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Belmont
History*

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Vol. 6
CARLMONT HISTORY
(HISTORY OF BELMONT)
By
Russel A. Estep
1986-1988

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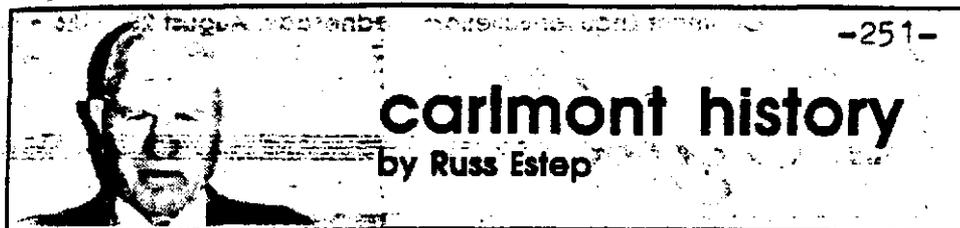
Likes Estep

Editor:

Having been a resident of San Carlos over 40 years, I wish to thank you for Carlmont History by Russ Estep. He is a great historian. We've learned so much about San Carlos and Belmont.

Good work, Russ. You are very appreciated, and thank you Enquirer Bulletin for bringing this gem to us.

Alice Norbut
San Carlos



- Sixty years ago Belmont had many facilities for persons needing medical, or other care. You could get help in Belmont regardless of what your ailment was.

One facility was the Howard Foundation. Charles S. Howard started it to help people who couldn't afford care. The Howard Foundation helped thousands of people, and the facility was located off Carlmont Drive, near what we call Lyall Street. An old newspaper item, dated June 12, 1924, tells about it.

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

With modern medicine, the sanitarium is no longer needed. It was replaced with apartment buildings.

The California Sanitarium was located in the large white Splivalo house on the short street connecting Lyall Drive and Carlmont Drive. Mr. Splivalo was a wealthy manufacturer of spaghetti and macaroni, and his factory was in San Francisco.

After the development of medicines to

help tubercular patients, the Splivalo house was demolished and apartments were built on its site.

Another very large tubercular sanitarium was located west of San Carlos, in the hills beyond the present subdivisions. It was called the Hassler Health Farm. Thousands of patients received good care there for many years, until the facility was no longer needed. Some of the buildings still remain.

Belmont has long been known as a location with an excellent climate. Belmont seems to have been recognized for many years as one of the best places in California where you could go if you had any health problem.

There used to be the California Sanitarium, the Howard Foundation, the Twin Pines Sanitarium, the Alexander Sanitarium, the Convalescent Hospital in the old Hanson house at 6th and Ralston Avenue, and later the Convalescent Hospital on Hill Street.

People could live to a ripe old age. They were well taken care of in Belmont, no matter what their problem.



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carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Everything constantly changes, and Belmont's streets are no exception. At the time when William Ralston lived in Belmont, Old County Road was El Camino Real. Johnson Street was west of the tracks, and was removed in 1918 when El Camino Real was moved west of the tracks.

Before Ralston died in 1875, Ralston Avenue was known as the Road To The Coast. It was unpaved. There were no roads or streets winding through the Belmont hills. That came much later with the developments between 1924 and 1927.

Brush covered the Belmont hills and loose cattle were everywhere. Ralston had very few neighbors. Mr. Mezes lived above the Ralston house, on the hilltop. The Mezes house burned later.

It was Mezes who had cleared the titles for the Arguellos, and in payment he had received some of the Arguello land grant.

Mezes had chosen Belmont as his place of residence.

In 1850 he was approached by Count

Leonetto Cipriani saying he wanted to purchase some land. The Count had been sent from Italy to be that country's Consul General in San Francisco. Very soon Cipriani was successful in buying some acreage from Mezes.

Count Cipriani had a small, one-story house built on his land. In 1864, Cipriani was called back to Italy to help out in Garibaldi's war. There were very few buyers of acreage on the Peninsula, but Cipriani's luck ran high and he was approached by Ralston who wanted to buy his property. He closed the transaction with Ralston and left immediately for Italy.

Ralston hired carpenters and began improving and adding onto the small Cipriani house. When finished, Ralston had a house with 50 rooms. He liked to entertain, and the space suited his needs.

Both Ralston and Cipriani raised cattle on their land. Ralston didn't need more income, but had no other use for his land.

The market for beef was limited, although people were coming to California because of the Gold Rush. Some beef could be driven to market in San Francisco, but many cattle were butchered for their hides. The hides brought only \$23 each from captains of ships that stopped at Half Moon Bay.

Half Moon Bay was a tiny settlement, and the oldest cemetery in our county is there with the date 1820 on a tombstone.

Ralston died in 1875, and Senator Sharon took over the large Ralston house in Belmont. Sharon only lived until 1885.

Isn't it interesting to know that these men never had access to things we commonly use? They had no telephones, television, radio, airplanes, automobiles, computers, paved highways, typewriters, adding machines, electric lighting, calculators, battery watches, telephone answering machines, and hundreds of other things we think we cannot get along without.

Although they were very, very wealthy men, some Belmont people wonder how they ever existed.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

After a three-month absence, the *Enquirer-Bulletin* welcomes back History Columnist Russel Estep.

Belmont and San Carlos are unique in many ways, but there is one fact you may not have thought of. Our cities have been under nine flags.

To describe them all we will start with the Spanish. They were first. California was under their flag from 1542 until 1785.

When the Spanish explorers came north into California the horseback columns were always headed by someone carrying the flag of King Carlos V of Spain. His flag is described in the I.O.O.F. newsletter as having a white background, and bearing the arms of Castile and Leon, with the royal crown at the top of the shield and around it. The collar is reported to have been the order of the Golden Fleece.

The flag of England was placed at Drake's Bay by Sir Francis Drake, in 1759. That flag is white bearing the red cross of St. George.

The Spanish National ensign was the third flag and it flew over California from 1785 to 1822. This flag is red, and has a wide center stripe of yellow, which bears the shield and crown and also bears the arms of Castile and Leon.

The fourth flag was placed in California by the Russian American Company 1812 to 1841. This flag was run up a pole

at Fort Ross. It remained there until Captain John Sutter bought out the Russians in 1841.

The Buenos Aires flag was fifth to appear. It was raised for 16 days over Monterey in 1818 by pirate Captain Hypolite Bouchard after he raided the Presidio of Monterey. That flag had three bars of equal width, and the outer two were blue and the middle one white with a yellow sun to the left of its center.

The sixth flag was the Mexican empire flag that was raised from 1822 to 1846. This Mexican flag had three wide stripes each of green, white and red with an eagle resting on a cactus in the middle of the white stripe.

The seventh flag was placed by General John Fremont from 1812 to 1846. It had 26 stars, representing all states then in the Union.

The eighth flag was our California Bear Flag. It was first raised in 1846 in Sonoma. This flag was adopted as the official flag for California in 1911. We still see it now and then flying below the stars and stripes.

The ninth flag was, of course, the stars and stripes of the United States of America.

We hope there will never be any flag other than the stars and stripes flying over California.



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carlmount history

by Russ Estep

After the 1906 earthquake, there were many smaller quakes on the Peninsula. These continued for many years.

Lorna Gardner tells of one when she lived in the Ralston house. Her mother grabbed her and rushed for the door. Lorna's father was superintendent. After Senator Sharon's death in 1885 the large house was used for a girls' seminary for awhile.

Then Dr. Gardner came from Napa and bought the property. He had been in charge of the psychiatric portion of the Napa hospital. Dr. Gardner operated his hospital in Belmont for many years. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur purchased the property in 1921 and moved here from San Jose in 1922. They, too, probably experienced many earthquakes.

Old reports said that when the big quake came in 1906, our Belmont had no damage. The reason appears to be that bedrock is shallow in what was early Belmont. Ray Kelly reported that the county Civil Defense and Disaster Committee he served on claimed that if a great disaster came, people from many areas would be moved to Belmont. Belmont's sub-surface would be solid and little or no damage would occur here.

The 1906 earthquake came at 5:12 a.m. before many persons were out of bed. The date, April 18, coincides with the date when Paul Revere made his ride, according to history records.

The old Paul Revere house still stands in downtown Boston. The guide will tell you that he and his wife had 16 children. The house was large and should have

been roomy enough. The vacant lot beside the old house contains a well.

It is easy to imagine squabbling among the Revere children when the water bucket became empty. Each would have said it wasn't his or her turn to go get water. Because the poem about Paul Revere's ride has been learned by so many school children they can very easily recall the date of the big San Francisco quake.

Newcomers coming to this area from the East Coast probably haven't noticed that some Belmonsters take earthquakes seriously, even though in our older areas there should be little damage. When a large plate glass window is replaced, they caution the glass installers to be sure to leave enough space around the glass so it isn't so likely to get broken in a quake.

These old timers also never place valuable knick knacks on the fireplace mantle where they could get shaken off.

If they have priceless dishes, they always push them to the back of cupboard shelves. And they make certain their paintings have been hung securely.

There are other ways to protect your keepsakes and valuable items in your home, but thought should be given to how to do it. Remember that this is earthquake country and that the land west of the lakes near Belmont moves northward two or more inches each year. Someday a larger movement will occur, and you will be glad that you are ready.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont has had communications for a long time.

The city's first telegraph was located at our train station. It was connected on Dec. 12, 1923.

Before then people could telephone from Belmont's telephone that was on the wall at the store at Ralston Avenue and Old County Road. No home owners had a telephone. When Ralston was alive in 1875, he had his private telegraph, but it wasn't available to the public.

The big broadcast station, KPO, used to have its antennas on the mud flat area near the bay at Belmont. KGEI is still operating near the bay at Redwood Shores—and they used to give Belmont as their address. Their broadcasts reach South America and Japan and China. Their power is 250,000 watts.

Presently most people living in Belmont have a telephone. There have been many improvements in the equipment. One which many people have is the call waiting feature which beeps when you are talking to someone and another person wishes to reach you.

This telephone improvement is interesting to me, and it may be to you if you stop to think of the number of calls you receive while talking to someone.

In a three month check of this, I have discovered that 81 percent of my calls are interrupted by incoming calls. Can this be caused by mental telepathy? Why do people call only at that time?

Calls may be spaced considerably, such as several hours, yet if you get an incoming call, someone else will try to reach you. The incoming beep will almost always occur.

Or if you are talking to someone you will hear a click from the other party's telephone, indicating that they have an incoming call at their end of the line.

I asked a telephone engineer about this, but he had no idea why it always occurs. In fact, he said he had noticed it too.

He said it wasn't because of equipment. He laughed, and said, "Must be mental telepathy."

It has occurred when I am receiving long distance calls as well as local calls.

I asked the telephone engineer if beeps indicated that my phone was being bugged. He replied that there would be no sound at all if that was happening. So the mystery continues.

In Belmont there are always interesting things happening, and this latest may give readers something additional to speculate about. It's something that didn't happen in earlier years.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

When most Western towns were being developed, there was a great slap-bang rush to complete construction. The rush was necessary so saloons could quickly be built. Fortunately Belmont didn't develop in this way. That's why we have such a good city now.

Early Belmont was a city of flowers. People grew chrysanthemums and asters anywhere they could find room.

One Japanese family had flowers growing all over the north end of Redrock Hill. Their chrysanthemums were of a giant size and were sent to the East Coast. They shipped them from the Belmont train station.

The Eastern towns that had been started several hundred years ago were surrounded by woods. Their setting wasn't so inviting as that of Belmont. The woods are still there.

The people still living where the first towns were started near Plymouth, Mass., still have signs by the roadside telling when the towns were started. Some signs proclaim 1636, 1641, and on upward. But the towns haven't grown. All

that remains in most cases are a small store and perhaps one house. The people moved west. Perhaps some to Belmont.

As Belmont developed, attractive homes were built which were well cared for. The first homes were large, and small houses came later. It is difficult to find a vacant lot anymore in Belmont that you won't slide or fall off of.

In its development, Belmont had many rare and unusual happenings. A workman who fell from the Golden Gate Bridge during construction was Fred Dumatsen of Belmont.

Another big news item here was when a sister from Notre Dame flagged down the fast "Daylight" train in Belmont, just to catch a ride to Redwood City. That would be like someone flagging down a 747 that had just taken off for London, just to ride across the Bay to Oakland.

I wonder if things like this have happened in our sister city of Belmont, Mass.

They haven't built a large and long bridge comparable to our Golden Gate Bridge, and none of their Catholic sisters have flagged down a fast express train, as far as I can find out.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Development, growth and Belmont

About 30 years ago Louis Morton gave up a \$5,000 deposit he had placed on the hill west of El Camino Real because Belmont couldn't supply water. A later developer arranged for the area to be taken into San Carlos. They supplied water.

Redwood City took in a large area east of Belmont because they could more easily furnish utilities. Their developers built Redwood Shores.

When we heard in a Chamber of Commerce meeting that Marine World would be coming to Belmont we were elated. We believed our city would develop very quickly just as Anaheim had done following the building of Disneyland.

After Marine World came we really didn't notice any great difference in Belmont's size. Now that Marine World has moved to Vallejo, Belmont hasn't collapsed. Everything here appears normal and about the same as it had been before Marine World left.

Sometimes there is merit in smallness. Some young people raise only one child, claiming they can provide for the child better than if they raised a large family. There were 10 in my family. We survived.

The smallest state is Rhode Island and I wonder if their growth was limited by political actions.

Their state is so small that you will find license plates of Massachusetts on the road, then suddenly all appear to be Rhode Island or maybe Connecticut. The entire state isn't much larger than some of our American cities.

Belmont can grow in future years, but the growth must be upward. The city we see now is very different from that which was here 100 years ago. Belmont in 100 more years will likely have dozens of high rise buildings. The growth can be upward. For Belmont the sky can be the limit.



Carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many people in Belmont, until recently, did not know that famous author Jack London, once lived here.

About 1897 he came here and found employment in the laundry at the boys' school where Carlmont shopping center is now located. He wrote that he found the work very hard. No one knew at that time that London would become an internationally famous author.

He was a young man at the time. Ralston Avenue wasn't paved and there were no sidewalks. One old report tells that he stayed for a while in the old hotel at Ralston Avenue and Old County Road.

Also, an old report (maybe untrue) says he came to Belmont by board down the bay, and walked up to the Read School. No doubt these experiences helped him in writing his books.

He did many things which helped him with the material for his books.

London lived at Glen Ellen. His fine new home was destroyed by fire before he moved into it. It was located on a steep-up-slope in a heavily wooded area. He and his wife had looked forward to living in the house and had made many changes from the architect's first plans. They wanted everything to be "just so."

The house would have been a wonderful improvement from where London had lived when he was in Nome. A few years ago when on vacation in Alaska, I saw the log cabin he helped build.

There are no trees in Nome—except one by his cabin. People up there thought London had planted it. I didn't recognize what kind of tree it was, but it was about

four inches in diameter and 12 feet in height. People in Nome were proud of the tree and one man said the citizens guarded it with their lives.

Since no other trees grow there because of the cold, and the permafrost, about 18 inches below the surface, some people wondered where London got logs for his cabin, but probably the logs floated onto the beach. Maybe from Siberia, which isn't very far.

The cabin was about 20 feet long by 10 feet in width. The logs were about 10 inches in diameter, and roughly fitted at the corners. Maybe he had to hurry.

Perhaps that indicated the work had been done as winter approached, for it gets cold in Nome.

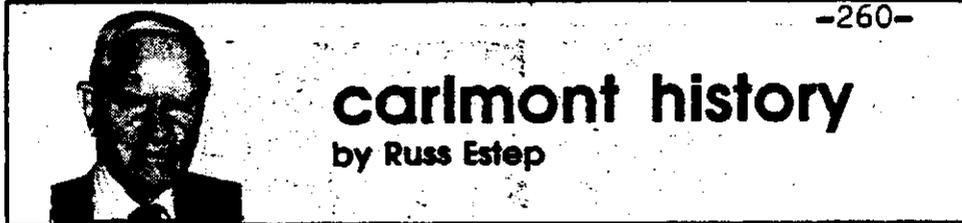
Lumber for the houses is shipped in. Ships anchor off-shore and unload onto lighters.

The houses were built on stilts so the arctic winds can pass underneath, thus lessening the tilt problem when houses are heated.

The Jack London log cabin tilts, but after all the many years since he lived there it is still livable.

I was told that London wrote *Call of the Wild* when his cabin was finished, but this isn't verified. Anyway, he must have gained considerable information for the story, living among the Eskimos, and where fish were being dried on racks. It must have been a good experience for him.

Recently, the Belmont Chamber of Commerce placed a plaque at the Carlmont Shopping Center telling that Jack London once lived in Belmont.



Belmont's Congregational Church has served several other occupants. When it was built between 1924 and 1927, no one in Belmont thought it would ever be anything but a clubhouse for the Belle Monte Country Club.

It was only used for this purpose for a short time because the country club people had financial difficulties. For one thing they couldn't pay the Union Paving Company for work they had done, and Union Paving took over many vacant lots.

During World War II, the building housed soldiers who were studying electronics. Next the Kaiser Foundation set up a medical facility there. They were doing experimental studies on animals.

The country club people built a fine swimming pool in back of the church that was later filled with gravel to avoid accidents.

The county club building was well constructed and today it appears just as sound as it did in 1927.

The country club people also built a nine-hole golf course below the clubhouse—mostly on flat land. After they went out of business, cows were pastured where the golf course had been. It was a common sight to see cows and

horses grazing inside the fence there.

When the Kaiser Foundation occupied the clubhouse building, there was usually a smell of formaldehyde permeating the air. We were never told just what they discovered, if anything, while they occupied the clubhouse building.

When the soldiers were there, code signals might sometimes be heard. Some of the men were electronics experts. Others were said to have been uneducated.

Sometimes the Belmont USO women visited with the young men in the old pink building near the railroad tracks. It was used by the USO for a while during World War II.

The educated young men occasionally removed their shoes and tried to speak like the uneducated fellows to amuse the Belmont girls. All had a fine time.

Across the street from the Congregational Church is the little real estate office of Monroe, Miller and Lyon, who developed the Belmont Country Club properties. The little building was a terminal for buses that brought prospective buyers down from San Francisco on weekends. They building isn't occupied at present.



Recycling things in Belmont

Quarry Road has seen considerable recycling. In fact, the street itself was recycled. It used to be the entrance to the large quarry at the base of Redrock Hill (or Newhall Hill, whichever you like to call it).

The dirt from the large hill was used when the Bayshore Freeway was built. Finally, they took all the dirt, right down to street level, but the name Quarry Road remained.

On Quarry Road there is a recycling plant for aluminum cans and other things. It is a very busy recycling operation. If you go there, you will be surprised at the great amount of aluminum cans they recycle. It appears that people drink tremendous amounts of soda and other things. The price paid is small and to receive 50 cents will remind you of seeing folks pick cotton near Bakersfield in the early 1930s.

Down there I watched people down on their knees crawling along rows of cotton hurriedly jerking cotton from the low-growing vines, and upon inquiring, learned the pay was only \$1.50 per hundred pounds. I asked how long it usually took to pick 100 pounds, and I was told "all day." Anyway, children get spending

money by selling empty cans. Of course, some are adult beer cans.

About 20 years ago, I was offered an opportunity to purchase what I considered to be a rather worthless lot on Quarry Road. It was lower than the surrounding area and had a small lake on it, with old tires and other debris floating on the water. The owner wanted \$1,000 for the lot. It was 100 x 200 feet in size. Feeling sorry for the seller, I purchased the lot.

I placed a sign "Clean Fill Wanted" on the lot. In several months the lot was all filled, and then I called Bragato Paving Co to bring a bulldozer and level the dirt. After that I put up a "for sale" sign.

In another few months I was offered \$10,000 and accepted it. In another few months the new owner came in and listed the same lot with me for \$40,000.

I told him I doubted whether anyone would pay so much, but it sold soon afterward for the amount and now the entire area is covered with a large factory.

So we have the cans recycled, the street recycled, the large hill recycled, and the Bayshore Freeway recycled. Many things happen here. Our area is interesting.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

El Camino Real in 1915 was much different than our present El Camino. It was across the railroad tracks until World War I in 1918. It was two lanes, and able to carry traffic at that time.

People traveling along it to the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco passed by some buildings that still stand in Belmont.

For instance, the house south of Ralston Avenue on the east side, the "pink" building that was a general merchandise store, another old house on the road's west side south of Ralston and a very few other buildings. Most disappeared and have been replaced by later buildings.

At the intersection of Ralston Avenue and the older El Camino Real passers-by would have seen the crossing guard who stayed in a little five foot square building and who walked out to the crossing when trains approached, waving his red flag. He was needed until the crossing gates were installed in the 1950s.

The school was on Old County Road, which was then El Camino Real, and the little Episcopal Church was there. Hammerson's blacksmith shop was at one corner of the intersection and he lived next to it. He had been the blacksmith for William C. Ralston.

Rows of eucalyptus trees lined the sides of Old County Road. A few remain in San Carlos. They are large trees now.

The small blue building north of the pink building was a saloon, and the building is still there, but it's a part of the store.

The old red hotel is gone and has been replaced by offices.

North of Ralston Avenue was mostly open space. A grove of small trees surrounded a little white house.

There was nothing north of the saloon, between the railroad tracks and Old County Road, in 1915. Even Christensen's Nursery wasn't located across the street yet. It came during the 1940s.

East of Old County Road, south of Belmont, there were open fields. The land was farmed, and once I recall corn growing on some of that land. Later a builder named Christensen constructed houses of concrete blocks which had slab floors.

Looking west across the railroad tracks, people would have seen Johnson Street. It disappeared in 1918 when El Camino Real was moved west of the tracks.

There were a few houses west of the railroad tracks, but in 1915, not many were there. There was the Smith house, Johnson house, Hanson house, Emmett house, and several others visible from the Old County Road. Some other houses were in Belmont but could not be seen from the road east of the tracks.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There have been many builders of houses in Belmont. One of the first was Count Leonetto Cipriani, who came from Italy.

Before he became consul for Italy in San Francisco he didn't know there were nine sawmills working in Woodside. He shipped a knocked-down house all the way around Cape Horn. It became the lower southern portion of the enlarged Ralston house many years later. I haven't located the name of the Cipriani builder who assembled the house.

Old records state that P.A. Roussel, building contractor, built the Old Country Store (pink building) at a cost of \$5,000. The item is dated March 19, 1903.

Then an earlier item reports that A.N. Ranger had just erected a saloon near the railroad station and that date was July 29, 1871. Probably the little blue building north of the pink building.

Another item dated April 28, 1877 tells of Robert Mills erecting a building on his farm north of Belmont.

Still another old item tells about Annette Alexander having a therapeutic bath constructed at her sanitarium (now Belmont Hills). However, the name of the contractor isn't mentioned.

An item dated Aug. 17, 1923 states that Mr. Hershmer was building a beautiful house opposite the grammar school.

Soon the great Depression came and building stopped for several years. Toward the end of World War II it began again. One of the largest builders was Ernest Baker, who built several hundred small homes. I was foreman for him until receiving a general contractor license in 1947, after which I built some houses myself.

There were two people named Cunn-

Estep

From Page 14

ingham who built homes in Belmont. The first built houses with the front door in the center of the front, that had a small roof above it. The houses he built are easily recognizable.

The other Cunningham was Ed Cunningham who built larger and, possibly, more attractive homes. His floor plan was a good one and the houses usually sold before construction was completed.

About this time a builder came to the area and built the Homeview portion of Belmont between the railroad tracks and the Bayshore highway, on the south side of Ralston Avenue. His houses had oak floors, three bedrooms, a fireplace, and

one-car garage.

Then Andy Oddstead built several hundred houses called Sterling Downs, north of Ralston Avenue. His homes had concrete floors, three bedrooms, a fireplace, and a two-car garage. They quickly sold at a price below \$10,000.

Next Oddsted built several more homes on the rolling hills south of Ralston Avenue, and east of Carlmont High School. Those houses had wooden floors, fireplaces, two-car garages, and sold below \$18,000. There were several hundred of them.

Conway and Culligan built several hundred houses out on the hills west of the Ralston School which sold for less than \$20,000.

Howard White, Harley Shirley, and Don Howard built some homes, as did a

few other builders.

Belmont has been fortunate in having some good, reliable builders who took great pride in their work. You might say that Belmont is a "well-built" city.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many people don't remember, but St. Michael's Chapel, Belmont's first Catholic church, was built in 1920.

The Church of the Immaculate Heart was built in 1930. The present Catholic church was built in 1958, and it is a beautiful church. Belmont is fortunate to have it here.

Before the first church was built, the spot on Alameda de las Pulgas was occupied by several schools for boys. First was the school for boys, which then became the Reed School. Archbishop Hanna purchased the Reed School in 1918 and after that, it was renamed St. Joseph Military Academy. Tuition was \$50 per month.

When the sisters took over the school, they had 120 students who boarded there. At the first graduation there were 32 boys who received diplomas.

Many of the buildings have been removed, but the School of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is still in operation. It is for both boys and girls.

While St. Joseph's Military Academy occupied the site, there was a large swimming pool near where the Belmont library is now. It deteriorated in the 1950s and the city had repairs made. Finally the old pool gave up the ghost and had to be removed.

The St. Joseph Military Academy football field was where the shopping center

is now. The Alameda used to leave Ralston Avenue about where the Bank of America is located, then bend back into its present location south of the Bell Market.

Mr. Roth built the shopping center after buying the land for \$11,000 per acre. His son, Bill Roth, took over the project after Mr. Roth's death. Bill was a member of our Chamber of Commerce and attended most meetings. I was present when the ground was broken for construction.

St. Michael's Chapel should be listed as a historical landmark as it was built in 1920. Cost was \$39,000 at the time.

After Reed sold the Reed School to Archbishop Hanna in 1918, Father Michael Muslin came to the school as head master. He was in poor health and returned to Ireland where he eventually passed away. He was replaced by Father James McHuth in 1932.

After that the school became St. Joseph Military Academy. There are several men in Belmont who, as boys, attended the school. They probably received good educations.

There were several other school heads before Father Kenny came in 1950. he came here from Brentwood.

Father Kenny is well liked, and it is hoped that he will never be replaced. He is the kind of man needed in Belmont.



Carlmont history

by Russ Estep

When people fly above Belmont they see a very small lake in our western hills. It is located behind the large Wadsworth Publishing Co. offices in the large gulch. It was formed when William C. Ralston employed more than 100 Chinese laborers to build a dam to hold back waters from a large spring.

Ralston used the water for irrigation for his field which used to be on the flat ground where Chevy Street and Avon Street are. He had a ditch to bring the water from the lake. We call the lake Water Dog.

Presently, the lake is owned by the Sisters of Notre Dame. They lease it back to the city of Belmont for a small sum and the city uses the lake for recreation purposes for our citizens. Lake Road goes to the lake, and another entrance is near Carlmont Drive.

The lake is visible from nearby streets, as it is down in the big gulch.

Boys sometimes go there to swim, but there is no lifeguard. It is a dangerous place for our youth to swim.

No doubt in time our city will provide a better access and will place picnic tables by the lake, and even provide a lifeguard. But that takes time. It won't be done immediately. Perhaps in 25 years or more. Then future youth may go there for their recreation.

Water Dog Lake is the source of water feeding the little creek that flows through Belmont. The creek flows all year round, but sometimes floods during hard winter rains. Drainage from the hills flows down

into the little creek, causing the problem. Likely the little creek didn't overflow before Belmont was built up with houses. Now the water cannot just sink down into the earth. It has no place to go except down into the creek.

At the Carlmont Shopping Center there used to be a bridge across the creek, but now the water flows under the Alameda de las Pulgas in a large pipe that I was told is six feet in diameter. The pipe also extends under the shopping center. Water even flows beneath the waterfall beside the restaurant there. The water we see in the nursery has been pumped up from the creek.

The creek has been covered over much of its distance. It ends down at the bay, after flowing underneath El Camino Real in a pipe.

The route of the creek used to extend more directly toward the bay, but many years ago, it flooded and a lawsuit was bought by a factory owner. Upon winning, the judge ordered a change in the course of the creek. Now it passes under Old County Road, then flows south a way then turns toward the bay.

The creek is so small that it isn't stocked with fish. With so many people in Belmont they wouldn't last long if placed there.

Someday maybe, Belmont will arrange for stocking of Water Dog Lake, but not at this time. The area is too primitive. And just a little difficult to get to.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

In many early California towns we find a Main Street and a Market Street, or a California Street. Belmont has none of these. Not even a First Street.

Also, some Belmont streets have had their names changed. When the highway was moved west of the railroad tracks, Johnson Street disappeared.

Then there was Daisy Lane, which became Notre Dame Avenue. South Road used to be called Back Road.

Pyatt Street was changed to Mountain View Avenue. There were other changes, but generally our street names have been carefully chosen and remain as they originally were.

Ruth and Anita Streets were named for the two daughters of a San Francisco lumberman who lived here. His name was Swift.

Monroe, Miller and Lyon Streets were named by the developers of the Belmont Country Club Properties, for themselves. Some people used to laughingly say, those streets were the smoothest streets in town.

Robin Whipple Way was named for the first boy from Belmont killed in World War II. Mrs. Whipple, a widow, lived in Belmont and Robin was her oldest son.

Streets farther out in Belmont were all named for areas in the Sierras. Before houses were built by Tom Culligan of San Mateo, a map was brought into my office showing what was planned. At that

time, about 1950, Belmont hadn't grown much toward the west.

When the plans were rolled out in front of me and I had been asked if I would like to see some houses, I replied that nobody would want to live so far out of town, and that Mr. Culligan might just as well build homes up at Tahoe, Muir Trail, Yosemite, Mt. Lassen, or in that part of California. That was how some Belmont people thought of development at the time.

The man laughed and took his plans with him when he left. Then he built houses and named the new streets Tahoe, Muir Drive, Yosemite Drive, Lassen Drive, etc. When I pass by there, I am reminded of the many commissions I didn't receive.

Janke Lane used to be at the Bay View parking lot beside the service station, but it disappeared when the parking lot for the shopping area was enlarged. The Janke family had been one of Belmont's early pioneers, and one member of the family operated a picnic ground where Twin Pines Park is located.

Waltermire and Emmett Streets, and also O'Neill Street, were named for early Belmont merchants.

Belmont's street names came about naturally, as have the street names in many towns. Even in downtown Boston is found a Milk Street, indicating the location of a small dairy that was there about 300 years ago.



Visiting the Filoli Estate

Many Belmont people think they have a large house if they have a house of 2,000 square feet. We find larger homes in Hillsborough, Atherton and Woodside. Probably the largest house in Hillsborough is the old Pullman house on Chateau Drive. The largest in Woodside is the Roth house, known as Filoli.

William B. Bourne II built it. Starting in 1917, it was completed in 1919 and had 36,000 square feet.

The house is made of brick and some walls are double with a space in between and a total thickness of four feet.

The Bournes came from Ireland and lived in the large house until both had died in 1936. Then Lurline (Matson) Roth's husband bought the property. They had 715 acres.

Mr. and Mrs. William Roth lived in the house until 1975. In that year Mrs. Roth gave it away and moved to Hillsborough.

Gardens cover many acres and the flowers are beautiful. Fourteen gardeners are employed full-time to care for the grounds.

Many of the house walls are paneled, with carving that adds to the attractiveness. Two of the largest-ever Persian rugs may be seen in the house.

Many people have seen the television series "Dynasty," and many of the scenes were produced at the Roth property.

Since both Roth and Bourne had been in the shipping business, they each

brought many items for the house from overseas. Even workmen who built the house were brought from Italy.

In the large ballroom are two beautiful light fixtures. They had hung in Versailles, France, and had been there when the armistice was signed at the end of World War I. They then were removed and brought to the Woodside house. These two crystal chandeliers are the largest I have seen.

Many people have traveled to Hawaii on the *Lurline*. Mrs. Roth's name had been Lurline Matson. A tour guide once said her dad hadn't given her name to the ship, but that she had actually been named for an earlier vessel, and her father had liked that ship's name.

Several Lurline ships were part of the Matson Line. Even today there is a container ship carrying the name *Lurline*.

Before Lurline Roth passed away, she donated the large house and her 715 acres to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The house is within the watershed land of the Spring Valley Water Company of San Francisco. The only persons living at her former property are the head gardener and one other caretaker.

The house and gardens are open for tours, but you must telephone ahead for reservations. Cost for the tour is \$6 and it takes 2-1/2 hours. The phone number is 364-2880. Take the tour. It is well worth taking.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In the settling of the west, horses were used and they required hay. Because of this, when the first people came to Belmont and San Carlos, hay became the number one crop.

Prior to World War II, hay could be seen growing in most of San Carlos and down toward the bay in the Belmont area.

Bert Johnson tells of seeing hay being harvested in the area of Belmont east of the Bayshore Highway. He has described seeing the hay baler at work, and bales being tied with three wires. The bales usually weighed about 100 pounds. Young men worked in haying and they were strong. They lifted the bales up on to the wagons.

Also in Belmont hay had been grown on the flat ground where Chevy and Avon Streets are now. This was both before and after the golf course was built there.

Since much of Belmont is hilly and unsuitable for growing crops, these were the only hay fields. However, immediately north of Belmont could be seen the Mills Estate with its large hay fields and the dairy that was east of El Camino Real, about where 37th Avenue is now.

Horses were much in use then and they could be seen at nearly any time of the day, pulling wagons along El Camino.

When people who traveled by train reached their destination, they often went to a livery stable and rented a horse and

buggy or a saddle horse. This was a long time before the era of rental automobiles.

There was a livery stable in Belmont very early on, and it was from that point that the stage began operating to Spanishtown—now Half Moon Bay. Mr. Janke became a partner with Mr. Pruner in the stage venture. They charged \$1 for the four-hour drive over the hills to the coast. Many passengers were carried after the route started in 1875.

Travelers stopped at the Belmont Hotel and their horses required hay.

Possibly the last person to use a horse and buggy was Miss Elizabeth Rowell. She lived where the Opportunity Shop is presently located at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue.

Some buggies had rubber tires (the solid kind), but hers had the usual steel wheels. These were more practical since street hadn't yet been paved and gravel would not allow the hard rubber tires to last long.

One of the Peninsula's largest hay users was the Walkup family of Woodside. They operated a drayage business, both on the Peninsula and in San Francisco, and their horses were the big type, similar to those seen in circus parades pulling large wagons.

The company had wagons with very low-slung wagon beds and small front wheels that allowed them to turn in a small circle. The wagons carried the name "Walkup Drayage" on the sides.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There are several people living in Belmont who were here 60 and 70 years ago. Two of whom I know were here 83 years ago. They have seen many changes.

Eighty years ago, if someone wanted to start a business, he only needed to hang out his shingle. It was a long time until city licenses were required. They began at only \$10 per year. Gradually over the years more money was needed to keep Belmont going, and the license fee had to be increased. Now it is up to minimum of \$50 with large companies paying several hundred dollars.

Presently there are 1,600 licensed businesses within our city. of course, some of these business owners work from their houses.

Probably most of those working from their houses are in sales. Some; however, are likely to be professional people.

All require city licenses. Our adjoining cities have similar ordinances. If a realtor places his "for sale" sign in San Mateo without a license, he will very quickly be cited and will have to pay for a city business license. Belmont must have a large income from this source for many out-of-town real estate people put up their signs in our city.

It seems only a few yes ago when there was only one restaurant in Belmont. It was known as Bondy's, and occupied the building where the Iron Gate is located. Then there was the Belmont Casino on

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Old County Road, later owned by Charles H. Cook, who had been one of our mayors. Both were good eating places.

Presently there are several good eating places in Belmont.

As for profesisonal men, there used to be one lawyer. Now we have several. We now have many doctors. Sixty years ago, there were three. Now there are many more.

The list goes on and on. Belmont's license fee income helps to match the city's out-go. The license fees help considerably as they add to other city income. It is all needed.

There are a great variety of businesses in Belmont. The license fees do not vary according to types of business.

New busineses are continually coming to the area and their license fees are added to what we already have.

Belmont has more employees than we had during incorporation in 1929. The population is many times what it was then.

Our city treasurer collects the city license fees, and our city clerk keeps our records. We are fortunate in having some very good city treasurers and city clerks. Katherine Hearstner was city clerk for many years, then James McLaughlin took over for 20 years, and presently, Dorothy Hall is our very fine city clerk and is doing an excellent job. Belmont is fortunate in having some good and efficient people in charge of things. Belmont knows how to pick 'em.



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carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Where houses exist on Escondido Avenue and along the south side of Ralston Avenue is where an orchard once was, according to Bert Johnson.

Bert was born in Belmont about 84 years ago. Long before World War I when he was a boy, he used to pick apples in that area of Belmont, he said the Hackett place extended from the football field where the shopping center is now, down to about opposite Notre Dame Avenue.

The Hackett property was managed by a man named Mr. Tesser.

Bert said that when young boys were caught picking fruit, Mr. Tesser chased them out of the orchard. However, if boys asked him for some apples, he usually told them to go home and bring a sack. The boys who did that could pick all the apples they wanted. The apples north of the creek, out as far as Ralston Avenue, were of the green or yellow variety, while to the south of the creek were red apples.

Bert said the farm was later sold to the Jordans. Mr. Jordan was Belmont's postmaster at one time. He also became a mayor of Belmont. Years later he moved to Hawaii. A photo in my files shows Mr. Jordan as being present for the opening of the Belmont dog race track.

The track moved later to Bayshore City because of opposition to it in Belmont.

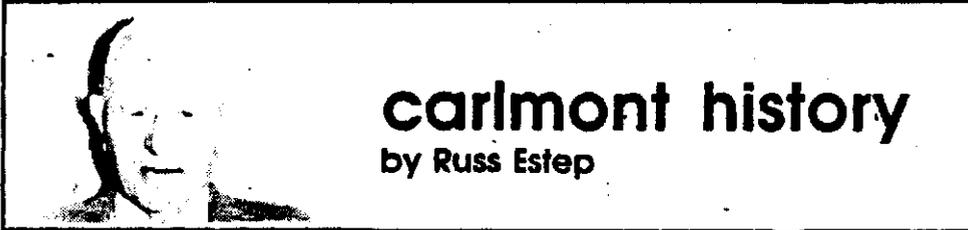
Bayshore City was just south of where we find South San Francisco. It had been incorporated to accept the race track and the crowd following it. Later, the new town was disincorporated, and still later, it was taken in by South San Francisco.

Another area of Belmont that was farmed is the gradually sloping hillside where Irene Court is located. Chinese people raised chrysanthemums there. Their crops appeared to be large and the land there must have been very fertile. It was a great sight to see the blossoming flowers covering the area.

The flowers were shipped by train and loaded at our train station. Mr. Hardy Hannibal was the Southern Pacific agent handling the shipment. He was also our telegraph agent, as well as express agent for many years.

The Belmont Water District named their pumping station at the entrance to the Ralston mansion for Mr. Hannibal. The pumps are underground, however, and not visible from the street. Mr. Hannibal had been a director of our water district for many years.

As Belmont has grown, the time for apples, chrysanthemums and hay has passed. Belmonters can still get them by buying them at stores and enjoying visiting with their neighbors who live now where those things were grown earlier.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many Californians shudder when they hear newcomers refer to San Francisco as "Frisco". They usually think the person must have a close relationship with the saints for San Francisco was named after one. San Francisco was named for Saint Francis.

The Spanish were in California very early and many of our towns carry the names of saints. Some local people aren't even aware of it. San Jose was named for Saint Jose. San Carlos carries the name of Saint Carlos. San Mateo carries the name of Saint Mateo, which is Spanish for Matthew. San Luis Obispo carries the name of Luis Obispo, a Saint. Spanish Saint names are anglicized.

San Juan was named for Saint Juan. San Juan Capistrano.... The list goes on and on. Our east coast isn't so blessed. Hardly a city is named for one of the saints. Creeks were more important apparently. We find Bull Run, Maple Run, Cherry Run, and other creeks with the word "Run" connected. The word means "creek".

In California we find only one such name — Oak Run. It is in Shasta County in the northern part of the state. Most likely, the area was first settled by Protestants from the East Coast. Many Protestants don't know, or understand, the importance of the saints. However, in early days men could understand the importance of the creeks where they could

water their livestock. The "runs" were important to them.

In much later years, something amusing has happened. In the Shasta County seat of Redding there are newcomers. One working for the Board of Supervisors was in charge of road signs, etc.

He had a sign made to be placed beside Oak Run, saying it was "Oak Run Creek." You might read that as Oak Creek Creek. Other newcomers to that area apparently don't recognize the error, or don't care. But when I saw it, I thought it was funny.

When we stop to think about it there are some unusual town names in California. Some of them are Buzzard Roost, Loag Barn, Bella Vista, sitting in a valley where there is no view, Hand Town, which was changed to Placerville, Ingot where there used to be a gold mine, Rough and Ready, and dozens of others.

Belmont is probably lucky in that William C. Ralston called his large home "Belmont," and the railroad company chose the name for a stopping place. It may be shocking to some strangers who find Alameda de las Pulgas (Avenue of the Fleas) here, but think of the shock they might get if our town had been named by early settlers as Rattlesnake Gulch, which it was called in early days before many people had arrived. We should be glad it was named Belmont.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Monroe, Miller and Lyon developed the Belmont Country Club Properties between 1924 and 1927, and it was a few years before other, smaller developments came. During the Depression, there was hardly any building anywhere. However, the inspiration for development seemed to occur to others in the 1950s.

The first big development following World War II occurred above Sonora, up on Highway 108. It was by Harry Hoeffler. Hoeffler had bought several hundred acres and developed a town he called Mi Wuk, after the name of an Indian tribe that used to live there.

Hoeffler sold hundreds of his lots and people from Belmont and the Peninsula built weekend houses. Streets were paved, and Hoeffler brought in the utilities. It was a real good development. The elevation was a little above 4,000 feet, and some of Hoeffler's buyers found that too high for their health. So there was a turnover.

Hoeffler had 16 real estate offices here on the Peninsula, and had sold them, so he knew what to do. He moved his real estate license to Mi Wuk Village and set up his office on the main street and handled re-sales. His car license was Mi Wuk 1.

After Hoeffler had his development established, someone came forward saying he had spelled his town's name incorrectly—that the Indians were Mi Wok, not Mi Wuk.

Hoeffler laughed, and said, "What's the difference? Maybe I can establish a Mi Wuk group here."

He was what you might call a character, but he had vision and was a good businessman. He belonged to the Board of Realtors here and retained his membership long after leaving this area.

Hoeffler died several years ago. Someone else operates his Mi Wuk real estate office, and he closed all his 16 Peninsula offices long ago.

After World War II, Oddsted developed Sterling Downs and the area up on Chula Vista Avenue that used to be the hayfield. Then another developer built the houses in the Homeview Tract in Belmont.

Also, after the war, the south portion of San Mateo, west of the El Camino Real, was developed, and hundreds of apartments were built there. David D. Bohannon developed the hayfield west of El Camino Real at the south end of San Mateo.

Later, developers built areas west of Ralston School. Culligan built homes near Ralston School. Belmont is becoming pretty well developed. So much so that buildable lots are very scarce. Even the almost vertical ones are hard to find.

Developers are now building in Gilroy and Morgan Hill, and also across the bay to Fremont.

We are all glad our city is what it is, and later developers can't spoil what we have.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Most Belmont People were not here at the time of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915. However, they may see one remnant of that World's Fair in Belmont. It is a restaurant near the north end of town, west of the El Camino Real, on Malcolm Avenue.

The little building was the Japan building during the 1915 fair. When I attended the fair I was in it several times. The building was sold to someone and floated down the bay to Belmont about 1918. Then it was placed on small wheels and pulled by trucks to its present site. It is a restaurant now and a good place to eat. If you go there, ask for a window table and enjoy the view.

During Prohibition, the building was

a speakeasy. Liquor and entertaining ladies were available.

Another building from the 1915 World's Fair was also floated down the bay. It was the Ohio state building and it remained on a barge at Redwood City for many years. Finally, it burned.

There are some other old buildings in Belmont but unrelated to the World's Fair. There is the George Center home in Twin Pines Park that people refer to as "the mansion." It was built in 1906 just after the earthquake.

Center was an officer in a San Francisco bank. It is told that he placed considerable funds from his bank in San Francisco in the house vault until it was safe to return them to the San Francisco

location.

Then there is the little "Fisher" house near the mansion. It is being used now for the Park and Recreation Department.

The Fishers had four children who lived at the house. They were George, Charles, Francis and Margaret. All attended the Belmont school.

In the little grove of redwoods near the front of the Fisher house, there is a large boulder that has a plaque on it. In 1974, the Chamber of Commerce dedicated the grove to Keith Davey, president of the Davey Tree Surgery Company.

Davey operated his company nationally and he lived in Belmont. His home was surrounded with large trees, and was located on the El Camino Real, just south of Davey Glen Avenue. He was an active member of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce for many years.

Another old house still standing and in good repair is the Emmett House. It is the two-story house on the south side of Ralston Avenue, just west of El Camino Real. Mr. Emmett was a partner with Mr.

Watermire in the Old Country Store—the pink building on Old County Road. When he lived in the house, he only had to cross the railroad tracks to get to his store.

There are a few other old houses left. Many others have been bulldozed down to make way for more modern structures. Here in the west we aren't known for preserving old dwellings as some people are in the east. In Plymouth, Massachusetts, you can see a house that was built more than 300 years ago. Someone still lives in it, perhaps with the old termites.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many people don't know that earlier people used to ski in Belmont. They didn't do this on snow, but inside the old Belmont Casino on Old County Road.

After selling his wheelbarrow factory in Belmont, Charles H. Cook bought the Belmont Casino. It was located where some new apartments are located on the east side of Old County Road, north of Ralston Avenue.

Charley operated a restaurant in the casino for several years before he passed away. His wife, Louella, took over operation of the restaurant and our Lions Club met there. Louella arranged for someone to install ski facilities at the casino. She rented skis, and evenings the place was hopping — or should we say sliding.

People could go to the top of a small incline and slide down on skis. They didn't need a ski lift for the distance to the top was small. They walked up the stairs or up the incline.

The place was crowded every night until closing time. Louella did very well, but finally sold the establishment and bought a restaurant farther up the Peninsula.

While she owned the Belmont Casino hundreds of Belmonsters used her facilities and learned how to ski. It also provided amusement for people.

Another place that is also on the east side of Old County Road, north of Ralston Avenue, where people have furr is the Belmont Ice Rink. The ice rink is 85'

by 175' in size, and skaters use it daily.

Many famous skaters have skated at the Belmont rink. Peggy Fleming and Renee Biagi were two famous skaters to use the rink. Many other world renowned people have skated there.

Champion skaters from the Ice Capades, as well as the Ice Follies have skated in the Belmont ice rink. Also several skaters from Holiday On Ice have used the Belmont Ice Rink.

It was David Comb who built the rink in 1956. Comb did a great service to Belmont, for hundreds of Belmont people have used the ice rink since it was built.

The ice is 3" in depth, so Belmont skaters aren't skating on thin ice.

The Mae Nesbit School and the ice rink occupy land where the Belmont airport used to be. I flew out of it several times.

Belmont people don't need to travel to other cities to see world famous skating. Among all our wonderful Belmont assets we have some of the world's finest skaters. If you haven't been to the ice rink you should go there to see what Belmont has to offer in recreation.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

We hear quite often about how well senior citizens are being cared for in some of the Northern European countries.

Now, some of this good care is happening in the United States, especially with nutrition.

The St. Anthony Dining Room on Middlefield Road in Redwood City feeds people who would otherwise go hungry. St. Anthony's has been doing this for many years and serves more than 100 people daily.

Pasco Balzerini and several others take turns in the kitchen. No questions are asked. Pasco told of one man coming daily for lunch who drove a new Continental. Maybe he lived alone and didn't like to cook. For the most part, however, those coming for a free meal are people who need it.

In San Francisco, there is also a St. Anthony's Dining Room where hundreds are fed. This also happens in many towns and cities.

Usually the government furnishes surplus food of one kind or another. Counties often participate. Cities help as much as they can and volunteers do the work of cooking and serving the food.

In San Carlos, a beautiful senior citizens building was constructed on San Carlos Avenue. It has a library, sitting rooms, card rooms, and kitchen. At nearly any time of day, you will see elderly persons enjoying the surroundings such as many wish they had at home.

They come there and visit with friends. Some play cards; sometimes they play bingo. They get something out of their lives which their parents never had.

The elderly formerly spent their last years with a family member — sometimes abused and sometimes made to think they were in the way. Often their silver years were unhappy.

Belmont is one of the cities that provides handsomely for its aged. The new senior center in Twin Pines Park is much appreciated, and if you go there at any time, you will find people enjoying the center. Food is provided for seniors, most of whom belong to the A.A.R.P. Most are elderly.

Belmont is serving from 50 to 100 persons daily. If you go there, you may hear pitiful stories. One man told me that he had been a bartender in a club for 40 years.

He said his lottery ticket in the state lottery had been drawn and he won \$5,000. He said that he had searched everywhere, but couldn't find his ticket. Without his ticket, he couldn't collect his prize.

He said in all his life, he had never had as much as \$5,000. The money would mean a lot to him. He was so disturbed he couldn't eat his dinner. Everyone felt sorry for the man, but no one could do anything to help.

Usually stories coming out of the senior center are more pleasant, and everyone is glad this was an isolated case.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue were only widened and paved to the curbs after World War II. We are all so accustomed to the pavement now that we seldom think about it.

Yet only a few years ago when we pulled our cars to the curb in Belmont we kicked up dust. Merchants were very grateful when the paving was done, for they didn't need to continually dust their merchandise.

The Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in getting the widening of the pavement on Ralston Avenue. We worked very diligently for this improvement.

Of course there are still streets in Belmont that aren't paved widely enough to reach the curbing — if there is curbing.

When the early streets were laid out many persons still used horses and buggies. It seemed inconceivable that wider streets would ever be necessary.

By laying out streets 40 feet in width the developers of Belmont Country Club Properties could sell slightly larger lots and get more money.

When only horses were being used most people didn't think wider roads or streets would be needed. Actually Interstate 5 only had two lanes as I drove my Model T along it in 1925.

I felt grateful that there was paving so my tires would last longer. Before the paving, the life of automobile tires was often as low as 3,000 miles.

On a trip to Portland in 1918 with my father there was no paving at all. His 1917 Dodge continually had tire

blowouts. The dust in places was six inches deep. When we neared Portland we found the road graveled which helped a lot. Interstate 5 was a rough unpaved route to the north.

During the development of Belmont Country Club Properties by Monroe, Miller, and Lyon between 1924 and 1927 some streets were paved by the Union Paving Company. The contractor didn't receive all his payment so the Union Paving Company took over many Belmont lots. I was still finding these liens when I sold lots in Belmont as late as 1946.

In the wintertime when showing vacant lots in Belmont, and if I came to the end of paved streets, I often found my car in mud. There were many streets with only a dirt surface. Those streets, such as All View Way, were only one-track roads.

If I drove over to the coast it would be on an unpaved road and my car would bump along. The road to the coast in the 1920s wasn't nearly as straight as we find it now.

In Belmont you may see a portion of the earlier road, and we call it Belmont Canyon Road. When the western end of Ralston Avenue was straightened, that part of the road to the coast was re-named.

Belmont streets are still mostly 40 feet in width, but pavement makes it easy to get around in our automobiles. Paved streets and roads have been desired since the Romans. They didn't have asphalt, and paved some streets with cobblestones.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many of us in Belmont visited, and drove through, the big Wawona redwood

much about it, although it is still there. Even on the ground it is large, and people photograph it. People who see it go home and tell others about the tree.

When some people have been outstanding, and in the eye of the public for many years, they are remembered. Upon their retirement they aren't seen so often, but they are still around.

Take Newell Sharkey, for instance.

tree in Yosemite.

Now that it has fallen we don't hear so

Newell was a very well-known businessman in San Carlos for many years. Some jokesters say he was there before Columbus discovered America. Anyway I often purchased film at his Laurel Street store, and bought gasoline from Newell at his service station for my Model T car. Sharkey operated a service station at the northwest corner of San Carlos Avenue and El Camino Real. I don't know when he started, but it could have been in the 1920s. He quickly became an important figure in his community.

Sharkey was the mayor of San Carlos at one time and handled the job good enough to satisfy the majority of voters. He was considered to be a good mayor.

There is a real estate and a title company office on the famous corner now.

Sharkey lives in San Carlos. He is 83 years old now, but still spry and active. We wonder why he retired. When he sold his service station he found things easier by operating the camera shop.

Instead of running all day serving gasoline, checking tires, and washing windshields, he only walked a few feet from his counter to the back room to develop film. Almost immediately he appeared to be more relaxed. Now he has retired and closed the camera shop.

His merchandise in the store was of a high quality. He carried well-known brands, and had a large stock of film. If anyone needed a personal photo it could be taken in his back room. They always turned out to be excellent photos. His charges were reasonable, and he was kept busy.

He told me that he has no plans for retirement, but that he might travel. I suggested he buy an R.V. and travel over the country and enjoy himself. He concurred, so possibly that's what he and Mrs. Sharkey might do.

Anyway Newell will never be forgotten. Like the big redwood tree, he will still be around even though not at his old location on Laurel Street in San Carlos.

Yosemite isn't the same anymore since the big Wawona tree fell, and San Carlos will never be the same again without a business run by Newell Sharkey. We will all miss him.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Recreational opportunities for our youth have changed considerably in the last 75 years.

When cattle roamed our hillsides, boys used to have great fun catching a calf and trying to ride it. Usually they wre buck-

ed off very quickly and another boy would try it. Probably such practice was beneficial because travel then wasn't quite what we find today. Many persons traveled by horseback.

Girls had their fun, too. In Belmont several girls at that time walked to the top of the hill west of El Camino Real, upon the north end of what is now Buckland Avenue, and they flew kites.

Several have mentioned what fun they had. The wind up there could be depended upon. They sat holding onto the kite string and enjoyed summer days and a good view.

Another recreational activity for some Belmont boys was to ride a coaster down the Ralston Avenue hill. Starting up above Cipriani Boulevard, they coasted down, sometimes going so fast they couldn't stop until their vehicle reached El Camino Real. There were few cars then so they didn't need to be very concerned about traffic.

Bert Johnson has told how one boy was usually chosen to stand at the Alameda de las Pulgas to stop other vehicles if any should come along.

The coaster they used was unlike coasters of today. Theirs was a stripped-down old automobile. Its wheels were large and "could it roll!" Their time was checked, and they found they were going 40 miles an hour. They were real daredevils.

Another "fun" activity the Belmont boys enjoyed was chasing a bull that used to be kept on the flat ground toward the Bay from El Camino Real. By tossing rocks at it, they learned it would lower its head and start toward them. They escaped by running to a fence and quickly climbing up to its top. Likely there were some narrow escapes.

Still another fun activity was teasing a bear. A Belmont man had won a bear at a convention and brought him home. Belmont boys often visited the bear and, staying just beyond reach of his chain, they tossed rocks at him to get him excited. They thought they were having great fun.

Today our modern boys have other activities for enjoyment, some of which are probably just as exciting as what boys of an earlier era found. Boys today ski, ride surfboards in high seas, scuba dive where there are sharks, and they call these things "getting their kicks."

Some of our Belmont boys and girls have become quite expert in their present day sports. They enjoy what they are doing. The earlier boys and girls couldn't go to the snow for that would require several days by stage or horseback. They couldn't scuba dive for such equipment hadn't been invented. They couldn't ice skate for there were no ice rinks here in Belmont. There were many things not available to them.

Our city of Belmont has a fine recreational program and many of our youths take advantage of it. Many, however, never think about the earlier youths who didn't have access to these programs. Our modern youths, no doubt, appreciate today's advantages.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

It seems that things go up and down, and where there is a positive there is always a negative. This seems to occur in everything. Let's consider Belmont schools.

Belmont's first school was a two story building on the east side of Old County

Road. Children from both Belmont and San Carlos attended it. Later, as Belmont grew, more schools were added until Belmont had seven.

Then the number of students declined and school trustees sold some schools, and closed others. One that has been clos-

ed is the Louis Barrett School on Belburn Avenue.

That school was built in 1948. Its first principal was Mr. Howard F. Kraus. Although the school was closed, Kraus still resides in Belmont.

Barrett School is now a community center, but still carries the name "Barrett." Barrett was at one time Belmont's school superintendent, although he worked as head forester for Northern California. One of his sons operates the mud baths at Calistoga, and his daughter, Ruth (Barrett) Parish, also lives in Calistoga.

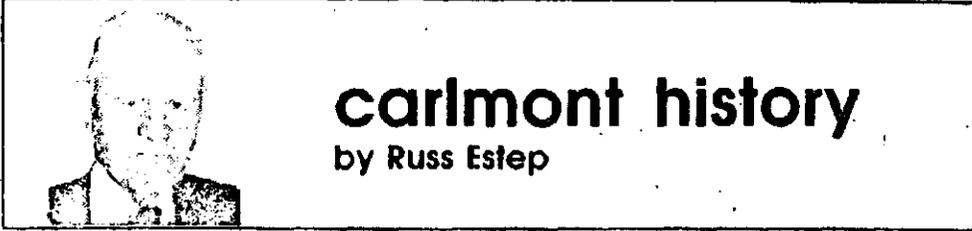
Barrett School was built by contractor Richard May. When it first opened in 1948 there were about 300 students. There were 35 in kindergarten, 30 in the first grade, and 44 in the eighth grade, until two students were transferred here from the San Mateo schools, making 46 in that grade at Barrett.

Our town's population exploded and soon double sessions were necessary. Until then there had been about 300 children attending the school. Landscaping had to be provided.

The hawthornes were planted after the school opened, adding to the appearance of the property. The first P.T.A. president was Mrs. Hartman.

One student became the Fire Chief in Berkeley. As far as can be learned all Barrett students made something of themselves, following the precedent set by Belmont's earlier school children.

I have been told that many Belmont school children who attended Barrett have had their names in "Who's Who in America," and in "Who's Who in the West."



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In Belmont the Senior Club and members of the A.A.R.P. meet in Twin Pines Park for lunch several times each week. Sometimes good speakers are provided, and sometimes people enjoy movies.

The old people meet and exchange stories about their lives. Some just visit with friends. All seem to be acquainted. Some acquaintances were likely established since the program started. They sit eight to a table and have an opportunity to visit with seven others during lunch. There are many tables, and usually 40 to 50 turn up to eat.

The center provides balanced lunches and the seniors go away satisfied with the food. They are all grateful to those who work preparing the meals and arranging occasional programs. When movies are shown they are never "X" rated like some TV programs their grandchildren watch.

There are many subjects for conversation. One heard lately is "Why did the city start a cemetery in this beautiful park?"

Of course it isn't a cemetery. During the early 1850s two deaths occurred at farms where the lakes are located west of Belmont. One was as early as 1852.

The parents put the bodies in homemade coffins, and placed them on homemade sleds, and dragged them to the top of the hill near oak trees, south of Kalston Avenue, and east of Highway 280. There they were buried.

They were undisturbed until recently when someone took the tombstones to the San Mateo County Historical Society in San Mateo. Why the graves were disturbed nobody knows. Someone brought the tombstones to Belmont, and they were installed near the front of the mansion in Twin Pines Park.

Remains of bodies weren't moved. Some old-timers wonder why the grave markers weren't replaced where they belong, at the gravesites.

Others wonder if the grave markers shouldn't be moved to a less conspicuous spot in Twin Pines Park where they wouldn't be seen unless someone searched for them. It seems that some older

people who may have a short while to live are bothered by seeing reminders of death where they go to enjoy themselves.

Others seem to wonder if fast growing vines, or fast growing shrubs couldn't be planted to hide the tombstones? Or maybe just put boxes over the tombstones until everyone in Belmont has died? I think these people refer to the older seniors.

One with among the seniors said he

had never heard of people going to a cemetery, sitting on a tombstone and eating lunch.

Anyway, everyone should be assured that no graves are in the area of the tombstones and none are expected to be.

Belmont officials try very hard to please their constituents, and no doubt they will study this situation. The tombstones were there for historical reminders of early settlers. That was all.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Starting in 1795 when the Spanish lived on the Peninsula, their lighting must have caused eye problems.

At that time they had no kerosene lamps and no electric lights. They had only candles or lights that used whale oil. Maybe they went to bed early and arose early in the mornings. After all, they had to feed their livestock.

Kerosene, as we know it, wasn't available until the late 1800s. Then it was probably brought from Pennsylvania where the first oil well was located.

On June 19, 1869, word went out that William C. Ralston was about to start a gas plant at his property. Others in Belmont were using various lamps. Gas lighting would be a great improvement.

Although Mr. Ralston put out the word that he would let neighbors tie into his gas line, as far as I can determine, nobody took advantage of his offer. The new gas plant was built near where his driveway turned off Ralston Avenue. He used the gas for lighting his Belmont mansion.

It was many years before electricity came to Belmont. It came first, from San Mateo. Then in 1931 when Belmont really was an incorporated city the Lighting District of the city handled the electricity.

At first there were four such departments: fire, water, electricity and sewage. It wasn't until June 30, 1960 that the Lighting District was dissolved. At that

time Pacific Gas and Electric Company assumed responsibility for our electricity. They established their district office in Belmont to serve much of the Peninsula.

Presently the PG&E division office is located on Industrial Way. Their district manager is Bill McLoughlin. McLoughlin has an engineering degree and has been with his company for 18 years.

The PG&E office has 390 employees. There are 134,000 gas customers and 160,000 electric customers.

PG&E's electricity comes from power plants throughout Northern California. Plants are hydro, thermal, wind power and nuclear. I'm told the cheapest kind of power is hydro. Many such plants were designed by engineer Frank G. Baum after he quit teaching electrical engineering at Stanford in the early 1900s.

It was Baum's invention of the constant potential transmission system that made possible the transmission of 240,000 volts instead of the 50,000. Those hanging insulators seen on power line towers were also invented by him to handle the greatly increased line voltage.

We in Belmont are fortunate in having plenty of electricity and fortunate that it is being supplied here by PG&E under the supervision of McLoughlin. We are lucky to have Bill as our manager, and we don't have to use kerosene or whale oil like our predecessors did.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont's young people used to enjoy oysters and swimming. The oyster appetite continued over into the early 1950s while Charles H. Cook was our Belmont mayor.

Cook always ordered oysters from the menu whenever our Chamber of Commerce held a meeting. Some of the directors were amused about this.

As for swimming, I don't know whether Charley, as we called him, could swim at all. He was a stout man and some folks said if Charley jumped into the swimming hole the water would overflow. He was a fine man and everyone liked him.

Young people used to swim at the Belmeda Pool that used to be at Carlmont. It was on the Alameda de las Pulgas near where the Belmont Library is now located. Earlier, young people swam down at the eastern end of Ralston Avenue, in the Bay. They had access to small bath houses that used to be there.

Some paid \$5 a year to use the bath houses, while others would find doors unlocked and go in to change their clothing. Dozens of Belmont's young people learned to swim in the Bay's waters.

Often some of them would gather oysters and the group would have a picnic. Gradually something happened. The Reed School had sewer pipe laid along Ralston Avenue from the Alameda de las

Pulgas to the Bay. This caused pollution and soon no one could eat the oysters.

The Morgan Oyster Company finally had to close. They had grape stake fences around a portion of the Bay near Belmont. It was still there during the 1920s. It was there to keep sharks from eating oysters.

Belmont's young people often fished for sharks and caught some. They were not large — usually about three feet long. They could bite, but no one was ever bitten.

Of course all the Bay pollution didn't come from the Reed School sewer line. Some came from ships that pumped out their bilge water while docked in San Francisco. Other pollution came from some early small towns emptying their sewage directly into the Bay. Fortunately this has changed in later yers, but still most of us wouldn't get pleasure from a Bay swim.

Probably most folks remember the awful odor near Oakland when driving from the eastern end of the Bay Bridge. They cleaned that up so people don't get sick when passing by that area. Indeed, it is so clean that condominiums have been built beside the Bay.

Russ Estep is the city of Belmont's historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont seems much like a small village, although the population is about 26,500. When rumors start they seem to go quickly through the town.

For instance, during the great depression in the 1930s, when Roy Teague was starting to build a house on Laurel Creek where Belmont joins San Mateo, he had difficulty with the excavation for the foundation.

He had to use a drag line and a large scraper. Neighbors told someone they believed he was mining for gold. Word spread quickly. Hundreds of unemployed men came to the area.

Old timers will remember the large field where the Sears store is located being full of jalopies of all descriptions. The men dug holes with picks and shovels hoping to strike it rich. The area was all vacant then, except for Murry's dairy cows. Some escaped and Murry wasn't happy about having to go after them.

The old ranch house of the Murry's burned later. It sat far back from El Camino Real, and there were eucalyptus trees around it which helped break the wind.

Of course nobody found gold. Work was scarce at the time, but digging in

Murry's field probably helped the men harden their muscles. They would have been better able to hold a job if they could find one. They were outdoors awhile breathing clean air and that must have been beneficial for them.

It seems unfortunate that a house was built across Laurel Creek. Today, people often need to drive into San Mateo from Belmont on the Laurel Creek route, but it can't be done without driving through someone's living room. People must drive back uphill to All View Way, then proceed eastward toward El Camino Real.

When Teague was building houses, he constructed one with a flat roof on Cipriani Boulevard. Its design was different from other Belmont houses. He placed 4x6s four feet apart, then built a sub-floor of 2x6s. This made a very substantial floor.

When I was showing it to a customer I jumped up and down on the living room floor to demonstrate how solid it was. The man was impressed and immediately bought the house.

Realtors often encounter unusual houses here in Belmont. One house I

showed a client during the hard winter rainstorms was down a very steep driveway. It was pouring rain at the time. I left my car up on the street, and we walked down to the house.

After viewing it, we started walking back up to my car and found the pavement slippery. The lady removed her shoes and began reaching for shrubbery alongside the driveway. She suggested I

hold onto her dress. We finally reached the street.

It seems that interesting things happen in Belmont. There are many others, but this may give you an idea of what has gone on around you. Gold mining, well-built houses and some steep driveways. Always a variety of things happening in Belmont.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Before World War II, there were many Japanese families living in Belmont. Local people considered these people to be good neighbors. School children attended Belmont schools with Japanese kids, never dreaming their families might be considered possibly dangerous.

After the war started there were many rumors of spies on the Peninsula; some telling about antenna wires at Japanese houses. Because of the publicity that everyone should keep an eye open, The Belmont Japanese soon seemed ostracized and some friends began wondering whether they were our enemies.

Finally the government officials believed our Belmont citizens of Japanese descent could not be recognized from the enemies.

They might be good citizens, but some people couldn't tell the difference. Some of our good neighbors might be hurt. All antenna wires they had for listening to news broadcasts were taken down. Some of them allowed their chrysanthemum corps to deteriorate.

Previously tons of these flowers had been shipped to the East Coast from Belmont. Our good neighbors became worried and wondered what would happen to these Japanese. Other local people felt sorry for their neighbors but didn't know what they could do to help them. Hostile feelings began developing.

It was about this time when news broadcasts told about a Japanese submarine shelling the coast at Santa Barbara. Then another broadcast told about

small balloons being carried by the wind over Oregon and Washington with explosive fuel in them. When they came down they could start forest fires. Then another report said a Japanese submarine shelled the coast of Northern California, but no damage was caused. People became more and more alarmed.

Along the marina in San Francisco, beautiful hories could be purchased for very little money.

Next a San Francisco garbage scow off the Golden Gate began dumping its garbage when a Japanese submarine surfaced alongside. As the Japanese opened their conning tower, the garbage slid into it. The enemy couldn't make a fast dive. A nearby American ship captured the Japanese and took the crew to Angel Island. I was a carpenter at Angel Island and saw them brought in.

All Belmont houses were blacked out at night with window coverings so no light could escape.

With the war growing worse daily, the government ordered all our good Belmont Japanese into a stockade established at Tanforan race track. They were kept there temporarily, then taken to well-guarded, fenced-in areas near Merrill, Oregon.

I had helped convert the grandstand at Tanforan into a huge dining area for the Japanese before they were sent there. After the war I went to Merrill, to see where the Belmont Japanese had been living.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In 1795, when the Arguello family owned what would later be named Belmont, San Carlos, Redwood City, Atherton and Menlo Park, there were no towns here. The Arguello family could go to Mission San Jose or Mission Dolores to buy needed items.

Beginning in 1950, Belmont was started, but not with the name Belmont. Charles Angelo established his store and small stopping place at the intersection of

name is popular, easy to pronounce and liked by most.

Some towns didn't acquire their names quite so naturally. Consider Paradise in Butte County. Real estate men chose the title after naming their offices after various saints. In 1922, they had arguments which ended in court in Chico. The judge ordered them to never again use saints' names. Then there was Azusa in the Los Angeles area. The developers thought they might influence their buyers by naming the development A to Z U.S.A., which became Azusa.

But back to Belmont. We have had some persons who helped to make Belmont what we find it today. There is Doris Vannier. Her grandparents were pioneers here in the 1800s. One of her grandfathers owned what is now Twin Pines Park and he operated a picnic ground there.

Then there was Ray Kelly. Ray was active in city politics and a well-liked man. Also Bert Johnson was born here. A fine man. Another was telegraph operator and station agent for many years — Mr. Hardy Hannibal. The pumping station at

Old County Road and what would become Ralston Avenue. Count Leonetto Cipriani bought acreage and had a house built which later became the south part of the Ralston mansion. William C. Ralston named the property Belmont, thinking it needed identification. Then in 1863, when the trains came to Belmont, a name was needed and the railroad company considered many names but decided on Belmont. Within the United States there are 31 towns named Belmont. The

Ralston Avenue and entrance to Notre Dame College was named for him. Many of us shipped packages by him at the old train depot. We took them to the north end of the station at the door opening toward the track, where he weighed them and accepted charges for shipment.

Father Kenny was also one of the old timers. He has been in Belmont for many years. Catherine Hearstner was city clerk for many years. Kitty Lane was named for her. Ruth Barrett Ross was born and raised in Belmont. Her father was school superintendent for many years. A school was named for Mr. Barrett. Their home was located where the Wells Fargo Bank now stands. Charles Cook manufactured metal wheel barrows at his factory on Old County Road, and was mayor of Belmont at one time.

There were dozens of others who gave their time and a part of their lives to making Belmont what we find it to be today. We, in Belmont, are grateful that our modern citizens are continuing the work that was started so long ago. We hope they will always continue this.

Russel Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The world has some very well-traveled roads, such as Appian Way in Italy.

In California our earliest road was El Camino Real. The Spanish built their first mission at San Diego in 1769 and traveled north, building the last one at Sonoma.

The missions were built a day's travel apart. Of course, at that time in the late 1700s, people traveled by horseback or with ox carts. Today, you could drive the length of the mission trail within a single day.

The Spanish gave our road its name. El Camino Real means "The King's Highway." I have an old picture of it near San Luis Obispo and at that point it was a single-track dirt road. Many years later, gravel was placed on the surface, and it was transformed into a two-lane road. The two lanes were eventually paved, but that didn't come about in its northern portion until World War I. Much of it was widened to a four-lane highway, and after World War II, most of it became a divided freeway.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, men wearing packs on their backs could be seen walking along the road. Most were going north, hoping to find work. Trains ran northward paralleling El Camino Real. Men's faces could be seen peering over the sides of passing gravel cars.

Men in search of work hopped box

cars, their tell-tale legs dangling from open car doors along the tracks. Before reaching the Sonoma mission, most of the unemployed men seemed to thin out. Perhaps some went to sea from San Francisco. Others may have crossed to Oakland and continued northward.

It is likely the travelers who chose that route found some kind of employment. Considerable lumber was being produced in Northern California, and maybe some became lumberjacks.

Things were pretty rough in San Francisco. Some people stood on street corners selling apples. By evening they probably took in enough to buy some soup.

Others may have turned back and began following El Camino Real south again. Their way wasn't hard to find. The State Federation of Women's Clubs had voted in 1904 to place copies of the mission bells along El Camino Real. We have two in Belmont: One at the train station, and one a few blocks north on the west side of El Camino Real.

Everything continually changes and presently some travelers on El Camino Real can be seen pushing grocery carts with their belongings in them. We call them the homeless. Some spend nights beside the railroad tracks near bushes and old cars behind my office.

Who will come next by the old highway — El Camino Real? It's always well traveled.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

During and just after World War II, airports didn't have fog dispensers such as large airports have now; the small airports at Belmont and San Carlos closed down when fog rolled in.

That didn't happen very often because of prevailing winds that blew fog away. However, in 1945, I needed to make a short flight and planes couldn't take off locally. I had to wait two hours until the fog lifted.

In 1956, there was great excitement at the San Carlos Airport. Our Belmont Chamber of Commerce had sponsored two women from San Carlos to participate in the Powder Puff Derby. We had "Belmont, Calif" painted on their airplane.

They did very well in the air race and as I recall, they came in fifth. We in the Belmont Chamber of Commerce were proud of their success and Belmont received some good national publicity.

Charles H. Cook was Belmont's mayor at the time, and I was president of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber of Commerce has always tried to help our city. it was successful in having crossing guards placed at Harbor Boulevard and at Ralston Avenue and El Camino Real.

Before that, there was a crossing guard at the Ralston Avenue crossing who sat in a little five by five foot building on the southwest corner of the street by the tracks. He would walk out with his flag, holding it up to stop traffic when trains approached.

The Harbor Boulevard crossing didn't have any crossing guard. Two people were killed one day — one by a northbound train and another by a southbound

train. The accidents happened only about an hour apart. These accidents occurred after crossing guards were approved, but before their installation.

The Chamber of Commerce was also instrumental in getting street lighting for Old County Road.

Ralston Avenue was only two lanes west of the railroad tracks, and the street was graveled from the pavement to the curbs. The Chamber of Commerce worked for many months, but finally managed to have the pavement installed all the way to the curbs.

when Christmas came, the Chamber of Commerce raised money and rented strings of decorations for the first block west of El Camino Real. Ed Vallerga and I put them up. George Tiegel furnished a forklift so we could hang the decorations above the traffic.

The following year we collected money from merchants to purchase several strings of across-street decorations. We added to them year after year. Annette Alexander was generous and donated \$1,000 to help with the project.

Those decorations wore out over the years and Isat Christmas, the Chabmer of Commerce and citizens raised fmds to purchase new decorations which brought Belmont up-to-date again.

The Belmont Chamber of Commerce has worked very diligently for our city, and the present officers and directors are continuing the good work. We are fortunate in having these people helping our city. They are good citizens. The present Chamber of Commerce is not at all like an earlier one in 1930 which was only a party and luncheon group.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Voices at another table in a Belmont restaurant could be heard as I sat eating my lunch. A girl in her teens was arguing with her mother. She hadn't cleared up the dishes and palced them in the dishwasher. This amused me.

When I was about her age, my father had died and I had been called to Shasta County to take care of his 3,000-acre cattle ranches at Oak Run and Palo Cedro. I not only had to do the work, but lived at home alone.

Although I became lonesome, I think it was good for me. However, I soon discovered that Shasta County and the Oak Run area were different from living down here. I decided it must be 50 years behind.

For instance, drinking water had to be carried about one-quarter of a mile from a cold spring. Plowing had to be done with a team of mules. Horses had to ridden and cared for. Cooking was done on a wood-burning stove.

During rainy winters, it became my custom to sit in front of the stove with my feet in the oven to keep warm, while I studied radio theory. I wanted to become a raadio operator on a ship, which I did accomplish later.

When I first put up an aerial in a tree, it was the first such action taken in Shasta County, and my first radio is now in the museum at Shasta College.

As I was up in the tree, a neighbor came by on a fat bay horse and glancing up, asked why I was up there. When I tried to explain that the wire was being put up so I could listen to ships off the California coast, he went on his way laughing loudly and saying, "You don't

think you are going to hear ships by putting a wire up a tree, do you?" Radio was unheard of at the time.

Fences had to be built and kept in repair. Hay had to be mowed using a mule-drawn mower, then raked into windrows and shocked. After curing a few days, it was then hauled to the barns.

Cows had to be milked and usually some could not be immediately found. Calves had to be marked and branded in the springtime. My brand was "RE" and was registered in Redding and Sacramento. Also my ear mark was registered. With the summer range open country, it was necessary to identify livestock if I expected to claim them.

In the summertime, alfalfa must be irrigated, and the water direction changed so all parts of the field would be irrigated.

In the springtime, a vegetable garden had to be fertilized, and planted.

A family orchard supplied apples, pears, peaches and plums, but they had to be picked. A half-acre vineyard furnished a variety of table grapes. They too had to be picked, and some put on trays to dry as raisins.

There was no electricity, so kerosene lamps and lanterns were used.

Telephones were on the wall, and by turning a crank, you could call a far-away neighbor. My call was three shorts and a long, but the phone didn't ring much. Everybody listened if it was in use.

All so different from life on the Peninsula. And a Belmont girl complaining about clearing up the dishes! For shame. We are glad all teenagers aren't like that one. Especially here in Belmont.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

We have all heard about some other cities, such as Chicago, where a few people have boasted that they have "their boys" on the council, claiming they can get them to do whatever they request them to do. Belmont is fortunate that this hasn't happened within our city. Our councilmen are great people.

Belmont's present city councilmen are Gary Orton, mayor; David Bomberger, vice mayor; Dick Gree, Ed Rodriguez and Bob Hoffman. We are well represented.

If these councilmen are in a city such as reports claim Chicago used to be, no vice would occur. If there is an egoist living in Belmont, we are fortunate he or she is not on the council.

Although there are many important items our City Council is trying to solve, there are some small ones also. Too many small ones can cause our councilmen to buy Alka Seltzer or Tums. They should have other people check these out and save their money.

One important item is the timing of stop lights at Harbor Boulevard and El Camino Real. The reference is made to the light that controls pedestrians.

Citizens tell me that they can barely walk 15 feet toward the center of El Camino Real when the light changes to "Don't Walk". They say they have to

run and try to race to the other side of the street ahead of traffic. Someone may be killed if action isn't taken. We don't want our good city involved in a lawsuit. Taxes are already too high.

It seems only yesterday when people could walk across El Camino Real safely and no cars or wagons would be in sight. People multiply and traffic gets worse. It is almost impossible to walk across El Camino Real any more except at a marked crossing where there is a stop light, and not always then.

Other citizens tell of the difficulty when driving on Terrace Drive. When the Belmont Country Club Properties were laid out between 1924 and 1927, the streets were surveyed to be 40 feet in width. More lots could be sold by keeping streets at that width.

When people park on both sides of Terrace Drive, it is difficult at times to squeeze cars between. Fire trucks or ambulances might need to go around on other streets, thereby losing time.

Homeowners along Terrace Drive think parking on the northerly side should be restricted. If parking was allowed only on the southerly side, traffic could always get through.

We all love Belmont and want its citizens to cross El Camino Real safely.

carl mont history

by Russ Estep



Trains came to Belmont in 1863 during the Civil War. Engines were steam propelled and sounded as though they were alive.

It was fun to ride on a train pulled by a steam engine. Of course, they are still around such as the famous Skunk Train that runs from Willits to Fort Bragg and the Roaring Camp Train at Felton in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

If you wanted to travel from Belmont to San Jose 75 years ago, you took the train and it made many stops. The towns had some open space between them at that time. Now, many have grown together.

A cloud burst in 1928 sent roaring muddy water down a canyon where the trains crossed. The stream of water hit the engine of a passing freight train, rolled it over and covered it with sand and debris. Reports said the train was never found.

If you traveled north toward Oregon, you crossed the Bay on the ferry to Oakland Pier where you found the back ends of several trains facing you when you disembarked from the Bay ferry.

Names of the various trains were posted, and some were famous trains going across the country. Telegraphs could be heard in the waiting room.

The train would not be northbound very long. It would travel to Port Costa where it was driven onto a long ferry to cross to Benecia. It was re-assembled and traveled to Davis, where you had to change trains to travel north.

The train traveled past prune orchards, and in the springtime when blossoms were out, the ride as wonderful.

If you went to San Francisco, it took an hour by train. The trains didn't always go by their present route. Earlier, they went by Colma and Visitation Valley to Third and Townsend streets.

Trains to Los Angeles had two routes — either down the coast, or inland by Bakersfield. That route took you across the mountains southeast of Bakersfield through Tehachapi and Mojave. A complete circle of the tracks ran near Tehachapi where a long train passed under its back end.

Sometimes you would travel as far as Sacramento then have to change trains to go north on the east side of the Sacramento River by Chico, then cross the river to Red Bluff, and on northward.

On one trip I took in 1914, the entire valley was flooded. Muddy water was up to the top of fence posts. The trip to Redding took a night and a day. The Shasta and Oroville Dams were needed, but they weren't built for many years.

Trains now are pulled by diesel engines, and an eastern train, the Metro-Liner, is propelled by electricity. What a train! It travels between New York and Washington at 150 miles an hour. I took a picture of its speedometer.

Transportation has come a long way during the last 57 years. What will it be like 75 years from now? Probably faster, and more quiet.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

The drought that's expected this summer is not the first Belmont has had. Several years ago, many lawns were brown and water was scarce.

Then in 1983, we had more rain than we were accustomed to. The little creek that flows down from Waterdog Lake crested at its banks. Water could not get under the railroad tracks and flooded south of Harbor Boulevard. A huge Matson Navigation Company container near the tracks floated nearly to San Carlos. Floods and dry years seem to come in cycles.

Belmont gets its drinking water by buying it from San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy water supply. We are told that the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in Yosemite Park isn't as full as it usually is. We'll have to conserve water this year.

It seems like only yesterday when the Hetch Hetchy water project was built. In 1916 a San Francisco supervisor pushed for its development. Some people were against this project.

The small dam at Crystal Springs Creek in San Mateo was built to hold water in the valley west of Belmont. At the same time the large dam was built up in Yosemite. One large pipe six feet in diameter brought water to fill the valley west of Belmont.

Farmers owning land there had been bought out and consequently settled elsewhere. A man by the name of Christian Bollinger moved to San Jose and

established a stage line to Mt. Hamilton. A street in San Jose was named for him, and we have a Christian Drive in Belmont.

Later a second six-foot pipe had to be laid beside the first one. They are visible west of Redwood City on Edgewood Road. The Pulgas Water Temple marks the western end of the two pipes.

Belmont's water is piped down Edgewood Road to Old County Road, and from there it flows to Belmont. At Belmont it is pumped along Ralston Avenue to the pumping station near the entrance to the large Ralston Mansion.

The Belmont pumps move the water to several hilltop tanks from where it flows to Belmont houses.

Belmont has a Belmont County Water District office on Folger Drive. Ed Morey, who recently received the prestigious William C. Ralston award, has been president of our water district. The group of directors and Morey are doing a good job of handling our water problems.

Although there may be a shortage of water this coming summer, we can be assured that everything possible will be done to make plenty of water available here in our city. The men are all well-qualified and will do everything possible to keep the water flowing. We can depend on them.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many people in Belmont haven't visited the old Sanchez adobe. It was built in 1846 by a Mexican named Sanchez. It is located up in a canyon in Pacifica, and it is a state and national landmark. Visiting hours vary, but you can call the San Mateo County Historical Society in San Mateo for visiting hours.

Senor Sanchez owned a large land grant and raised cattle and hogs. San Francisco was growing at the time and he had a ready market for all he could raise. No thought was given in 1848 as to cattle breeding such as there is now.

Presently, cattlemen in Wyoming and other livestock states raise herefords for beef. They have been found to do well on the range and are good to look at with red bodies and white faces.

Our early coastside cattle are said to have been mixed with Mexican cattle and were red and white spotted, black, white, and other colors. Since pasture was plentiful and they were easy to raise, no one tried to produce show livestock.

Go to the Sanchez adobe, stand there awhile and close your eyes. Try to imagine it is still occupied by the Sanchez family. No house would be in sight, and cattle would be bawling in the distance.

You might think some cattle had bells on. Their musical notes would have been easy to follow, and such cattle are easy to locate. Actually, range cattle would have a high-pitched bell. You would have known instantly which animals they were and in what direction to go to find them.

There used to be many variations in cow bells.

Other large land grants were located in our area. Of course, Belmont was the Rancho de las Pulgas, comprising approximately 34,200 acres. Others were Rancho Corte de Madera that had been granted to Domingo Peralta and Maximo Martinez, Canada de Ramundo granted to John Coppinger, Rancho Rodeo Viejo was granted to Jacob Leese.

Names and dates of arrival of the county's early settlers are interesting. William Smith arrived in 1834, John Coppinger arrived in 1835, Charley Brown in 1837, James Pease in 1838. Coppinger built the county's first sawmill at Woodside. Brown built the first adobe house in 1838.

In 1853, fifteen sawmills were operating in the Searsville and Woodside area. Lumber was sawed, then shipped to San Francisco from Redwood City — then called Mezesville. Wages were low and redwood lumber delivered to the docks at San Francisco might be profitably sold for \$8 per 1,000 board feet.

Inflation continued upward until houses now sell for over \$500,000, when in 1850 they might have sold for as little as \$2,000. However, the people would have thought the prices were much too high, as today's are.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In the early West about the worst crime anyone could commit was horse stealing. Usually people didn't wait to hold a trial. They hanged the thief to the nearest tree that had a suitable limb to toss a rope over.

As the migration increased westward, some persons objected to such quick justice and courthouses were built. They were constructed in the middle of town and a county seat was established.

Belmont was the first county seat of San Mateo County. After San Francisco County found it too difficult to collect taxes down here, they voted to chop off San Francisco County at Daly City in 1856.

Several towns wanted the county seat, and in the first election, Belmont won. However, 250 votes had come in from a little village out where the Crystal Springs lakes are located, west of Belmont, and only 25 voters lived there.

Another election was called and Redwood City won. Judge Fox, whom the Fox School in Belmont was named for, was the judge deciding the election case.

Angelo had operated a small hotel at the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. His hotel had been in the middle of the street — roads went around it on both sides.

His building was used in 1856 for our county's first courthouse. However, in 1884, the building burned. Rowell built another building on the same spot that later had to be moved 14 feet to clear Ralston Avenue. The Rowell hotel suffered a fire later, and parts of it had to be rebuilt.

Rowell had a beautiful bar that is presently owned by a Belmont artist and stored in her garage. The bar was called "Charley's Place."

Rowell's daughter was well-known as a friendly, social person who drove a horse and buggy wherever she wanted to go.

There is a plaque near the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue describing an early Spanish expedition that came through Belmont before anyone was here. It is located under a large pine tree and can be seen from the street.

Marjorie Mandanis presently owns the Opportunity Shop that used to be the Rowell Hotel. She is a practicing attorney with an office upstairs, while downstairs may be seen all kinds of interesting merchandise and collectibles.

When the big earthquake came in 1906, our city of Belmont had no damage. Down at Redwood City where folks were proud of their courthouse, there was great damage. The courthouse especially received very heavy damage, as shown by pictures taken at the time.

No horses have been stolen in Belmont for a long time. If that happened people would have a hard time finding a tree with a suitable limb to throw a rope over. However, many cars have been stolen in Belmont, and they are seldom found. It seems when cars are stolen the theft makes hardly a ripple, and insurance companies pay for the loss. Everything changes with time.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Hundreds of Belmont people play golf for their diversion and exercise. Some go to Palo Alto and to other courses. It was at the Riverside course at South San Jose where Belmont resident Bob Lee made a hole in one.

This was a rare thing for him to do and we are proud that one of our citizens accomplished the unusual feat. Lee is a contractor, and the day he made the hole in one, he was celebrating the completion of a project.

If Lee had lived in Belmont many years earlier, he might have made the hole in one right here in Belmont. There were two golf courses here before World War II.

One was located north of Ralston Avenue and extended from there to Fairway Drive. Its point of beginning was the club house, now used for the Congregational Church. The eastern boundary was near the tall trees in front of the Ralston Mansion.

This course was nine holes and was used by hundreds of golfers up and down the Peninsula, as well as some from San Francisco.

The other golf course in Belmont was called the "Goat Course," but a more descriptive name might have been the "rattlesnake course." The grass was tall and snakes were in it. That course was located west of Cipriani Boulevard, and north of Ralston Avenue. It too, had only nine holes. Not many people played on that course because of the tall grass and many players lost golf balls.

A nearby course on top of the hill west of San Carlos provided an alternative when the better Belmont course was too occupied. Club Drive provided fairly easy access to the San Carlos course and when you reached the hilltop (now called Hillcrest) the view was worth going up there for. You had a panoramic view of most of the Bay region.

When lunch time came, you could go to the Devonshire Country Club clubhouse. Food was well prepared and tasty. Many golfers ate there. The old golf course is covered with new townhouses, and the spot where the country club building was located, out on the point of land towards the east, is also covered with townhouses.

The large clubhouse burned later and the fire was so hot that people in San Jose and across the Bay saw the flames. During World War II, a dog training center was built where the golf course had been. When it was built, carpenters worked 10 hours a day to get the job completed quickly for the government.

Golfers today join a country club in Burlingame or Menlo Park, but if they want to play on public courses there are Half Moon Bay, Coyote Point, Crystal Springs, or Palo Alto.

Belmonters get their fun and exercise as people did earlier. Our Belmont people keep in good shape.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

When Belmont tried to incorporate in 1926 a lawsuit was filed by Mr. Bourdette stopping it. Accordingly, the city of Belmont didn't become incorporated until 1929.

Mr. Bourdette owned land with a good prune and pear orchard where Carlmont High School is located. The lawsuit was settled three years later.

Belmont's mayor and officials had been elected, and when the lawsuit was filed, they remained in office, but received no pay until 1929. Ray Kelly was city clerk and told about the problem. He remained as city clerk for many years.

Alameda de las Pulgas was a narrow, one track road in 1929, lined with trees on both sides and it was fun to drive my Model T along it.

When Carlmont High School was built, the architect received an award for designing the best designed high school in our state. The landscaping was done by a well known landscape architect, Alan Reid of Palo Alto.

Across from the new high school was a large vacant field. Much of it was planted with hay. Later a large grammar school was built on a portion of the land, and houses built above the school covering a larger portion of the land. Oddstad Homes Co. were the builders.

Much later the City Council voted to straighten the Alameda where it had curved, leaving Ralston Avenue at the area, where the Bank of America is located, crossing a small bridge, then returning to its present location near the mortuary. This was accomplished after World War

II.

There was a movement in Belmont at that time to widen Alameda through Belmont, but it died and nothing was done.

Menlo Park later widened the Alameda de las Pulgas through their city. No doubt in time it will have to be widened its entire length. Traffic continues to increase. However, after the Alameda was straightened at Carlmont the traffic moved better.

Almon Roth built the Carlmont Shopping Center, assisted by his son, Bill Roth. When Almon Roth died, Bill completed the project.

Most of the Carlmont Shopping Center was built where the football field for St. Joseph's Military Academy used to be. The land is level, and it was a good place for people to shop.

The shopping center brought more traffic.

Some people wanted Ralston Avenue widened to four lanes, but that movement died, and three lanes were decided upon. Also many persons had waited for the signal lights to change at Ralston Avenue and the El Camino Real, and a movement was made to have an overpass built. However, following an election, the overpass situation died. Traffic continues to get worse and it appears that something must be done soon.

People like to shop at the Carlmont Shopping Center, and no doubt will continue going there. People like the stores. Carlmont is a good development for Belmont.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In Belmont, between Lyall Street and Carlmont Drive, there is a short street listed on old maps as Lake Road. On the west side of this street stood a very large white house until it burned several years ago. It had been built for Captain Stephen Splivalo.

Captain Splivalo retired from the sea and came to Belmont in the 19th century and built up a large spaghetti business in San Francisco. He was sometimes referred to as the Spaghetti King, for what he manufactured was macaroni and spaghetti.

Finally, he retired to San Jose and turned his Belmont house over to his nephew, Cesar Splivalo. Cesar lived in the house a while, then sold it to some doctors who started the California Sanitarium, specializing in treatment of tuberculosis.

Soon after this Dr. Fairbairne and Mrs. Fairbairne came here from Canada. Dr. Fairbairne was employed at the newly started sanitarium and was soon working there 12 hours a day. He was well-liked, and people came to him from other states, and soon the California Sanitarium was filled with patients. Dr. Fairbairne helped many people recover. Some claimed they might not have recovered if they hadn't been helped by Belmont's very excellent doctor.

Dr. Fairbairne remained at the California Sanitarium for many years. Finally, as he became older, he decided to quit his job and establish his own practice in

Belmont. People liked him and the feeling was mutual.

His office became a Belmont establishment and people went to him with their troubles. They could always depend on a solution when they didn't know which way to turn. He helped to keep Belmont folks on an even keel.

Finally, it all became too strenuous and he decided to retire. Belmont people appreciated Dr. Fairbairne and wanted to show their appreciation. They put together a committee that was asked to arrange for a good Belmont restaurant to handle a party. No one thought the whole town would turn out.

The restaurant chosen was the old Belmont Casino on Old County Road, north of Ralston Avenue near the ice rink. It had a large dining room. Former Mayor Charles H. Cook owned the place and agreed to handle the dinner.

Even though Cook knew that everybody liked Dr. Fairbairne, he didn't realize just how many people Dr. Fairbairne had helped as the town's best known doctor. The whole town turned out and the restaurant was so full that many couldn't get to a table.

People were asked to get up from their tables so others could be served. Dr. Fairbairne made a short speech thanking the Belmont people, and Belmont's mayor then spoke, as did several others, with testimonial talks about the good doctor. Many believed they had not only lost their best doctor, but their best friend.

Belmont history

by Russ Estep



When a Belmont man came into my office recently, appearing agitated, I asked him the reason. He told me that he had just stopped for lunch at a new place to eat in Redwood Shores, and had been charged \$12.50 for a hamburger.

He said he had no idea that a hamburger could cost so much. He said the place was very nice and deluxe, but thought hamburgers shouldn't cost that amount. I tried to amuse and relax him by saying next time you had better stick with McDonald's.

It is true that food prices are high in comparison to what we had to pay 60 or more years ago. In 1926, a loaf of bread could be purchased for seven to 10 cents, which was the same as a gallon of gas. A half-gallon of milk was 21 cents and a new house cost \$2,500. Inflation is with us and may continue.

Prices seem to keep rising. Only 42 years ago when I showed Belmont lots, buyers often complained the price was exorbitant at \$600. Now there are very few

Lack of inflation existed in other lands. In Curacao in the Dutch West Indies I purchased a large stem of bananas for 10 cents and received a haircut up town for 35 cents.

A trip around the world in 1931 cost \$490 and that was first class. The Dollar Line offered those prices for the three month trip. And their ships weren't full.

In Belmont a tire for an average

vacant lots left in Belmont, and prices vary from \$150,000 to \$175,000. People don't complain anymore and builders step forward frequently wanting to buy.

We were able to get good lunches in Belmont fifty years ago for 50 cents, and sometimes all you could eat for only 25 cents. A new Ford car could be purchased for \$490. Of course they had no bumpers, no spare tire, no speedometer, no rear view mirror, no door on the driver's side, you had to climb over, and there was no gasoline gauge.

You just lifted the front seat cushion and stuck a ruler into the tank to see whether you needed gasoline. The gas tank was under the seat.

In 1926, I received 25 cents an hour and lived good on that. Soon however, like everyone else, I found a better job that paid more. As chief radio officer on a ship I was paid \$125 a month, including my board and room on the ship. I had to buy my own uniforms, and also had to do all clerical work.

automobile was priced from \$8 to \$10, and they were guaranteed for 3,000 miles, if ordered from one of the sales catalogs. Of course the roads weren't all paved and the tires often didn't last as long as their guarantee.

Everyone wishes that prices were low now like they used to be, and incomes high as they presently are. Probably that will never happen, so everyone struggles along. But it's good to be in Belmont.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

As Belmont began to grow prominent, people came to live here. One was Keith Davey, owner of Davey Tree Surgery Company.

Davey was a friendly man, was rather stout, and drove a Lincoln Continental. He lived on the south side of Davey Glen Drive. The large apartment complex across the street was built on land he had owned. He lived alone except for his housekeeper.

A few years ago, the Chamber of Commerce dedicated a small grove of redwood trees in Twin Pines Park to Davey, and placed a plaque on a boulder near the trees. The location is west of the mansion and in front of the small house. The plaque is dull and needs polishing. Davey's company was national in their franchise operations.

Davey had always liked trees and preferred to live among them. His home on Davey Glen was surrounded with hundreds of trees. They were already there when he purchased his home. Many trees had been planted earlier.

There was quite a tree-planting spree in 1888, as announced in the Times Gazette. In their article of March 17, 1888, they tell that Mr. P. Swift, a lumber dealer in San Francisco, had completed construction of a house west of the railroad tracks and had planted 2,500 trees.

This might have been the property later owned by Davey. The Swift house cost \$6,000 and had been originally painted white. The Swift family lived in Belmont

for many years, and Ruth and Anita avenues were named for the two Swift daughters.

Others planting trees in Belmont in 1888 were John Lewis, a partner of Swift (2,500 trees), William Swift, bookkeeper for the Swift Company (750 trees), B.F. Ellis, contractor (400 trees), G. C. Ross (250 trees), Mrs. Hall (300 trees), John Sanderson, contractor (500 trees), Springer & Salisbury of the planing mill company (2,500 trees), Mr. Riddle of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company (300 trees), and with trees planted by others, there were 10,000 trees planted in Belmont in 1888, mostly west of El Camino, north of Ralston Avenue.

What a forest it made on Belmont's formerly bare hills. Most of the trees are still growing. With trees planted more residents were quickly attracted to Belmont. Lewis had purchased his 20 acres of land from Mr. Mezes, and later subdivided it on the west side of El Camino Real.

Most residents of Belmont lived near where the Swift family lived, a few lived near the intersection of Ralston Avenue and Old County Road, and a few south of Ralston Avenue on the west side of El Camino Real. The town was small then.

It is probable that when Davey came down the Peninsula looking for a place to settle he was attracted by the many trees where he purchased his house. Some people refer to the location of Davey's former home as a jungle. He enjoyed living in Belmont and he liked the trees.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Editor's note: This is Russ Estep's 300th column published in the *Enquirer-Bulletin*.

Each year the number of persons born in Belmont decreases. Two natives, Bert Johnson and Doris Vannier, are still here. Bert was born in Belmont in 1904. He recalls many things some people today never knew. For instance, Bert has told about coyotes howling at night in Belmont. Not in the far-out areas, but right near El Camino Real.

He was raised just west of El Camino Real, near the San Carlos border. Bert said that coyotes used to come after his parents' chickens. Finally, the chickens left their lower hen house to roost in trees, high above the ground.

Other animals roamed through the Belmont hills, including raccoons. Some are still in Belmont and overturn garbage cans occasionally. One resident on Molitar street used to feed the "coons." He told of half a dozen coming to his place every morning for breakfast.

Deer are sometimes seen in Belmont, and a few years ago one came running south on El Camino Real past my office. Some citizens living in the western part of Belmont often see deer eating their shrubs and chase them away. There are many deer in the San Francisco watershed. People who live on the west side of the Skyline Boulevard tell of problems with deer.

One said he put up a fence to keep them out, but they jumped over. He extended his fence higher, and they still jumped over. Then he placed a very high single wire and that stopped them, although he had left plenty of space

under the wire. They could have jumped between the wires if they wanted to. So he discovered something many of us hadn't known.

Many jackrabbits used to hop through Belmont, and a few years ago one came along El Camino Real by my office. It probably was confused, or lost, and was trying to find its way home.

Before Belmont became so developed, Mrs. Adelia Vannier (Doris' mother) told me she had seen large bands of cattle driven along El Camino Real. She said they appeared wild and the men driving them told her to stay behind a fence so she wouldn't get hooked.

As far as I have determined there has only been one bear in Belmont. That one was won in a convention raffle many years ago and was kept on a chain and raised as a pet. As it grew larger, the chain broke and it appeared like it would attack a Belmont woman. One shot saved her life.

Bears can be dangerous animals. In Alaska, at the Mt. McKinley Hotel, I wanted to go fishing. There was a lake down the hill nearby. The hotel clerk said he would lend me the fishing gear. It started to rain when I was ready to leave. Another tourist stepped forward and accepted the fishing gear and walked to the lake. He immediately caught a large fish and a bear wanted it. The bear clawed him and he had to be flown to the hospital in Anchorage.

I had no further desire to go fishing, and was glad to return to Belmont. Here the wildlife is not so dangerous.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.