standing on a platform at the cemetery, and head stones for the many soldiers were slanted inward toward him, as if in salute. Someone pulled the statue off the stand, and workmen straightened all the head stones so they no longer salute anybody.

It is interesting to note that in San Carlos as Belmont there are many descendents of the Revolutionary soldiers. The ladies belong to the Daughters of the Revolution, and the men belong to the Sons of the Revolution. The men's unit for this area are referred to as the Palo Alto Chapter S.A.R. They meet monthly in Palo Alto. I am one of their past presidents.

Several of my ancestors served during the American Revolution; one a lieutenant with General Washington at Valley Forge, another a wagon master in the cavalry in North Carolina. The one in the south was said to have been a kind man and treated his mule good. If he hadn't been so kind he might have whipped up his team and kept ahead of the British. They captured him and held him for nine months.

Once, while standing by the Delaware River at Washington crossing, I decided that I was a lucky person not to have been born 200 years earlier. I visualized all the other men getting aboard rafts and boats to cross the river, then me being ordered to have my horse swim across.

That wouldn't have been very helpful to General Washington, for I cannot swim, but eight feet. That's how wide the creek was where I learned to swim, and there were rocks upstream and downstream. The only way I could swim was straight across.

So if General Washington had depended upon me to help him take Trenton, this country might still be under the British.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Unlike towns in the Mid-west where they depend upon their bedrooms to help increase the population, Belmont and San Carlos have had their increases from other sources.

At first, of course, there were thousands of squatters on land belonging to the Arguello family. Publicity had been given to people that the Mexican Land Grant obtained by the Arguello family wouldn't hold up in court.

These squatters were caught with their pants down when S.M. Mezes, attorney for Mrs. Arguello, received confirmation in Washington, D.C. from the court upholding the land grant. Mezes immediately contacted the squatters and informed them they could buy the land they camped on and he would carry their loans.

His interest rate was high, but most squatters accepted his offer so they could remain where they were. This brought the population up greatly for San Carlos and Belmont, although neither town had yet been started.

Then, in 1906, the San Francisco earthquake caused many more people to move to the Peninsula. Again the population of this area quickly multiplied.

During the gold rush to Alaska in 1898, hundreds of people saw the advantages of the good climate, and no rocky or shallow soil, and returned to live in their homes here when they failed to discover gold in Alaska.

In 1918, the big army camp at Menio Park brought thousands of young men to

Camp Fremont, which was located there. Those men too, recognized the many advantages of this Peninsula and returned when the war was over.

World War II found similar population increases here. Thousands of young men were heard to comment that they would return to live in this area when the war was over.

Their desires were helped by the government when the Veteran's Loan Bill had been signed by the president and when Congress passed the first FHA loan opportunities. There wasn't so much inflation and veterans could purchase a home with very little, or nothing down, with only 4½ percent interest. FHA loans could be had with 10 percent downpayment, and five percent loans.

It was easy to buy a house. At that time—1941—I bought a new five room house for only \$4,200. The builder, Richard DeLucci, was said to have made a neat profit of 10 percent.

Since 1941 the inflation has continued, but more and more people have taken up residence in the Belmont and San Carlos areas. And why not? Redwood City isn't the only place where "Climate is Best."

The location of San Carlos and Belmont, being one-half way between San Francisco and San Jose has many advantages. There is only one adverse disadvantage. Trains pass in Belmont going different directions and always whistle. This wakes up some residents, but growth of the city isn't dependent upon our bedrooms anymore.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Ever since San Carlos and Belmont were tiny villages the citizens have almost been one large family. This is as it should be, and it is something not always found in other cities.

The citizens here are often seen visiting over the yard fences. Most are very friendly. Their love for their fellow man extends to persons in other places across the country too.

In 1976 Belmont's city clerk, James McLaughlin, helped to establish "Sister City" status with Belmont, Mass. Since that time McLaughlin has corresponded with the city clerk there.

He has found that their city is about the same as our Belmont. There are many similarities. Their population is 28,000 while our Belmont has 26,500 citizens.

The city of the eastern Belmont covers 4,676 square miles, and our Belmont covers 4,611 square miles. Their first newspaper was the "Courier" and their second newspaper was named the "Bulletin." Ours was the "Courier-Bulletin." Our Belmont has a Middlesex Street, and the eastern city is located in Middlesex County.

Both Belmonts are suburbs of major cities. The eastern city has a hospital on "Belmont Hill" and our Belmont has a sanitarium named "Belmont Hills." Both communities were originally the location of large estates.

The eastern Belmont has a beautiful old brick city hall. Within their city is a sign announcing "Belmont Jewelers," and our Belmont has a similar sign and business.

Three of our Mayors and former Mayors have visited Belmont, Mass. They are Mayor Bob Jones, Mayor Meg Buckley, and Mayor Don Heiman. Heiman was there during October 1985.

The eastern city is older than our California Belmont, but we do not know when it was first incorporated. Our's will have its sixty year anniversary this coming October, 1986.

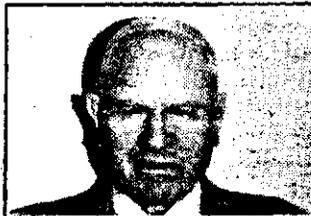
One difference between the two cities is that we have a man mayor and theirs a lady—Mrs. Wilson. It was she who escorted Mayor Heiman around some of the time while he visited their city.

There appear to be at least 25 Belmont cities within the United States. Several are in the Mid-west where all the countryside is flat. Another is in Nevada where no mountains are within view.

Persons claiming our Belmont was named for "beautiful mountain" could be in error. The fact is that William C. Raiston liked the name and referred to his mansion as "Belmont." We do have beautiful mountains here, however, but other Belmonts using the name probably only use it because they like its sound.

McLaughlin, really "reached out" when he corresponded with the eastern Belmont, but it was left for our Mayor Heiman, and former Mayors Jones and Buckley to go back there and "touch someone." We appreciate what they have done.

Russ Estep, a long-time Belmont and San Carlos resident, is the official historian for the City of Belmont.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

It's probably a good thing that Belmont isn't as traditional as London, England is. If you ask a tour guide in London which buildings had been bombed out during World War II, he would explain that it's impossible to tell.

He would say that all destroyed buildings are required by law to have the exact appearance from the street as they had before the bombing. The guide would further add that the interiors however, are usually modernized.

Belmont will celebrate its 60th year since incorporation this year. London, England is far older, but some parts may not have changed much since its beginning.

In the British Museum is a Roman chariot wheel. It was left there by the Romans some 2,000 years ago, yet it is well preserved, and was made the same as modern wheels.

During the first 60 years of its existence Belmont has had many businesses, and buildings replaced. If a Rip Van Winkle was to appear, he wouldn't recognize many sights he would find in Belmont and San Carlos.

The very popular fruit stand operated by George Pyatt on El Camino Real, where a closed service station stands, is long gone. George moved to the Delta and died soon afterward, many years ago.

The large and well-known nursery owned and operated by Juel Christensen for more than 40 years has been sold and vacated. Soon new buildings will replace it on the property. Juel died a year or so ago, and his son, Jack, operated the nursery until recently, then sold it.

The well-known St. Joseph Military

Academy at the corner of Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue, was replaced by the Carlmont Shopping Center.

A part of the Bay View Shopping Center occupies the location of Mr. McDonough's sandwich and ice cream shop. Mr. McDonough died many years ago.

Taco Bell occupies the corner of Harbor and El Camino Real where Arnold Mertens had operated a clothing store and ladies tailor shop. His store burned many years ago.

The first Villa Chartier restaurant used to be at the south end of Belmont on Fifth Avenue—the site occupied now by apartments. The Vills Chartier moved to San Mateo years ago.

The small army camp that was on the north side of Raiston Avenue between the railroad track and Shantytown (across the bayshore) is replaced by the Mae Nesbit School and businesses, and some duplexes.

The little airport north of there has been replaced by houses. And on and on. All different than 60 years ago, but no Rip Van Winkle is going to appear, and if he did appear he would likely approve of what he found.

We Americans may seem to some to be traditional, but none of us are so traditional that we would want old buildings replaced "just as they had been" such as they are in London, England. We like what we have here.

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carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont and San Carlos have had some differences in what has been grown in their localities. Before so many people came, San Carlos was a productive hayfield, and Belmont was known worldwide for raising chrysanthemums. The plants were of the aster family.

There were several locations in Bel-

mont where the "mums" were grown. One was on the north end of the large hill which used to be between the Bayshore Highway and the railroad tracks, specifically at the east end of Quarry Road.

A Japanese family lived there and raised "mums," and they had a large fami-

ly. One son lives in San Francisco, and I met him at a Lions Club function. He reported to me that his father would ship the flowers by train to San Francisco, and that enough were shipped to send most of their large family through college. When their plants were in full flower the north end of Newhall Hill was a sight to see. (Some called the hill Redrock Hill, because it contained considerable redrock)

Obviously the Japanese farmer had to use fertilizer, and the chemicals used now weren't yet invented. Horses were plentiful, and theirs was plentiful from barns at Woodside. After the use of natural fer-

tilizer for many years someone complained of the odor. Problems developed, and from then on, the crops in Belmont weren't so good as they had been.

The hill mentioned was used in its entirety for fill for the Bayshore Highway. When that source of fill came to an end, several factories were built on the site of the hill.

The next source of fill for the Bayshore Highway came from the old quarry west of the lakes near Belmont. Trucks carrying the dirt spilled some along Ralston Avenue and truckers were soon required to cover their loads.

Hauling didn't stop, and finally the new Bayshore Highway was finished, much to the delight of Belmont residents tired of trucks traveling on Ralston Avenue so close together.

In addition to the Japanese family raising chrysanthemums on the north end of Redrock Hill, a Chinese family also raised similar flowers in Belmont. Their nursery was on the sloping hillside where Irene Court is located. Many apartment houses replaced those flower gardens.

The Chinese family shipped trainloads of "mums" to the East Coast in special cars. Some went by air.

At our County Fair and Floral Fiesta

in San Mateo, the elaborate displays of San Mateo County flowers attracted large crowds. The San Mateo County display at the capitol building in Sacramento was kept filled during the flower season with cut chrysanthemums from Belmont. Thousands of people enjoyed seeing the exhibit.

When talking to the man in San Francisco who had been born on Redrock Hill in Belmont, he amused me with his reply to my question as to the price of the flowers his family shipped. He smiled, and said his father had told him to keep "mum" about it. Then we both laughed.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Everyone has heard of buildings where the draftsman overlooked a stairway. I was reminded of this soon after the Bay Bridge was opened. My ham radio was turned on as I drove across the bridge, and I was talking on 20 meters with a ham in Australia.

As I approached the tunnel, I told him that I might not be heard for a few minutes while I drove through a tunnel in the middle of a bridge. When I emerged he was laughing and wanting to know what I had been drinking. Later I sent him a postcard showing Goat Island with its tunnel.

Work was going on inside the tunnel to lower its floor. It seems an error had been made in its design and large trucks couldn't traverse the tunnel. A part of the roadway was closed while the work was

going on. Many months were required before all lanes were opened.

Over the years there have been other mistakes—some bad, some not so bad. One happened here in Belmont many years ago. It was bad but was finally straightened out.

Belmont needed a park, and one place for a really good park was the Twin Pines property. An election was held, and park boosters were successful in getting enough voters to vote in favor of more taxes to purchase the property.

After the election, people who had voted against it began to speak in favor of the park boosters. But something happened which caused everyone concern.

The large house there was built by George Center after the 1906 earthquake. He was an officer in the Bank of Califor-

nia which had been started by William C. Ralston.

Adjoining the Center home were three additional acres owned by two Laguarde brothers, George and Ed. Old timers will remember that it was George who took over the Johnson real estate office that used to be in his house a few doors west of El Camino Real, on the south side of Ralston Avenue. George operated it until his death when Daniel St. George took it over.

Dr. Rebec bought the former George Center home. He had acquired title to the three acres, and he opened a nerve disorder sanitarium in the large house where Mr. Center had lived. It was Dr. Rebec who named the area "Twin Pines."

After the city of Belmont had purchased the property for a park, a problem developed. It seems there was no legal access to some of the land. Following months of research and legal tangles the access was retained. However, during that time some local Belmont residents were worried, lost their hair, and were nearly climbing the walls.

Now people in Belmont have a beautiful city park—probably one of the best on the West Coast. There are picnic tables among the trees, an old log cabin brought there in 1931 from La Honda, and many beautiful plants, trees, and flowers.

All people are welcome. Go there, and as you walk along the pathways, think of the early problems. Be glad that you live today and not yesterday and that there is a way now to enter all parts of the park. It wasn't always like this.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

It is fun to research old newspapers. In a paper of June 26, 1924 is an article telling about William Yount taking a contract to demolish and remove an old building on Dr. Gottbrath's land where Twin Pines Park is located.

The item doesn't say what kind of building Mr. Yount removed. Another item tells that Miss Adrienne Yount was spending her school vacation in San Francisco with her father, Dr. G. Gordon Yount.

Probably everyone in San Carlos and Belmont is familiar with the large veteran's hospital at Yountville. A Dr. Yount started it. Presumably this was the same Dr. Yount, for the name isn't a very common one.

There follows another item of interest. It's dated 1888. It states that the population of our San Mateo County was only 8700 in 1879. Among those people were 960 farmers, and 24 saloon keepers. Of them 151 were teamsters, and 63 were blacksmiths. This causes speculation as to what the descendants of our computer workers might be doing in the century ahead.

By 1879, the large open range for cattle and livestock, such as the Spanish and Mexicans enjoyed, were almost non-existent here. There were cattle—but mostly dairy cows.

Hogs were raised at Colma and some at San Bruno, mainly by Italian farmers. These hogs were kept corralled, for by 1879 there were people who might steal

livestock if left out in the open country. Fences were necessary, even though the animals might be marked or branded.

It is interesting to look at development further north in our state. Conditions, as described, didn't come to Shasta and some other Northern California counties until the middle 1920s. People living up there actually lived as those down here had before the turn of the century.

Many had no electricity, they had woodburning stoves for cooking and heat, and often carried water from a spring or creek some distance from their houses.

Most had no tractors, but plowed with mules, which were used for all farm work such as hauling loose hay into the barns. It was hard work because their temperature usually reached, and stayed, at 110 degrees or higher during haying season.

Mostly lighting was by kerosene lamps, often referred to as coal oil. Many raised their chickens, and everyone had a vegetable garden, orchard, and vineyard, just as people did in San Carlos and Belmont 60 years earlier. Their mail arrived by horse-drawn stages as late as 1918.

People here in the last century had many amenities not available in the Northernmost part of California. Some here did not realize that some folks farther north still used outhouses, and there was no running water at most ranches.

People living up there had heard of the "advanced" style of living down here.

Most wished they could live "high on the hog" as they believed people here lived.

One fine young man up there asked a large ranch owner for his daughter's hand. He was given the daughter providing he took her south. The young couple settled near the Mexican border in Escondido.

The rancher asked a Mexican man what that word meant. He was told it meant "Corner Ranch of the Devil."

"Well," the rancher said, "I guess Shasta County isn't so bad after all, but I wish they had stopped when they reached San Carlos or Belmont."



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

When ships or buildings are covered with water, fish make their homes inside them. It is probable that the fish in the lakes west of Belmont like what is there.

When the Crystal Springs lakes were established to hold the Hetch Hetchy water from Yosemite, a small town was flooded. The buildings were on both sides of the road to the coast, where the fill was placed to raise the crossing.

Since building material was in short supply it seems probable that some of the buildings would have been demolished and the material removed. Although the project was completed in 1916, and I was 13 years old, I still do not recall what took place.

The little valley, where we find the lakes, had previously been farming land. The top soil had washed off the surrounding hills like it did across the hills to the west where the productive little farms are.

The settlement was called Crystal Springs. Presently two pipes that are six feet in diameter bring water to the lakes from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir that is at a high elevation in Yosemite Park. The water arrives, clear and cold, and very pure.

There were springs in the little valley west of Belmont before the lakes were formed. The little springs had their outlet down San Mateo Creek, past Mills Hospital. A large concrete dam at the outlet of the valley was built to hold the water. Highway 280 crosses it by a high bridge built over the dam and an earlier bridge.

One farmer who had lived in the valley

sold his farm to the San Francisco Water Supply Co. and moved to San Jose. He was Mr. Bollinger. You will find his name preserved with a street name in San Jose.

When he first left here he started a stage line to Mt. Hamilton from San Jose. Probably the old Mt. Hamilton road was busy at times, but he made regular runs.

The first road was a scary one. When a relative drove me up there in 1916 I was so frightened I begged to be let out at Smith Creek, where I waited for my family member to return from the summit. The first road was one lane, with no railing on the outside and no brush or trees to catch a rolling car on the bare 45 degree down-slope hillsides.

Before Crystal Springs was flooded by the Yosemite waters, there were 25 registered voters living there. An election was held in 1856 to decide whether the new County seat should be in Redwood City or Belmont.

Belmont won because 250 voters were turned in from Crystal Springs! Then Judge Fox ordered a new election, and Redwood City received the most votes.

But the fish — fishing isn't allowed in the Crystal Springs lakes, but no doubt a good catch could be had near the crossing on either side. It has been tried, and several person have spent some time thinking about it while sitting in jail. The lakes are closely patrolled.

There are other places however, where buildings are under lakes. One is Searsville Lake, Shasta Lake, and Whiskeytown Lake.



200 TH COLUMN

carlmont history

by Russ Estep

When the first rails were laid from San Francisco to San Jose in 1863, there were no stations along the way. San Carlos and Belmont people ate their breakfasts, drank two cups of coffee, then raced for the train stop while wishing the trains would hurry.

By 1863 all brush around the stop area had been cleared. The train bathrooms were very much used by commuters going to work. Everyone wished there were convenience buildings at the stops, especially during rainy weather, but they were slow in coming.

Old records say that Menlo Park had the first station building. An old clipping dated August 10, 1867 states that "Belmont is to have a depot at last, as the RR Co. having erected a new depot at Menlo Park, they had no further use for the old one, so they got it on a car and on Tuesday last hauled it to Belmont, at which point it has been anchored." Later it burned.

Another old clipping dated Feb. 8,

1873 states, "The railroad company is building a passenger depot building at Belmont to take the place of the one lately destroyed by fire; the new one to be one of the largest and neatest, when completed, on the road. It is 30 x 55 feet, and partitioned off into ladies and gents parlors, office and freight rooms, closets, etc. Both tracks are in front of the depot."

That would be the Belmont station which our Chamber of Commerce tried so hard to keep in Belmont. However, the S.P. Co. demolished it, and then someone brought a new building from east Hillsdale Blvd. in San Mateo, which had been a real estate office for a man who went out of business. The present building serves customers as both a station and a restaurant.

The first station building in San Carlos was apparently ordered construction by members of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco. They had a lodge building built in San Carlos in 1870, at 125 Dale

Ave., to be used for recreation by their members.

Needing shelter from the rains, and a convenience station, they built the first building. Later their depot was replaced by the present station building in 1888.

Governor Leland Stanford was president of the Southern Pacific Co. at that time, and he arranged for the same stone masons that he had brought from Europe to build his university, to build the present depot.

The Madera brownstone came from the Almaden Quarries, and he had the

first building roofed with flat slate tile. The building is 101 feet long, and 30 feet wide. The tower is 27 feet in height.

The building, at first, housed a waiting room with fireplace, office, supply room, turret-like sleeping room upstairs for the station agent. On the south end was the baggage room, with the west side providing a portico for the carriage trade.

Both San Carlos and Belmont stations have all the amenities required by residents — and especially for those who drink too much coffee. They wait for their trains in comfort.