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BELMONT

Vol. 8

CARLMONT HISTORY

By

Russel A. EStep

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INDEX

1. Life on the Arguello Rancho in 1795.
2. Belmont's Famous black lady, Haulcer C. Thompson.
3. Illness at the Arguello Rancho.
4. Mexican cowboys worked for the Arguello family.
5. Pedro and the cook's daughter.
6. Pedro went to San Jose Mission.
7. Pedro brings water to the Arguello home.
8. Building a cattle corral from rails.
9. Pedro takes a liking to the cook's daughter.
10. Pedro butchers a hog for meat.
11. Squatters camp on the Arguello land.
12. Sidney Mezes clears titles to the Arguello land
13. California becomes a state in 1850 and Sidney M. Mezes dies in 1884.
14. On January 1, 1851 Angelo completes his hotel in Belmont.
15. Professor Reid opens a school in Belmont Aug. 1, 1885.
16. November 14, 1885 Senator Sharon dies.
17. Many daughters born in Belmont-- few sons.
18. San Carlos Avenue in San Carlos was the Arguello driveway.
19. Cattle hides were sold for \$2.00 each to ship captains.
20. The S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien ship comes to Redwood City.
21. It took all day to drive a surry to San Francisco.
22. The Daylight train passed through Belmont.
23. How some towns received their names.
24. Movies were made in Belmont.
25. There used to be a Dog racing track in Belmont.
26. Trains came to the Peninsula in 1863.
27. Some early houses in Belmont.
28. Only a few brick buildings in Belmont.
29. Bert Johnson was born in Belmont in the early 1900s.
30. The Count Cipriani house was added onto by William C. Ralston.
31. Development of Belmont Country Club Properties.
32. People traveled by horse-drawn vehicles in early days.
33. Some of Belmont's barbers.
34. Those Sequoia gigantea redwoods in Belmont.
35. The Central School and the Safeway store.
36. William C. Ralston comes to the Peninsula.
37. Belmont used to have week-end cabins for San Francisco people.
38. Mr. Hammerson was Belmont's blacksmith.
39. Teamsters drove large wagons along El Camino Real.
40. Some businesses that used to be in Belmont.
41. The Waltermire and Emmett store.
42. Eucalyptus trees along the railroad tracks.
43. In the beginning of Belmont hogs ran loose.
44. Stage rides through Belmont in early days.
45. Home cures for Belmont illnesses in early days.
46. When some early people arrived in Belmont.
47. Horseless carriages pass through Belmont in 1908.
48. Adelia Vannier watched cattle being driven through Belmont.
49. The Janke Picnic Grounds in Belmont.
50. The first Courthouse was in Belmont.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

By Russel Estep

It was Sunday and 18-year-old Pedro Peralta sat on a log by the barn shining his new cowboy boots. He had saved many months to acquire money to purchase them. He felt that he needed high-heeled boots for protection, for if one of his feet should slip through a stirrup he wouldn't get dragged by a horse.

He had been employed by the Arguello family as a cowboy and handyman for two years now. It was the early 1800s. He felt grown up and he could do almost anything the Mexican men did at the 34,200-acre rancho here on the Peninsula.

He wanted to attend Mass but to do that he needed to ride his horse to the mission at Santa Clara, or the one at San Jose. It would be a five-hour ride either way. Just then the cook called that her woodbox was empty and there wasn't but a small amount of wood in the woodpile. He had work to do.

At that time there was no electricity and wood had to be cut with a saw or ax. Pedro was efficient with either. When cutting with an ax he had learned to swing hard and aim to hit the same place each time. That way wood was cut faster, and he needed all the time he could save so as to oil and shine his riding gear.

After filling the wood box in the kitchen he hitched up a team to a light wagon and drove out for more wood. Finding a fallen tree he sawed it into chunks, then split them with the ax. He had learned how to swing the ax and quickly tilt the blade just before it hit the chunk of wood. This caused the wood to split easier and the ax blade didn't stick in the wood.

Taking the wood back to a woodpile near the kitchen he started to leave, when the Mexican cook called, "I'm not feeling good this morning, so it's up to you to fix lunch for the men." Then she went into her room and closed the door.

Pedro unhitched his team, turned them into the corral, then returned to the kitchen. He wasn't a cook, and wished he wasn't the Arguello handyman. It would be several hours until lunch time, so he didn't need to hurry. He didn't like hurrying anyway. He liked the word *manana*, and lived by it as much as possible. Never hurry, was his motto.

But he thought he would get things together, and finding some rice in a can, and potatoes in a box, he began thinking what he would prepare for the men's lunch. He decided that rice and potatoes should be enough, along with some home-baked bread he discovered in a cupboard.

When he cooked the rice it expanded and he found it necessary to grab all the empty pots in the kitchen to catch the surplus.

There were no schools yet in California, so Pedro had no education. He could neither read nor write. At that time he might not have benefited much if he had attended a school.

Later, when Yankees began arriving from the East Coast, he discovered other young men with educations who could earn more in an hour than he did in a month. They knew how to do certain things better than others could. Pedro decided that everyone should become educated and learn a profession or trade. He had neither. The uneducated ones picked prunes.

Without education, other young people became prune pickers. The word went east and soon all Californians were referred to as being "Prune Pickers."

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



Belmont history

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Belmont has had some famous people and one, not publicized, was Mrs. Haulcer C. Thompson, a black lady. She came here many years ago and later established her home in Oakland.

She was poor when she came to Belmont, and left as a millionaire. She started the San Carlos Transfer Company. She purchased a large parcel of land on Old County Road and still owns it and won't sell at any price. It may be worth over a million dollars by now. She purchased it when land was plentiful and cheap immediately after World War II.

Mrs. Thompson raised three children — a daughter and two sons. Her daughter became a nurse and was head of a large nursing staff in a large hospital. All three children attended the University of California. One of the sons grew to manhood, then died. The other son, Art, lives in San Mateo and is a well-liked person.

Mrs. Thompson built up her transfer business and was kept so busy that many nights she slept in her office, since she was too tired to drive home.

Before coming to Belmont she had been the cook for President Herbert Hoover in his Palo Alto home. Her three children played with the Hoover children when they were small.

Mrs. Thompson is 98 years old now, and becoming feeble. Still, she manages to go to town now and then. Her only surviving son,

Art, helps her all he can. Both are retired. Art was in the military during World War II and fortunately wasn't wounded. He returned home all in one piece, and immediately began helping his mother with her transfer business.

The business has been closed out now and the land is leased on a long term to someone else. The rent keeps Mrs. Thompson in groceries and pays for her needs.

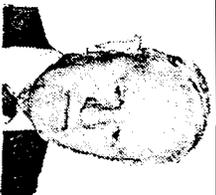
She likes to be active as much as possible and attends her church every Sunday. Since she is 98 years old it may be that her parents or grandparents may have been slaves. She told me that her father was a white man. I never met him.

The Hoover family enjoyed Mrs. Thompson's excellent cooking for almost 30 years. They liked her cooking and also her family and treated them well. The Hoovers had considerable respect for how Mrs. Thompson was raising her three children. All turned out good. Mrs. Thompson still receives Christmas cards from the Hoover boys, and looks forward to Christmas each year.

Her property in Oakland is probably worth about \$400,000. It is a large, roomy house.

She lives by the Golden Rule, treating everyone as she would like to be treated. It has paid off. Everyone who has known her likes her and everyone had been fairly treated by her former company. She was a credit to Belmont, and is missed, now that she has moved away to Oakland. We wish her well.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Medical help was not readily available at the early ranchos in California. People had learned from their parents and grandparents how to treat various illnesses. They relied on them.

When Pedro Peralta, an Arguello cowboy, was 18, the cook's daughter caught poison oak. Her left arm was red and swollen. Pedro felt sympathetic and, besides that, he hoped to get closer to the fat senorita — he liked her. He invited her to the barn when he was milking. The fact that no other girls were around could have influenced his thoughts.

Pedro took a can of axel grease and rubbed it onto her arm. She immediately told him the hurting and itching had stopped.

He held her hand while rubbing the grease into the skin. Looking into her eyes, he thought, "Why, she's beautiful."

She came back several times for further treatments by Pedro which suited him just fine. They liked each other and that suited both she and Pedro.

Later, when the girl contracted a cold-like flu and a fever, Pedro offered his help. "Just place a pan of hot water under the bed and she will get over her fever in no time," he advised the girl's mother, the rancho cook. Soon the fever went down.

Another time a small pimple seemed to be growing on the girl's neck. It had turned dark in color and appeared hard in texture. Pedro examined it and decided it might be a mole or wart. He immediately advised the girl, saying, "I'll help you."

That evening, he brought a thigh bone from a cow that had expired sometime earlier and

told the girl, "Just go out at midnight, look toward the moon, rub this old bone on the wart and say, 'Wart-wart go away, don't come back another day.'"

He explained to the girl, "This old bone came from a 10-year-old cow. That is very important, as my grandfather told me in Mexico." Within a week the mole, or wart, had disappeared. The girl thought Pedro was really somebody. Still, her mother tried to discourage her from seeing Pedro.

Soon afterward, the cook herself became ill. As much as she disliked Pedro, she asked him if he knew what to do for the illness. After thinking about it awhile, he decided the best cure might be something he could obtain at one of the missions. All were 25 miles away so he obtained permission from his foreman, then saddled his sorrel horse.

He rode to the mission at Santa Clara to obtain what he wanted. It was asfetiti. He smiled to himself as he rode home to the rancho. There, he advised the cook to place some of the medicine in a small bag and hang it around her neck.

The cook had never heard of such medicine and held her nose at first, but she recovered quickly. She didn't thank Pedro — she thought he might be playing a joke on her. Even after Pedro had cured her, she didn't think Pedro was good enough for her daughter.

How fortunate we are that we didn't live before the 1900s. There might not always have been someone like Pedro to help us get well. Russ Estep is Belmont's historian.



By Russel Estep

Some newcomers to this area seem surprised to learn that California used to be a part of Mexico. It was under Mexico's rule until 1848 when the war between the States and Mexico occurred.

Before Mexico controlled California, the king of Spain granted several large areas of California to Spanish Grandees. Then Mexico took over and made a number of large land grants here on the Peninsula. The "de las Pulgas" grant of 34,200 acres in 1795 was followed by others north and west of here.

The de las Pulgas grant, however, was the first given for military service. Senor Arguello had been in charge of the San Francisco presidio.

Considerable settling was accomplished by the Mexicans, hoping to head off the Russians who had established a church and a settlement at Fort Ross, north of here. It is long gone, but you can visit the museum and rebuilt Russian Orthodox Church at the site.

Each of the land holders raised livestock — among them they raised thousands. Mexicans cowboys (vaqueros) were employed to control the livestock. Pedro Peralta was one of these.

Another large landholder was the Peralta family, who also had an extensive land grant. But, as far as I can learn, Pedro wasn't related to the wealthy family.

There were apparently stepping stones in the early society and even the Arguello cook believed she was socially above the cowboys — and especially above Pedro, who liked her daughter.

When fandangoes were held, the cook kept a close eye on her young daughter and hoped she wouldn't dance with Pedro. Yet somehow

she usually saw her daughter holding hands with Pedro and swishing her dress when they danced.

There was always someone who could play an instrument of one kind or another and, when none was available, there was always a mouth organ or jew's-harp. Anything to make music.

Life on the ranchos was usually quiet and serene and very restful — that is, if you liked to hear cows bawling throughout the days or horses nickering. Pedro liked it there.

The Arguello home was first at the intersection of what we call San Carlos Avenue and Cordilleras Street. In 1821 their home was moved a block north of San Carlos Avenue, on Cedar Street. You can still see a wide place where the home stood, and one house on the north side of the street was built for the Arguello family. Someone still lives in it.

Concerns of persons living in the early 1800s were most likely similar to ours of today. Yet their surroundings were so different to what we have today. Pedro's thoughts of the cook's daughter were probably what any modern youth would have.

Their living conditions were considerably different. They had no telephones, telegraph, automobiles, TV, electricity, radio, trains, buses, motors, gasoline engines, paved roads, sidewalks, and hundreds of other things we in Belmont and San Carlos think we couldn't be without.

Yet, if Pedro and the cook's daughter lived today you wouldn't find them radically different from our modern youths. Things change. People do not.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

The men at the 34,200 acre Arguello land grant ranch had been too busy to plant winter wheat in the fall. It was February now and the foreman started two of the cowboys plowing so oats and barley could be planted. The horses had to have hay if they were to work. Of course there would be volunteer hay, but it never had the strength of the planted crops.

The cowboys had not been making much progress after plowing for a week. The early plows only dug into the earth about six inches and the furrows were usually eight inches wide. The foreman wanted Pedro Peralta to help with the plowing. He was 18 now. He had never handled a plow.

Hitching up his team, he immediately noticed the cowboys walked directly behind the plow where walking was difficult, in the furrows. He decided to try something else.

He found that he didn't enjoy plowing, but he did enjoy the odor of the newly turned soil. He stopped his team regularly to let them rest, and the rest period was usually under one of the large oak trees that were interspersed throughout the 40 acre field.

After plowing for a few hours, he decided to try something different. He stepped out of the furrow, to the left side, and found that he could guide the plow by tilting it when needed. He held the left plow handle in his right hand and found that he could guide the plow by tilting it slightly one way or the other. He took hold of the right line with his right hand, and crossed his left arm across the left line. By raising or lowering his left arm he found that he could easily guide his team. And he could walk on the unplowed smooth ground beside the furrow.

The cook's daughter had been watching and

called to him that she was proud of him.

By evening of his first day he wasn't really tired, while the cowboys who had been doing the same work were exhausted.

Finally the plowing was done and Pedro helped with the planting. He learned quickly to carry the half-filled sack of seed grain on his side and toss out seed with his right hand and arm. He helped the cowboys harrow in the seed and when it had sprouted the foreman told the men he believed it would be a good crop.

The Arguello family had purchased one of the very early hay balers, which was brought down the Bay from San Francisco. The machine would be powered by a horse which must be hitched to a long pole and he would walk around and around and this action would make the hay into bales.

Pedro was assigned to digging the loose hay out from the stack near the baler, and placing it on the platform.

While seeing him work, the cook's daughter came to him that evening and told him she was pleased to see him "working on so modern a baling machine." Pedro wanted to thump his chest like a proud ape, but only acknowledged her greeting with a "thank you, senorita." Then he told her "the machine is the newest and best in California and we are lucky to have it here, so we don't need to pitch loose hay into the barns."

The year was 1812 and Pedro thought everything was very modern and probably never could be improved. He decided that he preferred ranching to farming. Farmers had to work hard preparing for their crops, while ranchers rode horses and sat while working.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Most Belmont residents aren't aware of it, but one descendant on the maternal side of the Arguello family lived in Belmont on Harbor Boulevard until only a few years ago. I met him and found him to be gentlemanly, a large man and friendly. We had a good visit about his family and early times in Belmont. I learned a lot.

At one time in the early 1800s, the family cook needed many items for her kitchen. Since Pedro, the cowboy handyman, was available, she sent him to Mission San Jose to get what she needed.

The Arguellos had a surry and Pedro hitched a team to it. The 25-mile drive to Mission San Jose would require at least five hours, so he wouldn't be returning until late evening. He was to bring back salt, sugar, baking powder and some leather for shoe soles.

Just as he was leaving, she called to him to get pepper.

The Arguello family had a productive vegetable garden which Pedro was responsible for. He hoed and cultivated it when needed. The virgin soil was rich and the garden produced enough for the kitchen and enough to feed the hired hands.

When going to Mission San Jose, Pedro was glad that the family had a wagon with genuine wheels. Some early settlers had wagons with homemade wagon wheels. They sawed logs from trees and peeled the bark, bored a hole in the center and put their wagons together just as some of their ancestors in Mexico had done.

Wagon wheels as we know them have been around a long time. I saw a chariot wheel in the British museum which the guide said was more than 2,000 years old. It had been made exactly as those wheels we are familiar with and it had an iron tire around it. However, the iron tire was well worn, made very crudely, but was still around the wooden spokes.

Its size was approximately 3 feet in diameter — perhaps 2 or 3 inches more.

Pedro drove his team along the single-track road and kept the team trotting much of the way. He knew there would be chores to do upon his return.

Arriving at the mission he purchased what was needed, paid in pesos and started back home.

The missions usually carried much needed items not available anywhere else. The fathers had things brought by boat down the Bay when ships arrived from the Mexican coast at San Francisco, though they didn't arrive often.

As Pedro and the team started for home, they had to ford Guadalupe Creek, for there was no bridge in those early years.

Soon after crossing the creek Pedro noticed the gray horse he called Jose starting to limp. Stopping the wagon, he lifted its foot only to find it had lost a shoe in the adobe mud at the creek.

Walking back away he looked carefully for the lost shoe but couldn't see it in the soft mud at the bottom of the creek. He returned to the wagon and drove on. He knew that he would have to make a new horseshoe for the horse. He wished there was a blacksmith somewhere, but there was none yet at the Arguello rancho.

The next morning he built a fire, kept it going with portable bellows so it would become very hot, then heated a strip of iron for the shoe. He hammered it out, shaped it, then nailed it onto Jose's foot after smoothing the hoof with a rasp.

The cook's daughter came out to watch. When he finished she smiled and said, "Pedro, I'm proud of you." Then she ran back to the kitchen.

Pedro could hardly work the rest of the day. He felt so happy.

Russel Estep is Belmont's city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

By Russel Estep

When the Arguellos owned their 34,200-acre land grant here it sometimes became hot in the summertime just as it does now. There was no electricity, and freezers as we know them weren't invented yet.

There was no running water at the rancho unless someone ran to the creek to get it. The little creek flowed just south of what we call San Carlos Avenue, and the Arguellos lived a block north on Cedar Street (as we call it now) San Carlos Avenue was their driveway to the El Camino Real.

On one very hot and humid day, the cook called to Pedro to come see what the weather had done to butter she had churned. What he saw was very liquid. He offered to help.

Getting some string, he lowered a bucket down into the new well the rancho hands had just dug and placed butter in the pail. It worked for two weeks until the next hot spell came. Then one afternoon the cook called wildly to Pedro. It seemed a jack rabbit had fallen into the well and was in the bucket eating butter.

Pedro knew he would have to figure another way to keep things cool. Going to the barn he soon found some rail fence pieces and chopped them into lengths of about five feet. He cut shorter ones about 18 inches in length and then located some square nails to make a frame. It was rough but no lumber or tools were available.

He nailed cloth around the frame, leaving a space of about two feet for a door opening. The cloth came from an old saddle blanket. Then he made a container for water of about the size of the frame and he placed the container on top and stood back to admire his work. The cook's daughter had come to the barn to gather eggs and asked what he had built. He told her it was a water cooler and maybe the first in all of Mexico. Then she helped him carry the cooler to the house porch.

He drew water from the well with the well bucket and filled the box at the top of his in-

vention. He loosened the half-inch wooden pegs he had fitted into the holes he bored near the bottom edge of the wooden box, so water would drip down onto the cloth.

The cook placed some butter in the contraption and, lo and behold, she was pleased the next morning when she found the butter not melted. However, she didn't even compliment Pedro. She only ordered him to go out to the woodpile and chop her some wood. The woodbox was empty.

At their former house location at the corner of Cordilleras street and San Carlos Avenue there were flowers growing around the house. At the new location not many had yet grown. Mrs. Arguello asked that Pedro water them. He pulled a bucket of water from the new well and poured it onto the plants. Then he returned again and again with more water until everything had been watered. He decided there must be an easier way than carrying the water.

There was a large live spring on the west side of the Alameda de las Pulgas south of San Carlos Avenue where plenty of water would be available. He diverted the flow over northward so it flowed into the little creek. He wished there would be pipe available but there was none.

One cowboy laughingly told him he had heard about someone down in Mexico raising hollow trees — trees "without a heart." They should make good water pipes, he said. But Pedro didn't laugh.

Since he had no sawed boards for a flume, he dammed up the creek to create a flow over its side, and a cowboy helped him dig a small ditch to the new house location. Mrs. Arguello could water her garden and Pedro wouldn't have to carry the water.

The cook's daughter told him she thought he was wonderful. He went out to the barn thinking she might be "all right too." She had some sense.

Russ Estep is Belmont's city historian.

A NEW EDITOR MADE CHANGES IN THIS. I NEVER SAID THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF COWBOYS. I SAID THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF CATTLE AND TEN COWBOYS. I NEVER SAID THE MEN HAULED TEN TREES, TWO FEET IN DIAMETER FROM WOODSIDE TO SAN CARLOS. I SAID THEY HAULED RAILS. ETC.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

By Russel Estep

The fall season was approaching and the Arguello cattle had been multiplying. Thousands upon thousands of the *vaqueros* were kept busy with the huge task of branding the cattle.

One morning, the foreman of the group called all of the men together. "Get some axes," he said, instructing the group that rails needed to be split. The men would have to go to Woodside — on horseback — to chop the trees that would eventually be split into rails.

Pedro, one of the *vaqueros*, was among those instructed to go. Though rail-splitting was not one of his favorite tasks, he realized that a larger corral needed to be built. He would help.

Saddling their horses, each man took an ax over his shoulder. Two had to carry cross-cut saws.

At Woodside, the foreman told the men not to cut the smaller trees (large trees would be harder to carry home). Two feet in diameter was the perfect size to haul back, the foreman explained.

Soon the men had cut six trees and began cutting off the limbs. That finished, the men started cutting the fallen trees into 10-foot-long pieces. With nothing else available with which to measure, the men used their feet, counting off 10 steps and cutting. Being a tall man, the foreman offered to do the stepping. With only one man doing the stepping, it was reasoned, the rails would all be approximately the same length.

Next came the splitting of the logs. They had no metal wedges — only their axes. Pedro

cut a small tree about 8 inches in diameter and burned a hole in it. Then he fitted a small branch in the hole for a handle. Years later, in America, it would have been called a maul.

The men drove their axes into the logs, while one man hit the butt of the ax with the maul. It was hard work, but redwood splits easily, and by the time that night arrived, the men had split all the logs.

The foreman told one man to hitch up the team to a wagon. He also told Pedro to help load and unload fence rails. When they brought them to the barn, they found that they indeed had enough rails to build a larger corral.

The rails were laid end-to-end, with each end interlaced to hold the fence up. The fence would be a zig-zag and therefore stand upright. One *vaquero* called it a "worm fence." (Later, Americans would use this expression as well.)

Now that they had the corral built, the *vaqueros* began rounding up the calves that had yet to be branded. Pedro enjoyed this work. He could rope calves by their front or back feet almost every time he threw his rope.

Other *vaqueros* kept the small fire going; another brought the branding iron; yet another branded the animals.

In only a few minutes, the cook called again to say that the wood was green and that her fire was going out. Hurriedly, Pedro gathered an armful of dry wood from the barn area and went to the kitchen and filled the wooden box.

He secretly hoped that there might someday be a better way to keep a kitchen stove hot — without wood. In the early 1800s, though, their way was the modern way.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The following is Mr. Estep's account of how life may have been lived by 19th-century Peninsulans

By Russel Estep

In the early 1800's there wasn't much demand for the beef cattle Arguello's raised. Ships from the East Coast called now and then over at the coast, and in San Francisco, but there weren't many people yet.

The ships' captains offered two dollars a head for cattle which the crews then skinned and loaded the hides onto the sailing ships. The ships took the hides to the East Coast for show leather. The Arguello *vaqueros* occasionally drove fat cattle to San Francisco and sold them to the Missions. Likewise, some of the cattle were driven to San Jose and Santa Clara. Yet those Missions also raised cattle and offered very little for them.

Pedro and the other *vaqueros* drove to them. Not much thought was given to upgrade their livestock. Spotted cattle roamed the Peninsula. However, when the Arguellos had an especially good bull, the San Jose Mission was usually interested in obtaining it.

When the Yankees came to California much later during the Gold Rush period, the rancho owners began to find a ready market. Still, the Arguello herd kept increasing with cows and bulls running freely and mixing with other owners' cattle. More help was needed to care for the great herd. Another *vaquero* had to be hired.

The Arguello foreman couldn't immediately find a *vaquero*.

He hired a young Mexican who was about Pedro's age. The boy was named Manuel

Ortega. He claimed that he could ride a horse and would work for the ten dollars a month that the foreman had offered. The money was to be paid at the end of each month in *pesos*. The amount might have seemed small, but there wasn't anyplace where the *vaqueros* could spend their pay.

The youth had black hair—as did Pedro. He was about five feet, six inches in height, had a tan skin, and immediately had an eye out for the cook's daughter. He offered to bring in wood for the cook when the woodbox became empty, so that he could have an opportunity to see and visit with the daughter, Gloria. Pedro was jealous.

The two instantly became enemies. The cook's daughter soon began playing Manuel against Pedro. She liked the attention both gave her. Trouble appeared to be brewing.

One morning, Pedro awoke and decided that he had had enough. He must cause Manuel to slow down. Pedro woke up before the other *vaqueros* and collected some thorns from Senora Arguello's rose bushes. These he stuck into the bottom of Manuel's saddle blanket.

After breakfast, the *vaqueros* all mounted their horses, but Manuel didn't stay mounted for long. His horse began to buck, and he was thrown. Pedro was glad that the cook's daughter didn't come running out to give sympathy to Manuel.

The foreman called, "Let's get going. We have work to do. Pedro, you stay here. You have fences to mend. Now go to it." And the other men rode out to their assignments. Another day had started.

Russel Estep is a Belmont city historian



carlmont history

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The following is Mr. Estep's account of how life may have been lived by 19th-century Peninsulans.

By Russel Estep

On this sunny August morning, a deer hung from the low limb of a tree near the barn. Pedro had shot it the night before as the cook had claimed that she needed more meat. She also told Pedro that some of the *vaqueros* were asking for bacon for their breakfasts. She wanted him to bring her some. With this, Pedro saddled his horse and rode out from the barn.

He didn't need to go far. The Arguello family not only raised cattle, but their hogs ran loose over the large 34,200 acre land grant, and hogs made their own living. They didn't even need to be slopped, like Americans did years later at their homesteads.

Pedro soon came across a bunch of the Arguello hogs rooting beneath a large oak tree. Raising his flint-lock rifle, he brought down a large porker. Dismounting, he cleaned it, then loaded it onto his horse with difficulty. His horse remained nervous from the gunshot, and just wouldn't stand still.

Finally, he tied the horse to a small tree. Then, with difficulty, he was finally able to get the carcas up onto his saddle. Then he walked home, leading his horse. Reaching the barn, he unloaded the animal and placed a stick across its open stomach and then threw a rope across a tree limb and left the meat there to cool during the night.

The Arguellos not only raised the meat that they needed, but had several dozen chickens that produced eggs for the *rancho* hands. This,

along with their large vegetable garden, supplied almost all of their table needs. Of course, they had to purchase salt, baking powder, pepper, and sole leather for their shoes from missions at San Jose or Santa Clara. The *vaqueros* ate well and word went out that the Arguello place was a "good place to work."

The day after the men brought fence rails from Woodside, they were busy constructing the extension on their large cattle corral. Pedro cut up and salted down the meat from the butchering.

Manuel stepped forward while pedro was cutting up the meat and offered to take some kto the jcook, but Pedro told him that it wasn't ready. He sensed why Manuel made the offer. he only hoped to get closer to the cook's daughter. Soon after this, the foreman called to Manuel to help Pedro during the day while Pedro cut up and salted the meat.

Seeing an opportunity, Pedro ordered Manuel to grab a shovel and dig a few hole for the outhouse. Pedro was thoughtful. The cook's daughter seemed to be on his mind night and day. Of course, she was the only girl who was available and his age. Pedro wished he could somehow sidetrack Manuel to another girl.

A passing *vaquero* paused to visit a moment with pedro and told him that another of the large *ranchos* was paying thei *vaqueros* 11 dollara a month (in *pesos*) Immediately, Pedro passed the word to manuel, thinking he might move on, but Manuel said he liked it where he was and didn't intend to leave. Arguellos paid ten dollars and board.

Mr. Estep is a Belmont city historian



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The following is Mr. Estep's account of how life may have been lived by 19th century Peninsulans.

By Russel Estep

At the large Arguello land grant the fall season was approaching and their apples and grapes were ripening. The cook asked Pedro to pick a bucketful of apples and to bring her some grapes. Then she asked him to pick more grapes and place them on something flat so that the sun could dry them, turning them into raisins. She would make applesauce with the apples.

Manuel had ridden out with the other *vaqueros* to locate some of the missing cows. That evening, when the men returned, they reported to the foreman that they had found three families camped on their land.

The year was 1821 and the Spanish rule had ended and some of the people had come to the East Coast thinking that they would have all of California for settling.

The foreman explained to each family that the land wasn't theirs; that they were on private land and that they must move on. When he returned a week later, they were still there, and he even found others camping nearby.

An argument followed and the foreman

drew his flintlock gun to enforce the demand. Then he called on the other squatters and ordered them to move.

The cook's daughter heard about the trouble and begged Pedro to stay home.

This problem continued for many years. The elder Arguello had died, and his son continued operating the large, but declining *rancho*, with the cooperation of his mother.

During this time ranch life continued as it had been. On Saturday nights the Arguellos bathed in a washtub in the middle of the living room, after the cook heated water on the wood-burning stove.

The cowboys bathed in the nearby creek that used to flow alongside what we now call San Carlos Avenue. The water was cold and during the winters they had to hurry to dry off and dress again.

Two new sawmills were operating at Woodside, and Pedro bought lumber and built a one-room cabin near the barn. He and Gloria lived in it for several years until her mother died. Then she became the *rancho* cook and she and Pedro moved into the *rancho* house.

You may still see it about a block north of San Carlos Avenue on the north side of Cedar Street, where the street is wide and curves.

Russel Estep is a Belmont city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The following is Mr. Estep's account of how life may have been lived by 19th century Peninsulans.

1821 came and the Spanish rule in California ended and Mexico took over. Now there were disputes as to the legitimacy of the land grants. One evening when Pedro returned from riding after the Arguello cattle he reported that he found three families who seemed to have settled on some of the *rancho* land. During the following months many more Yankees appeared. The foreman rode out to see for himself. Upon his return he told Senor Arguello about what he had seen. Mr. Arguello immediately drove to San Francisco to Mission Dolores to see what might be done. The fathers advised him not to cause trouble, but to try to be kindly in asking the squatters to move.

As days and weeks passed, more and more settlers set up small ranches on the 34,200-acre Rancho de las Pulgas. Although deer were plentiful, the *vaqueros* began noticing beef that had been butchered by someone. Their large herd began declining.

Regardless of requests for the settlers to move, most refused, claiming they had a right to settle. They had heard that California was open for settlers, and they had not heard that their claims were legally disputed.

As time went by and Mr. Arguello passed away, Mrs. Arguello hired an attorney named Sidney Mezes to help straighten out the title to her *rancho*. Mr. Mezes had an office in San Francisco. He succeeded in clearing the titles and in 1850 on Sept. 9, California became a state. The war with Mexico had ended and things began to become settled down.

Pedro had grown up and had married the cook's daughter at the mission at San Jose. After the marriage they couldn't remain at the

rancho house, so Pedro built a small one-room house near the barn. Lumber had become available with the opening of several small mills at Woodside.

Pedro and the cook's daughter raised two children, a boy and a girl. The cook died about 1831 and Gloria, the daughter, took her place as cook for the household and the hired help.

Inflation had set in and the *vaqueros* had to be paid \$12 a month instead of the \$10 that they had originally received. They had more pesos to carry around, but not as many places in which to spend it.

When Mr. Mezes presented his bill for straightening out the *rancho* titles, Mrs. Arguello was shocked. His demand was for approximately 15 percent of the 34,200 acres. He chose Belmont, Redwood City and San Carlos and built his home in Belmont. It burned only a few years ago up back of Notre Dame college.

With completion of the continental railroad in 1863, more and more settlers came to California. Some were looking for gold, others for land.

Mr. Mezes sold land at high prices and carried loans at high interest.

A descendent of the Arguello family on the maternal side lived in Belmont on Harbor Boulevard and used to stop by my office for chats. I found the man to be intelligent, interesting and I enjoyed his visits.

All the Arguello land is gone. Where we drive our cars was formerly cowboy country. Stop a moment sometime when you aren't in a hurry and imagine how the Peninsula used to be many, many years ago. At first only one house. The country was open country.

Mr. Estep is a Belmont city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Seventy years ago when I began saving clippings about this Peninsula no thought given to putting any of them to use. I only thought they were interesting and I cut them out because I liked them. Then I started going to the courthouse, title companies, and libraries doing research about Belmont and San Carlos. The following is from some of my old records. One article from the *Redwood City Democrat* tells that the steeple was finished on the Church of the Good Shepherd, and the date of the item was March 31, 1883. It's still there, pointing to the sky just as it was when finished so many years ago.

Another old item dated Oct. 18, 1883 states that Hamilton Rowell purchased a vacant lot across from the Emmett and O'Neil Store on Old County Road. Another item about the lot states that Mr. Rowell had started building a hotel there. This was Oct. 20, 1883. Marge Mandanas operates a store on the corner now.

An item dated Jan. 27, 1883 tells us that Mr. Janke had completed a dance hall at Belmont Park. (Now Twin Pines Park)

An item in the T&G paper dated Nov. 1, 1884 states that Mr. Rowell had just completed building a second floor on his hotel and had it ready for occupancy.

A longer item dated Dec. 13, 1884 tells of the death of Sidney M. Mezes, the attorney who cleared land titles for Mrs.

Arguello after California became a state. Our statehood began Sept. 9, 1850.

The old item states that Mr. Mezes came here from Puerto Rico and that he was 58 years of age. The item states that for the last 30 years he made his home in Belmont. he left a wife and two children. His funeral took place at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Redwood City with Rev. Mr. Brewer officiating.

On Dec. 9, 1884, the *Alta California* merely reported the death of Mr. Mezes and said he was a large landowner. In the 1924 issue of "History of the San Francisco Bay Region" by Bailey Millard, he merely states that Mezes died in 1884.

The *Times Gazette* of Dec. 13, 1884, lists the death but does not give any cause.

The *San Francisco Bulletin* of Dec. 8, 1884 states that an accidentally administered overdose of chloral hydrate caused Mezes' death.

Also the sewer from Reid's school to tide water has just been completed. The date was Feb. 18, 1882, according to the item in the *Redwood City Democrat*.

March 17, 1892. Services at the Episcopal Church at Belmont will be held every Sunday at 3 p.m., according to the *Redwood City Democrat*.

It appears that a century ago things in Belmont were much as we find them now.

Mr. Estep is a Belmont city historian.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

By Russel Estep

After California became a state on Sept. 9, 1850, many people from the eastern part of the United States flocked to the west. Many intended to find land and settle on the Arguello property. It took awhile for Sidney M. Mezes to clear the Arguello titles. Some people needed a place to stay temporarily. Charles Angelo built the first hotel here in Belmont.

An old item dated Jan. 1, 1851 in the *Daily Pacific News* states that Angelo had completed his hotel and it was ready for guests. It was located in the middle of the road to the coast (Ralston Avenue) and Old Country Road. (Then called El Camino Real.)

Mr. Angelo's advertisement stated that there was a good view of Mount Diablo and the bay from his hotel, and that game, poultry, eggs and milk would be served in his dining room. He did very well with the project and accommodated many guests.

The little hotel burned later after having been moved southward to the side of the road. It was then replaced with the present building which is now the Opportunity Shop.

People continued coming to the Peninsula and word about the good climate soon spread eastward. People came for the good climate and accessibility to San Francisco which was a growing seaport.

The trains came in 1863 and an old item in the *San Mateo County Gazette* dated Feb. 8, 1873 tells that the train station had burned and was being replaced with a new depot. It was to be 30 by 55 feet and would be on the west side of the tracks. It was to be partitioned off for a ladies parlor.

An item in the *Gazette* dated April 5, 1873 states that the new depot was first-class.

Apparently the new railroad had competition, for an item in the *Gazette* dated May 17, 1873 tells that the steamer MARS had brought a crowd to Belmont for a picnic at the Janke Picnic Ground (Twin Pines Park.) The item states that the railroad was too independent to furnish cars on Sunday so the people had to come by boat down the bay.

Another item tells us that another group came to the Janke Picnic Grounds from San Jose the same day. Apparently the Park was large enough to accommodate the two large groups.

Note: Many people in Belmont think what you see is what you get at the park. But there is a larger picnic ground with tables and barbecues, across a bridge beyond what is so easily observable.)

With the arrival of more settlers a demand appeared that a stage line was needed between Belmont and the coast. Accordingly, Mr. Janke and Carstens began such a stage line. The old article in the *Gazette* is date Feb. 20, 1875, and states that they had purchased two stage coaches — one to leave each end of the route daily. They would travel by the shortest way and hoped to make the run in about five hours.

Another article from the same paper on April 3, 1875 tells that their stages were then ready to roll.

Progress was coming to Belmont. Trains in 1863 and now stages to the coast in 1875. Some people wondered if there would someday be cable cars on the coast route. But they never came.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

By Russel Estep

An old item in the *Times Gazette* dated Aug. 1, 1885 tells that Professor W. T. Reid would open a private school in the house formerly occupied by Mrs. Ralston. She had moved to Berkeley, and the house was vacant. Professor Reid was said to have been President of the State University, and before that he had been Master's Assistant and Principal of the Boy's High School in San Francisco.

Local Belmont residents must have worried some because they thought that the public school might lose students. However an item from the same newspaper states that the public school on the Old Country Road, south of Ralston Avenue, would open Aug. 8, 1885. It was a two-story building on the east side of Old Country Road. There are still people living in Belmont who attended school there several years later. They are Doris Vannier and Bert Johnson.

As for the area where the Reid School was first opened, it was located back of the football field where the Carlmont Shopping Center is now located. Mr. Sharon had allowed Mrs. Ralston to use the building after he took over the Ralston Estate.

There weren't many students for a school in Belmont, but at that time San Carlos was considered a part of the school district and

some students came from San Carlos to attend the public school, and students from many outside places came to attend the Reid Private School.

The first Reid School building burned later and new buildings were constructed across Alameda de las Pulgas. In fact the Alameda formerly curved and left Ralston Avenue where the Bank of America is located, and returned to its present location near Carlmont Drive across from the Bell Market.

The Reid School property was sold to Archbishop Hana in 1918 and it became St. Joseph Military Academy. It was a private school for boys.

Then in 1952 the property was taken over by the Sisters of Mercy and renamed the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Later it became a school for both boys and girls.

In 1956 Mr. Almon Roth took over the football field and made it into a shopping center which it remains today.

The earlier public school on Old Country Road became too small as Belmont grew. A new school to be known as Central School was constructed on Emmett Street, and later moved to Middle Road, as students increased. A Safeway store occupies the old school site.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

Two of Belmont's most prominent residents only lived a comparatively short time in Belmont. Count Leonetto Cirpiani purchased his land here in 1854 and sold his property to William C. Ralston in 1864. Mr. Ralston only lived here a short time and died in 1875.

Sen. Sharon took over the same property upon Ralston's death. The old *Times Gazette* dated Nov. 14, 1885 tells of Sharon's death. The item further states that Sharon's diary had been moved to the area of Burlingame. Sharon owned 1,000 acres there.

Each of these men profited by being in Belmont, and it is an interesting thought that none lived here long. Sen. Sharon was a very prominent man, and had been a director in the Comstock Mine at Virginia City, Nev.

In those years the region of Belmont and San Carlos was all considered to be Belmont. An old item dated 1899 tells of the death of Sen. Phelps who was killed by two boys on a bicycle running into him. He lived just north of Holly Street across the tracks.

There weren't so many people here and everyone was important in the news. Items tell of wedding and even mention when Judge Head commenced building a residence on a lot he had purchased from Mr. Phelps.

The large home of Sidney M. Mezes was destroyed by fire July 10, 1886, according to an item dated July 10, 1886 in the *Times Gazette*.

An item dated June 10, 1886 states that David Bollinger had moved to San Jose. He was one of the original Bollinger who had settled west of Belmont where the lakes are.

From the *Times-Gazette* of Aug. 7, 1886 we learn that Mr. Jefferys, former pastor of the Belmont church, paid a visit to Belmont, and that he was preaching in the San Gabriel Mission.

Another item dated Dec. 25, 1880 announces the wedding of Sharon's youngest daughter, Flora, to Sir Thomas George Fermor Hesketh.

And on Oct. 15, 1880 James Van Court of Belmont had a fine lot of choice canaries for sale.

The *Times Gazette* of June 12, 1880 states that Mr. Alfred W. Emmett had been appointed postmaster to replace Charles Janke, who had resigned.

A further item in the *Times Gazette* tells of the death of Carl August Janke, father of Charles F. and August Janke. The item is dated Sept. 3, 1881. (He was an ancestor of Doris Vannier who still resides in Belmont.)

The *San Mateo County Journal* dated March 16, 1882, tells us that one quart of milk delivered (daily) would be \$2.50 per month.

All milk and other prices were much lower than they are now. Thomas Reed, the dairyman, advertised that if anyone wanted a gallon milk it would cost them 30 cents. His wagon started out every morning at 5 a.m. The price would be for each delivery.

While we receive milk from grocery stores in cardboard cartons, it is still delivered in London in glass milk bottles. But not with horse drawn wagons. It is delivered in milk trucks. They are modern now.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

We realize how fortunate we are in living now instead of a century ago when we read about things then. For instance, when Mr. Ralston had Water Dog Lake dam constructed he had to hire many men. He didn't have our modern machinery available. The work had to be done by hand with shovels and wheelbarrows. An old item in the *San Mateo Gazette* dated May 2, 1874 states, "On William C. Ralston's dam, two miles beyond San Mateo, there are 70 white men and 80 Chinese at work. The dam is an earth-fill dam and the lake above it will contain 50 million gallons of water. The water that is stored there is to be used at the Ralston residence, and for irrigation of the crops."

The old dam is still there and apparently safe. The city of Belmont leases the lake and dam for \$1.00 per year for Belmont recreational purposes. The property now belongs to Notre Dame.

You can see the lake and dam by walking along a trail which turns off Carlmont Drive just past the Jewish Center buildings.

Men worked very hard a century ago. Many thought they would be benefitted by drink. Accordingly saloons were plentiful. An old item in the *Gazette* dated February 3, 1882, states that the Grand Saloon was completed and ready to accommodate thirsty persons.

They advertised that they had the best drinkables and smokables available. The article commented that some Japanese who were guests of Mr. Ralston, would only take a glass of water.

The saloon had changed hands by August, and a Mr. Kreiss owned it.

The Grand Saloon building may still be seen. It is a small concrete building immediately adjacent to the pink Country Store on Old County Road, on the north side. It presently belongs to the owners of the store who use it for storage.

Old records tell that mostly girls were born in Belmont a century ago. There was Ralston's daughter born April 4, 1872.

To the wife of A.P. Johnson, a daughter, May 31, 1873.

To the wife of L.W. Blackwell, a daughter, July 26, 1873.

To the wife of Charles Janke, Sept. 25, 1873, a daughter.

To the wife of Joseph Sever, a daughter, Oct. 2, 1873.

To the wife of David Barre, March 18, 1874, a daughter.

To the wife of Henry Carstens, Sept. 22, 1874, a daughter.

To the wife of A. Hammerson, December
See Page 14

12, 1874, a daughter.

To the wife of F. Robinson, April 21st, 1874, a daughter.

To the wife of James McManus, January 27, 1875, a daughter.

To the wife of J. O'Neill, twin daughters, June 25, 1884.

There seems to have been an abundance of girl babies a century ago in Belmont. Did the climate cause this effect? Their food? Or what?

One man had started raising canary birds but wasn't successful. Maybe they were all females and maybe he had no roosters? Or what do you call a male canary?

Mr. Estep is a Belmont city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In 1807 one of the Arguello cowboys had an accident. He had been chasing a wild cow and his horse stepped into a gopher hole. The cowboy, Manuel Soberanas, landed on his head on a rock. The foreman said it was the only rock in the neighborhood. The men took Manuel to the house and tried to nurse his wound, but they didn't know what to do. Manuel's skull had apparently been crushed and Manuel soon expired.

No lumber was yet available for a coffin. The foreman had his men wrap the body in a cowhide and they buried him near the barn.

The cowboy hadn't been particularly religious so the foreman didn't bother to have a priest come from Mission Dolores which would have taken a day.

As late as the early 1930s a descendant of the Soberanas family was living in Jolon, near King City. Danny was a friend of mine.

In the early 1900's the Arguello family's driveway to the El Camino Real was what we call San Carlos Avenue. First the driveway was named for a tree, and you can still see that name in the sidewalk near Prospect Street. Later it was changed to San Carlos Avenue.

The Alameda de las Pulgas carries its name through several other towns, but in San Carlos, it becomes San Carlos Avenue for a few blocks, until it gets to the Belmont border,

where it is Alameda de las Pulgas once more. (Avenue of the Fleas).

Probably within the United States there isn't another street with such a name.

The cowboys had no flashlights, or kerosene lanterns. They tried to complete their chore before it became too dark to see. Each morning the group arose when the rooster crowed. Usually just at daylight. Their hours were dawn to dusk. All for \$1.00 per day.

The foreman needed one more cowboy but there were no newspapers yet on the Peninsula, and he had to wait until word spread around. The only way he could spread the word was by word of mouth. When people occasionally stopped overnight he always made it a point to tell them of his need. Even San Francisco didn't have a newspaper as early as 1807. However, ships occasionally brought papers from the east coast which were greatly in demand, according to old reports.

People now have running water, both hot and cold, electricity and paved roads, and automobiles. Yet many have mountain cabins where they go occasionally just to smell the fresh air, and to watch flames in their fireplaces. They cook on wood burning stoves. They often sit and dream how nice it is to live like the early people.

Mr. Estep is a Belmont city historian.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The las Pulgas Rancho, which contained Belmont and San Carlos, was the largest land grant on this Peninsula. King Carlos of Spain granted it to the Arguello family in 1795 for the San Francisco presidio. It was the first such grant. His grant contained approximately 34,200 acres.

According to Title Company records later Spanish land grants were Canada de Ramundo, Corte Madera, Buri Buri, San Pedro, Feliz, Palomares, Corral de Tierra, and Miramontes. There were several others south along the coast.

The Buri Buri Rancho was second largest and was located where we find San Bruno. Each Rancho raised wild cattle and employed Mexican vaqueros to control their herds. Old drawings show the vaqueros to be wearing hats with wide flat brims, with tassles hanging down from the edges. Their spurs had large rowels. Their chaps were leather, and their saddles were square-cut and usually had two cinches. Usually the drawings show the outfit having a martingale.

Apparently these large rancho owners didn't make much from early herds. There was no market except ship captains calling at Half Moon Bay. The captains usually paid \$2 per hide and didn't buy the meat. The hides were taken to the East Coast for shoe leather. Coyotes and other animals must have become fat on leftovers.

Old records tell that Arguello had 4,000 head of cattle. Although there were no fenced

pastures at first the family had a large corral for marking and branding. It was made from wooden rails.

The Arguello home was about a block north of San Carlos Avenue, on

Cedar Street after 1821. Prior to then they lived at the intersection of San Carlos Avenue and Cordilleras where a good spring used to be.

Their horses were watered in the little creek that used to flow past their house. It has long been enclosed within a large pipe.

A street in Redwood City carries the Arguello name, as do

several other towns who have named Arguello Streets.

Old records tell that Arguello's had everything available when

they lived on the Peninsula. They were considered to be well-off, but not especially wealthy for there were other large land grants in other parts of California such as the one east of Gilroy. That old adobe house disappeared under the lake a few years ago. It used to be beside the highway on Pacheco Pass. At least that land owner had the pass named for him.

Here on our earth things continually change. We must be glad of this. Wouldn't it be uninteresting to live on the moon where there has been no change for many millions of years? I'm afraid we would find it monotonous.

Mr. Estep is a Belmont city historian.

San Carlos-Belmont Enquirer Bulletin • Wednesday, November 1, 1989 • 8



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

During WW-2 many Belmont men either went into the military or went to sea on merchant ships. One of those ships was the Jeremiah O'Brien. That ship was constructed toward the end of the war and then laid up at Suisun for 40 years. Recently it was taken out of mothballs and fired up.

It was sailed down to Redwood City and was open for visitors to see for several days. I visited it.

I found it to be a straight-deck freighter: a good ship. It still had the guns in their mounts just as it had during the war.

People could walk anywhere so I took advantage of that.

When I first approached it I noticed machine gun indentations on the starboard side near the stern. There were about 30. Fortunately they didn't penetrate the hull. Had they done so they might have hit someone from Belmont. The crew usually sleeps in the stern area — back aft, as they call it.

Since all bullet marks were near the stern it is probable that the ship was moving and the enemy didn't make enough allowance for the ships speed. It could go 14 knots.

The color was still grey, just as it was when the war ended.

At midship I found the officer's quarters. The staterooms for the three mates, and three

engineers, Captain and Chief Engineer were roomy and comfortable. There was a steam radiator in the passageway to keep the temperature just right. The bridge was enclosed and there was the usual flying bridge above it with the additional ship controls and binical. The bullet proof small glass windows allowed the officer on watch to see where the ship was headed.

The radio room was smaller than on some ships, but adequate. The radio equipment was still aboard. It was the usual CW transmitter, probably manufactured by RCA.

The Jeremiah O'Brien was one of the Liberty ships built in a hurry.

The records show that the keel was laid for this 441 foot ship on May 6, 1943, and it was launched June 19 and delivered all completed and outfitted June 30, 1943.

It was one of dozens of such ships. Workmen surely didn't lose any time when constructing the ships in those days.

The ship was named for a Revolutionary War hero, Jeremiah O'Brien. During WW2 the ship carried a civilian crew who were defended by Navy personnel. There had been about 43 crewmen and about 20 Navy men aboard.

In the engine room I found reciprocating

engines of IHP 2500 at 76 RPM.

The ship had traveled in four convoys to England from New York and had made 11 shuttle runs between England and Omaha Beach, in Normandy.

The ship made a trip down the west side of South America and one trip to the Philippines. Then the war ended.

Belmont and San Carlos men returned home. Glad that the war was over. Now they are glad the S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien wasn't scrapped.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In 1798 when Mrs. Jose Arguello needed to buy things she had to go to San Francisco to the Mission Dolores. Often they didn't have what she needed and then she would ask her driver to drive to the waterfront so she could try to get something from ship officers.

The 25-mile trip to San Francisco took five hours. There was no traffic but occasionally she would pass a wagon.

The road was a single track dirt road. There were no rocks such as roads further north in California had. However, in the summertime she found the road dusty. A large cloud of dust usually followed her progress. Old records tell that the road was muddy in wintertime.

Sometimes when her son Luis became older he would go along and driver her buggy. Luis was said to have been a good driver, and was said to be easy on his horses. When he grew up he took charge of the Arguello rancho when the Spanish rule of California ended and the Mexican rule began in 1821. His father had died and the newer home was on north Cedar Street, about a block north of San Carlos Avenue.

On their trips into San Francisco Luis often told his mother that he wondered if someday the roads would be better, or other transportation would be available.

It was to be many years however, until much improvement came. The trains didn't come until 1863. The El Camino Real was gravelled however, in soft places. It was many years before pavement came.

Sometimes men from the Arguello rancho would ride horseback to Mission Dolores. That too, required five hours.

Much later when William C. Ralston came to Belmont in 1864 he often drove his team of horses and raced the early trains.

Old reports tell of him beating them to Belmont from San Francisco. Although he helped to finance the trains he still wanted to prove the worth of his horse conveyances.

The El Camino Real remained a narrow paved road for many years. Finally it was widened to two paved lanes. Stores along the way had to dust their merchandise daily, until almost up to World War II when pavement was placed from the old pavement to the side curbs.

The Arguello family would be amazed if they were here now. We can either drive our automobiles to San Francisco in half an hour, or drive to Daly City to BART. One bus goes directly to BART from Redwood City and the time is about an hour for the 25-mile journey. The reason they take so long is that they stop many times.

We can get off BART at many stops and it is so easy for us to make the trip to San Francisco now. Also there is the bus that starts at Redwood City and goes downtown directly. Some of us take it and enjoy the bus ride. It is smoother than the bus to Daly City which travels up El Camino Real.

How fortunate we are to be living in Belmont now instead of when the Arguello family lived in this area. We have things easy.

San Carlos-Belmont Enquirer Bulletin • Wednesday, November 15, 1989 • 4



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many old timers in Belmont and San Carlos will recall what happened about 25 years ago after the Belmont City Council put a train speed limit into effect. The engineers probably had trouble keeping schedules, so they began blowing their whistles as they reached Belmont and held the whistle cord open until they had passed Belmont. Nobody could sleep. The noisy whistles bothered the City Council so they finally cancelled the ordinance.

Another interesting happening in Belmont occurred about 30 years ago when two sisters from Notre Dame flagged down the fast Daylight Train so they could ride to Redwood City. The conductor was annoyed, but the sisters blessed him and the train proceeded. The Daylight was a very good train, operating each day to Los Angeles, and passing the northbound train near Santa Margarite. The Daylight was painted bright orange. The engine was black but had a 3-foot orange stripe along its sides. The train was fast and could make the run to Los Angeles in 10 passenger service dropped drastically, the Daylight was retired. The engine is kept in good condition by a group of train buffs. It is parked at Sacramento most of the time.

When making its run to Los Angeles it made very few stops. Its first was San Jose, then Salinas, and Santa Barbara. Nobody but Catholic sisters could get aboard just anywhere.

Of course we can still ride a train to Los Angeles, but it isn't the same. The Daylight had a steam engine. The engine sounded like it was alive with its puffing and noises. Trains now have diesel engines. They are very

unromantic. But the ride is the same. They make the run to Los Angeles in about 10 hours.

Trains first came to this Peninsula in 1864. There were two early attempts to start a railroad here. Both failed. Then the Southern Pacific bought out the earlier railroad companies. This happened in 1868, but in only two years, in 1870, the big four — Crocker, Huntington, Stanford and Hopkins — took over. Their line was Central Pacific Co. This company controlled several railroad lines both running east and northward from this region.

The early engines were steam and burned wood. Their smoke stacks bulged so cinders wouldn't scatter over the countryside. The cinders disintegrated in the bulge space.

Of course one can still ride a train pulled by steam but they are all short runs such as the famous train at Willits. Even there diesel engines are alternating with steam engines.

Recently I rode a recreational train at Felton and had the pleasure of hearing the engine puff and whistle. It brought back pleasant memories of good times.



There were some very well-known persons living on this peninsula in the early days. For instance, Andrew Hallidie, inventor of the San Francisco cable cars, lived in Portola Valley. According to old records he came from England. Hallidie invented the cable cars in 1870, and in 1880 he owned a large ranch. He even did considerable experimenting with his cable car invention and built a tramway from his place to the mountain to the west.

As a lasting tribute, San Francisco has named the Hallidie Square on Market Street for him.

While roads were poor and transportation difficult, many persons thought about how to overcome the problem. Accordingly, some built piers and wharfs at the oceanside and at the edge of the bay. Over at Half Moon Bay, Josiah Ames had a wharf built a way north of the little town so ships might load produce to take to San Francisco. Many farmers used the wharf. One was an early settler, John Johnston, who came to the area in 1854 — the same year my grandparents arrived.

Johnston's house is still standing. It is painted white and is located east of Highway 1, in a field, and it stands there empty. It is a state landmark.

Another famous settler in Half Moon Bay was Henry Bidwell, who was a nephew of John Bidwell, a captain of an early wagon train across the Sierra Nevada Mountains in 1842. John Bidwell settled in Chico.

Then there were the Levy Brothers who arrived in Half Moon Bay in 1872. They started a store and branched out until they owned several retail outlets, including one in San Mateo.

San Carlos had Congressman Timothy Phelps who owned several hundred acres where San Carlos is located. His large home burned many years ago and was located across the railroad, and north on Holly Street. There is a street in San Carlos named for Phelps.

Belmont's early settlers were Count Leonetto Cipriani, who came in 1854 and William C. Ralston, who came in 1864.

Menlo Park's early settler was James Flood, a banker in San Francisco. His huge house was demolished several years ago so the Flood estate could be developed on Middlefield Road.

Burlingame received its name from Anson Burlingame who had owned 1,000 acres there. This land was later acquired by Mr. Ralston who gave the city its name.

Millbrae was named for Darius Ogden Mills, secretary of the U.S. Treasury. His large mansion was demolished when subdividers needed the land to build smaller houses.

There weren't many people in our county in early days. Some of those were well-known like big frogs in a small puddle. Now we have many hundreds of thousands of people here. Some important persons aren't noticed. Take for instance Bruce Smith, president and CEO of Network Equipment Co. of Redwood City. Bruce is the largest employer of Peninsula people in Redwood City, having more than 1,200 employees manufacturing electronic equipment.

Shouldn't someone invite Bruce Smith to lead the parade next July 4th in Redwood City? He deserves it. And people would like to see him.



Old timers may remember the making of movies in Belmont, but thousands of newcomers probably never heard of this. It happened during the 1920s and mid-30s. The Paul Gershim movie company filmed the "Ma and Pa Kettle" series at Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. The series was very funny and very popular as shorts in hundreds of theaters.

The group of actors had one very fat girl who did things to make people laugh. The film company had an old Ford car and Bert Johnson tells that in one scene the fat girl stepped on the back end of the car so the movie could show a man from the car boarding the train. Of course the car had been jacked up but the movie scene didn't show that.

Bert Johnson was born in Belmont about 1904. He can recall many things about the movie company. He says in one scene the old Ford was driven through the Hammerson blacksmith shop, and when it came out the rear door was splintered. It had been worked over in the shop.

Several local people were hired as extras to help with the movie. They were young then and active. Bert says the movie company received permission from the Southern Pacific Railroad Company to pull down the Belmont sign from the depot and replace it with Plum Center.

The name fitted the character in the script in the series.

It seems that Belmont has had some adverse publicity because in modern times a sign was placed on the Belmont depot saying this was a whistle stop. That is changed now, however.

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

I recall that when I was about 12 years old, which was in 1915, a movie company made some movies in San Mateo, at about B and Fifth streets, I do not recall what films were made but a famous actress was said to have been involved. The company folded soon afterward though.

I'm told that movies were also made in Redwood City, but I cannot confirm this and I do not remember about any made there.

Presently many movie shorts and advertisements are made upstairs in the Eureka Federal building in San Carlos. They aren't given publicity for crowds might disturb filming. When you see the advertisements on your television though, you might remember that they might have come from San Carlos.

With the invention of the camcorders it seems that many people now make their own movies. At many meetings it seems that someone is always shooting with his camcorder. The camcorders particularly help our flying news crews. Within three minutes of the earthquake, a newsman happened to be flying near the Oakland bridge, and we saw the damage on our TV sets.

Invention of the movie cameras was a great step forward for our country. Mr. Eastman invented a small camera, and Mr. Land the fast developing film.

There are still movies being made on this Peninsula so our area hasn't lost out entirely.

It used to be fun for our young people to watch when movies were made. Now they make their own while other young people watch.



carlment history

by Russ Estep

Sometimes towns and girls change their names. Since I am not a psychologist I don't understand girls, but the towns are a little different. Sometimes a large town will absorb a small town like a big fish eating little fish. This has happened on this Peninsula many times.

Take Beresford, for example. Mr. David D. Bohannen built hundreds of houses and apartments south of San Mateo a few years ago. That's where Beresford used to be. After Mr. Bohannen completed his project he renamed the area Hillsdale. Later Hillsdale was taken into San Mateo..

Then there was Lomita Park south of Palo Alto. It was a thriving town and a railroad stop. Later Palo Alto engulfed it. Then there was the town of Baden. It was located where we find South San Francisco. Baden was named for a city in Europe, Baden Baden.

Baden was incorporated in the mid-1930s so dog racing could be held there. A fine track was built and thousands of people from San Francisco visited the track. Gambling on dogs was not allowed in San Francisco. Later the dog track closed and the town of Baden was unincorporated, and later taken into South San Francisco.

Visitation City on the north slope of San Bruno Mountain was a lively little town but its name was changed to Brisbane by an early mayor who apparently came from Australia. Its sister city now is Brisbane, Australia.

Lomita Park used to be a small town north of Atherton. Its name was later changed to Menlo Park, and taken into the larger city. Then it was disincorporated.

A small town named Lawndale used to be where there are more than a million graves west of South San Francisco. Now it's gone. It was incorporated under the name Colma, and the burying of bodies continues. The nice little town of Maywood south of Redwood City along El Camino Real has disappeared. It is a part of a larger town now.

Redwood City has a good name — appropriate for what used to be there. It was an important shipping point in 1850. Redwood lumber was brought there from Woodside and put aboard sailing ships and taken up the bay to San Francisco. But the town was first named for a man who owned the land: Sidney M. Mezes. The town was called Mezesville.

San Carlos was named by promoters for King Carlos of Spain. It still has its name.

Belmont was first called Waterview. The name Belmont came about in 1864 after William C. Ralston came to Belmont.

Even San Francisco has trouble retaining its name. Some people apparently don't realize the name is for St. Francis. But maybe those people who call San Francisco "Frisco" think they are in the good relations club with saints. We must hope they are.



carlmon history

by Russ Estep

An old-time steam engine on display recently at the Carlmon Shopping Center attracted considerable attention. Belmont people liked the sound of the bell and its whistle. Many gathered around it. The whistle sound was different than what we have become accustomed to from the diesel engines running on the tracks through town. When many of us heard the little engine approaching Belmont its sounds brought back pleasant memories. The train, which had been built for a mining company in 1913, was moved by a truck to the shopping center.

Peninsulans were glad when trains came in 1863. They made traveling easier. Most people had been accustomed to travel bby buggy or on horseback, but travel had been slow. Stopping places had been established. One of the first on the Peninsula was the little roadhouse owned by Charles Angelo here in Belmont. There were other stops north and south. Some were comfortable for an overnight stay and others were rather rough and primitive.

At San Bruno, the 17-mile House was said to have had feather beds. Without modern mattresses, this must have been a great thing to sleep on.

Other rest stops had mattresses stuffed with hay that crackled when you moved.

The little stopping place at Colma was reported to have had something different and quite deluxe. Their bed pots weren't the ordinary enamel kind, but were made from

crockery, and had "forget-me-not" flowers painted on them.

Each of the stopping places had a corral for horses. At first no lumber was available so the corral fences were made of rails. The redwood rails came from Woodside and were about 10 feet in each section. At first the rails were laid upon each other in a zig gaz pattern which became known as a worm fence. These were quickly built but they took up too much ground. Later the settlers put two fence posts at 10-foot intervals, spaced about 6 inches apart. Then they placed fence rails in between the posts. This allowed for a straight fence and probably looked better to passers-by. The height for each type of fence was 5 feet.

Some animals could jump over the corral fences but most could not. Enough to contain passing livestock. Large herds of cattle were driven along the early El Camino Real through Belmont.

The dirt road was primitive and dusty in summer and muddy in winter. Often travelers found deep mire holes. When wagons passed, one or the other must pull to one side to let the others pass. It was the rule to allow vehicles coming down hill to pull to the right, and if on a curve, the heaviest wagon must have the inside priority.

Early American presidents and European kings didn't have accommodations as luxurious as most of us have now. We are fortunate to be living in these modern times. Aren't we?



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Fortunately for historians a few of the early Belmont houses are still standing. There aren't too many old homes, for there weren't many folks here in earlier years.

The Ralston house is probably our oldest. It was built while Ralston lived in it between 1864 until his death in 1875. Of course its south-end portion is older, for Count Cipriani had lived in that portion after coming herein 1854. The difference in architecture is easily

seen where the Cipriani house and the later portion was added.

There is the Emmett house, a two-story construction on the south side of Ralston Avenue, just west of El Camino Real. It dates from the early 1900s.

Then we have the Havard house up on Middle Road. Havard was a building contractor in San Francisco and built a house with a small tower so he could see the bay. The tower still

stands and is painted white.

We have the "mansion" in Twin Pines Park that was built in 1906 just after the earthquake. It was owned by George Center who was cashier of the Bank of California in San Francisco. The mansion has a concrete vault in the basement and old records tell that during its construction Center stored money there until it would be safe in San Francisco. It was well cared for and looks strong enough to withstand another hard earthquake. It had no damage in the 1989 quake.

Another beautiful old home was that of George C. Ross. His home was built in 1890 and is still standing. The house was occupied for many years by Cliff Davey — national tree surgery man. It is on Davey Glen Drive on the south side of the street, surrounded by trees. We must hope the trees are never cut, and that

this old home will remain for future generations, so they can understand how Belmont people lived.

The Congregational Church building was built as the Belle Monte Country Club Clubhouse between 1924 and 1927. It appears to be in excellent condition.

In our Twin Pines Park is the little Fisher house, which is being used by the Park and Recreation Department. It was built about 1890, and has been renovated. Some residents claim that early state Governor McDougal might have lived in the house, but I haven't been able to confirm this. If he lived in it he must have been a very old man, for McDougal was California's second governor.

The little Episcopal Chapel on Fifth Avenue was built in 1876 according to records. It carries a plaque placed against its front.



carl mont history

by Russ Estep

In earthquake territory, Belmont is probably fortunate not having many brick buildings. Only two are easily discernable: the Iron Gate and the Lariat.

Bricks to build these houses probably came from the Hull brick yard that used to be at the north end of San Carlos.

Hull's house was where we find Hull Drive now. It was a wooden house, although thousands of bricks were kept piled in front of it until his yard closed at the start of WWII. He had two very large palm trees in front of his home which framed its entrance. Hull's house was attractive.

It was found during the 1906 earthquake that mortar didn't always hold bricks together. Damage occurred in San Francisco where there are many brick buildings. In fact, most of the bricks came from the Hull brick yard. He shipped them to San Francisco by small ships.

Californians who didn't have bricks available and no lumber mills nearby, turned

to what they found on their own land — adobe. The Sanchez house in Pacifica was built in the 1840s of adobe bricks. It is still standing as a National Landmark. It is east of the Highway 1 at the Linda Mar part of Pacifica.

What a chore the Indians must have had making many bricks. Mixing adobe with water and pouring in molds to make bricks. Their bricks were not held together by mortar; they merely laid one brick on top of the other.

The Sanchez house was built for Francisco Sanchez, owner of a Spanish land grant of many thousands of acres.

Trees for lumber cannot last forever. The Japanese are cutting trees in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska and American loggers continue to cut this nation's trees down. It seems that they should be required to plant a tree everytime they cut a tree. Then something could be left for future generations, who might otherwise have to live in plastic houses.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Eighty years ago people in Belmont and San Carlos were awakened by the sound of roosters crowing. Most people raised chickens. Many had a cow and most used horses for transportation.

We used to see people driving along El Camino Real in surrys and buggies with their horses trotting along.

People thought nothing about walking considerable distances. They often swam in the Bay and dozens of people walked to the bayshore. Now-a-days people drive their cars and wouldn't dream of walking a couple blocks.

Doctors often advise people to walk more. Yet it just doesn't usually happen. If a car is available, they'll use it.

In hardware stores, we no longer see foot scrapers. Formerly they were in demand for persons to scrape mud off thier shoes before entering a house. Streets are paved and the earth is well covered.

Eighty years ago everyone in Belmont walked to church. One was located on Old County Road south of Ralston Avenue. Now they wouldn't think of walking to church.

One of Belmont's oldest men, Bert Johnson, was borri some 84 years ago. He has

told how he and other boys drove their little coaster cars down the Ralston hill west of Alameda de las Pulgas. He walked a lot from his home at the south end of Belmont and enjoyed it.

Now Johnson is healthy. Had he not needed to walk so much during his lifetime, he might not be so healthy.

He walked to Belmont's grammar school when it was on Old County Road, and the walk was about one-half mile from his home. Doris Vannier, also in fier 80s, walked to the same grammar school. Both she and Bert attended high school and had a long walk to get there. Doris is a healthy lady and likely has many years ahead of her to enjoy living in Belmont.

Following WWII buses came to Belmont. Now they operate throughout both Belmont and San Carlos. There is no need for anyone to walk further than the curb to climb into his car.

One must wonder whether the health of our citizens is as good as it was. People appear all right, and there is no way to ascertain what their health might have been had transportation not improved.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

After California became a state on Sept. 9, 1850, travel westward across the country increased. Many persons had heard about the good land on this Peninsula and wanted to settle here.

Those who made it across the country with their covered wagons finally arrived and were pleased with what they found. They had heard rumors that some person was contesting the Spanish land rights, but apparently that did not matter. They arrived and constructed houses, barns, corrals and settled comfortably.

Just when they thought they had everything they needed, a man rode up on horseback and demanded that they move. It would have been a Mr. Sidney M. Mezes, the attorney who Mrs. Arguello hired to settle the titles.

Settlers protested and Mezes offered to sell the land at a high price, with high interest. Many accepted reluctantly, since they had no other choice.

Records tell that Mezes sold portions of his land at enormous sums with small down payments, but with high interest. He established his home in Belmont behind the College of Notre Dame. His house burned several years ago, after he had lived there all the rest of his life. His daughter inherited the property and

the lot remained in her name as late as WWII.

One settler west of Belmont was Mr. Harrington who lived where the lakes are. (The lakes were only established in 1916.)

Mezes established his law practice in San Francisco and became a well-known California attorney.

Count Leonetto Ciprani came to Belmont in 1850 and purchased land, probably from Mezes. He remained until 1864 then sold his property to William C. Ralston. Count Ciprani then returned to Italy. When he came here he wasn't aware that there were already several sawmills operating in Woodside. Accordingly, he had a house constructed in Italy, then taken apart, and shipped around Cape Horn to San Francisco. (If you will notice the south portion of the Ralston house, you can see the different construction.) Ralston added onto the little house until he owned a home with fifty rooms, according to records.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur own the Ralston House and some of the Sisters live upstairs. Portions of the historic house are used for offices.

The Gold Rush came and brought thousands of people to California, many of whom settled on this Peninsula.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Golf is an old game and newcomers in Belmont do not realize that there used to be a course right here in Belmont.

The course was built during the time when, Monroe, Miller and Lyon were promoting the Belmont Country Club properties from 1924 to 1927.

The company built the clubhouse, which is now the Congregational Church. They also built several large houses on the new golf course. These houses were English-style and can be easily recognized.

The company operated free busses each weekend to bring prospective buyers from San Francisco. Each prospect was given a box lunch, which many ate in the clubhouse, while others sat under trees and ate their lunches on the lots they had chosen to buy.

The Union Paving Company was given a contract to put in streets and to pave them.

Large advertisements appeared in San Francisco newspapers extolling the virtues of living in Belmont.

The flat area, where Avon and Chevy streets and Robin Whipple are, was first called Belburn Village. There were half a dozen English-style houses by 1929 when Belmont became incorporated. The village name was dropped upon the city's incorporation in 1929.

Some of the Belmont lots were quite steep and when people came to view them on the free bus, jokes were made that the prospects must use caution and not fall off a Belmont lot.

Sales were active and frequent and by 1927, most vacant lots had new owners. Prices paid were between two thousand and four thousand dollars per lot. Most lots were 50 x 100-feet, although on Monroe Avenue some lots were smaller.

The developers subdivided the hills in Belmont Country Club properties number one to 10. Each subdivision required several months for approval by state and county officials.

Many gala parties were held at the clubhouse, including several weddings. Young people often swam in the pool that was behind the clubhouse. It has since been filled in for safety reasons.

One street in Belburn Village had its name changed early in WWII. It was renamed Robin Whipple Way in honor of the first boy from Belmont who had been killed in the war.

The Whipple family lived on a street near Monroe Avenue. Mrs. Whipple and her family of eight were well liked and respected. Robin was her eldest son.

The developers went along well until bankruptcy. The Union Paving Co. took over many of the unsold lots and some were still being sold during WWII by that company.

With the closing of the Country Club several builders stepped in to build houses where the golf course had been. The building companies included Baker Construction Co., for which I was in charge of construction.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Several years ago when James McLaughlin was our city clerk he arranged for a marker to be placed honoring the route taken by the Spanish padres in 1769. The monument is at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. It is beneath an evergreen tree and is easy to read.

The Old County Road was El Camino Real at that time, as named by the padre soon after 1769.

The El Camino Real was established to con-

nect all the missions. It extends from the San Diego mission to the Sonoma mission. The first mission to be constructed was in San Diego.

At first most travel was by horseback. Following that the ox carts were in use. Wheels had to be greased frequently and early records tell of the travelers using bear grease.

It was many years before the El Camino Real was very comfortable to travel on, and by 1700 no one could have believed it would

be paved.

Some of the ox carts had covers, almost like we used to see on buggies. Others had longer beds such as our later spring wagons had.

The ox carts didn't go fast, although an old cartoon in my file shows a sign at a hilltop on the El Camino Real saying "resume speed."

An early painting preserved for many years showed the El Camino Real near Santa Margarita as a single track wagon road. The date must have been early 1800s.

The missions were established a days travel apart. This was approximately twenty-five miles.

Each mission had a corral and stable. Travelers were always welcome to spend the night. Cost was sometimes listed in old records as being a peso.

The oxen had to be shod and ox shoes came in two sections. The hoves aren't in a single piece such as are horses feet, which require the familiar horseshoes. You couldn't play

horseshoes with oxen shoes. They don't make a half circle.

The oxen were hitched with a heavy yoke across their foreheads. You can see these yokes in many California museums.

I can find nothing about horses being used along the El Camino Real until the early 1800s.

Most people driving horses used horse collars on the teams, but if wagons were light some travelers used a breast strap. Professional teamsters however, always seem to have used collars so their horses would be able to pull heavier loads.

Travel with horses was a little faster than with oxen. Sometimes if the load was light the horses could be made to trot a few miles. The oxen very seldom, if ever, could trot when pulling a load.

Over the many years, the El Camino Real has been widened and paved. Automobile travel on the El Camino Real is heavy now and will likely get worse before it gets better.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

About 1885 Mr. Eranosian started his barber shop in Belmont. He operated it for many years. The price for a shave and haircut was 25 cents. A shave was only 15 cents. These prices prevailed until WWI when inflation crept upward. Then haircuts only were 25 cents — and only raised to 35 cents in the 1920s.

John Eranosian, son of the barber, owned and operated a machine shop on Old County Road until after WWII. He specialized in coolers for RVs and trailers. They were mounted on the top.

While haircuts were so cheap it was common here in the West to use the term "two bits." A bit was 12-1/2 cents. The bits were dropped by the government after WWI.

An incident at a Belmont hotel occurred while this type of money was being used. The story goes that a man and his daughter stopped for a night at the Belmont Hotel. When the man asked how much the accommodations would cost he was told "two bits apiece." He replied "No. We only want one bed apiece." He was from the East Coasts and had never heard of the California terms "bits" and thought the hotel meant two beds apiece.

Many years before the 20th century the

barbers bled people. When they became ill they went to a barber who took some blood. They believed this helped them gain back their health. It was a long time before it was generally thought this did more harm than good. Barbers advertised by using barber poles with red stripes around them, indicating what they could do. We don't see these barber poles very often now. Of course barbers no longer take blood, not even accidentally.

Belmont has several good barbers now. Possibly the longest in business is the one about two doors west of El Camino Real on Ralston Avenue. He has been there for many years, and is efficient and reasonable with his charges. Others are south on El Camino Real, and at Carlmont. All good at their profession.

Belmont barbers used to have shaving mugs sitting on shelves in their shops. These mugs had customers' names painted on them. It used to be interesting to go to the Eranosian shop and see who patronized the shop. The mugs were always placed with the name showing so the barber could quickly reach for the right one. Since electric razors have become common, it must be very rarely that a barber is asked to shave someone.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

One early skill that is hardly used anymore is that of chopping wood. Our Belmont hills used to be brushy and without trees. You can observe the kind of landscape we had by driving to Hillcrest or over to the Devonshire area of San Carlos. The trees we see now in Belmont were planted during the 1800s by early settlers. Old records tell of quite a tree planting binge in this area during early years.

Without trees to cut down many Belmont boys never learned to chop. Where logging is done the choppers are skilled. They have learned to hit in the same place when chopping so they could cut faster.

Possibly the first trees planted in Belmont were the eucalyptus. They were brought from Australia before William C. Ralston died in 1875. They are large trees now.

In the early 1900s Louis Barrett brought small Sequoia Gigantea redwoods from the high sierras and planted at least six in Belmont. One is on El Camino Real south of Ralston Avenue. Another is in front of the Wells Fargo Bank and there is one growing through the dining room of the Pine Brook Inn. Another is on Ralston Avenue. In 4,000 years they may be as large as thirty feet in diameter if not disturbed.

The gigantea redwoods are not of the same variety as what grew on King's Mountain. Those were Sequoia Sempervirons. They grow large, but never as large as the other variety.

Early settlers in Belmont planted thousands of small trees in the 1880s. Old newspaper items in my files tell about several settlers planting a hundred one day, two thousand the next day, while others planted trees on their

acreage.

Nearly everyone had some acreage in early days. Some kept a cow so they would have ready milk. But all had wood burning stoves, both for heat and for cooking.

Since there were no available trees that could be cut for wood, most bought ready cut wood. Boys never had an opportunity to split, or cut the wood. There was no city ordinance that they couldn't plant trees, but families respected the use of what they had in Belmont.

Now we have city ordinances prohibiting the cutting of trees. Several years ago Belmont's redwood Christmas tree was cut. It was in the first block of Ralston Avenue, west of El Camino Real.

The beautiful tree was there one evening, but gone the next morning. A builder wanted to clear the lot for a new building.

When boys now-a-days need to cut wood they use chain saws. Faster and easier, but they don't have to train themselves to chop in the same places.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

There have been many changes in Belmont since its beginning.

New citizens probably haven't heard of the dog racing track that used to be here. It left during the depression and moved to Bayshore City, where we find South San Francisco. It closed later.

The area was vacant awhile, then an airport was built there. It was later displaced with ar-

my barracks during WWII.

South of there was a field where Homeview is now. The homes were built during and immediately after WWII.

The Old County Road was El Camino Real until 1918 when it was moved west of the railroad tracks.

On El Camino Real south of Ralston Avenue was George Pyatt's vegetable stand.

San Carlos-Belmont Etc

From Page 7

George closed it after WWII and moved across the Bay to Delta and he died there.

The Central School used to be where the Safeway Store is now in the downtown area. The school was moved to a new building on Middle road.

At Harbor and El Camino Real, on the west side was an English style building, until it burned about 1952. It was occupied by LoCoco Liquors, Arnold Mertens and Louis Morton Realty. Morton moved across the street, Mertens left Belmont, and LoCoco moved north on El Camino Real to a new location.

There was a golf course on the north side of Ralston Avenue in the area of Avon and Chevy Streets. Previously it had been a pasture

for Mr. Ralston's horses.

Clee Street was a single track dirt road through the field. It was later subdivided and lots along the street sold for \$600 soon after WWII. They were hard to sell at such a high price.

At the corner of El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue was a sandwich shop that did a lively business. I think Mr. McDonough owned it.

There was a house where we now see Wells Fargo Bank. It was torn down to make room for the bank.

The Post Office was in the first block of Ralston Avenue, west of El Camino Real, until after WWII when Juel Christensen built a new building on Masonic Avenue and leased it to the government.

The Alameda de las Pulgas used to have a

bend and turned off Ralston Avenue where we see the Bank of America now, and the road connected with the Alameda again near the mortuary.

The Belmeda swimming pool was across the Alameda north of the library where we now see a vacant lot. The pool was filled in because of high maintenance.

The two old tombstones across from the mansion in Twin Pines Park were brought there for tourists to see. They were from graves on the hilltop west of Belmont.

The old BELMONT sign from the train station may someday be placed in our new museum in Twin Pines Park.

These are only a few of Belmont's changes. If you had been away and returned you might not have recognized Belmont as we see it now.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Over the years there may have been some large gamblers and speculators in Belmont but surely none as active as William Chapman

grew up and in 1833 he moved to St. Louis. He helped to build two steamboats that were used on the Mississippi River. Later he worked on a ship going down to New Orleans. He quit in New Orleans and boarded a ship for Panama.

At Panama he and a friend, named Garrison, established a pack-horse route on a trail across Panama to Balboa.

After awhile Ralston and a partner managed to purchase an old steamship and Ralston captained it to San Francisco.

Ralston. After having been one of the richest men in the country he died broke.

He was born in 1809 in New York state. He

In San Francisco he joined the Calvary Presbyterian Church and he became a deacon and trustee in 1853. He was a protestant all his life.

The California gold rush had occurred in 1848 bringing thousands of people to our state.

Miners in Nevada had discovered silver at Virginia City which they thought wouldn't have much value. Accordingly, Garrison and Ralston bought into several mines. The com-

See Page 23

From Page 22

stock proved to be the best and later produced millions of dollars for the two men.

Ralston found himself with pockets bulging with money from the sale of silver, and silver stocks. He purchased property from Count Leonetto Cipriani in 1854 and moved from his Pine Street home in San Francisco to Belmont.

Cipriani had come to this area from Italy to be the Italian Consul at San Francisco. He was recalled to Italy in 1854 to assist with a war.

Cipriani had news while still in Italy that California was a wild and remote place and he wouldn't have a suitable residence. Accord-

ingly, he had his house constructed in Italy, then taken apart and shipped around Cape Horn to San Francisco.

Controversy exists as to whether or not his reconstructed house was put together on Pine Street, or was taken down the bay to Belmont. The south end of the large Ralston mansion appears different than the rest of the house. It would be very easy for someone to pull off a splinter from the south end of the Ralston house to see whether it was redwood. If it was redwood then Cipriani located a sawmill at Woodside and had the Belmont house constructed here. If it wasn't redwood then the rebuilt house was reconstructed on Pine Street

in San Francisco.

Ralston had many workmen building his Ralston house until it had fifty rooms and was one of the largest homes on the Peninsula. It is still a showplace, and many weddings and special events are held there.

Ralston built the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, and owned the dry docks at Hunter's Point, as well as a large woolen mill, and huge acreage over in the central valley. He started the Bank of California and the bank became his downfall.

An audit of bank records in 1875 disclosed that Ralston had a shortage of his accounts of more than four million dollars. At a meeting of bank directors he was requested to resign. Senator Sharon replaced the money

and Ralston signed all property and money he owned over to Sharon.

Ralston rode his horse to the Marina in San Francisco, gave his watch to someone there, his coat to another, and swam out in the bay. A boat soon picked his body up and it was taken to his Pine Street home.

He was a member of the I.O.O.F. Lodge and a coroner's jury of lodge members, and a doctor who was a lodge member held an inquest. A decision was made that Ralston had drowned.

His widow received \$68,000 life insurance money, and moved into the gardener's cottage at Carlmont. She lived there for two years before moving to Oakland.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont people have never found our town monotonous but they have always preferred to get away now and then. Some had cabins on Kings Mountain. The others had cabins at Santa Cruz and other nearby spots. They couldn't travel far by horse and buggy. Some drove one horse in their buggies, while others drove two horses in a surry. It was a great event to picnic at Memorial Park, and similar places. Just to go to San Francisco in the 1880s took almost all day.

How things have changed. Presently some people have cabins where they go on occasional weekends as far as 150 miles. Others find it easy to go by air and have their weekend cabins farther. One has a summer house in France. Another in Alaska. They can go there as easy as their grandfathers could go to Kings Mountain. People like to see changes in the countryside and experience different air in the mountains or seashore.

It is interesting to note that while Belmonters were away for weekends occasionally, people from San Francisco often came to the San Juan area of Belmont to spend a weekend in cabins. That street used to be lined with small houses — mostly used for weekends. The countryside there was very rural and gave San Franciscans a boost.

Other San Franciscans built shacks across the railroad tracks in an area called Shantytown. Some were hunters, while others simply came to enjoy fishing and to hear the tide come in and go out. If they were tired

businessmen they received a boost by coming here.

People from other places have thought for a long time that Belmont was a restful town. This is why there were three hospitals here for many years where persons with nervous disorders were treated. In addition there was a tuberculosis hospital.

People would come to Belmont for a change and for country atmosphere. Belmont people would go elsewhere for a change. One person who occasionally drove a horse and buggy to Kings Mountain was Miss Elizabeth Rowell. Her parents owned the Belmont Hotel at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. She made her trips after WWI, for several years.

When automobiles became more available, Belmont people sometimes formed a caravan of cars and all drove over to Memorial Park for a change of atmosphere.

People everywhere seem to appreciate a change from their immediate surroundings and Belmont people are not different from others in this respect. A change to other surroundings seems to give people a lift so they can charge their batteries. They come home rested.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Along Old County Road there are about five small car repair shops. Repairs for transportation have generally been centered on Old County Road. However, for many years there was one on the west side of El Camino Real where George Pyatt had his vegetable stand earlier. That mechanic later went into real estate. Apparently he couldn't stand such a transition for I heard he soon died.

Our mechanics on Old County Road are all good men and very reasonable in prices and get work done in short order.

Earlier than these mechanics was the blacksmith shop. It was on the east side of Old County Road, south of Ralston Avenue and operated by Mr. Hammerson. When we heard him pounding a hot wagon tire on his anvil some boys thought his name suited him. One boy said, "That's Mr. Hammerson — not his son."

He could tighten the iron tire on a buggy wheel in about three hours. If a tire was loose

on the fellows some folks would drive the buggy through a stream or pour water onto the wheel until they could see the blacksmith. This caused the wooden part to swell.

The blacksmith first had to get the tire off the wooden wheel. Sometimes this proved to be difficult. Although the tire was loose it still would refuse to come off the wooden wheel. Portions of it always seemed to stick. The blacksmith would pound wedges between the sticking tire and the wheel to loosen it.

To retain temperature in his forge the blacksmith would turn a crank which blew air into the hot coals. When the fire was ready he would place the strip of iron across the fire and heat it then bend it into a circle. Then force the ends close together and let them overlap just a little and then place that portion over the hot fire. When the metal was white hot he would lift the iron tire and place the overlapping ends onto his anvil and pound and pound until the iron was together. His an-

vil made a pleasant sound that could be heard a block away.

When he made horseshoes almost the same process took place. He would heat a strip of iron, then bend it in "U" shape about the size of a horse's foot. Then he would place the iron across a hammer until it was cut as he needed it to be. Then he would heat the future horseshoe in the hot fire until it was white hot, then pound it until it was the right size for the horse. He would bend each end of the shoe so it would allow the horse not to slip in soft ground.

He always wore a leather "bib" apron so his trousers wouldn't become burned. And besides his anvil was a wooden barrel full of water. It had the top end knocked out and a gallon coffee can was placed next to the barrel for dipping out water to quickly cool hot metals he would be working with.

Of course all buggies didn't have metal tires. Some had hard rubber tires. Buggies equipped with the hard rubber tires rolled quietly along the graveled roads.

While it took several hours to have new tires placed on a horse-drawn vehicle, it only requires ten minutes now-a-days for us to have a new tire mounted. Things change as time goes by. We should feel lucky to be living in 1990 in Belmont.



carlmount history

by Russ Estep

Between 1875 and 1885 all the lumber from Woodside didn't go by boat up the bay. Some went south to San Jose. Much went by freight wagons pulled by six horse teams.

Experienced teamsters drove the horses. They used a jerk line connected to the bit on the front horse, and his team had learned that "Gee" meant right and "Haw" meant left.

By yelling these commands, then jerking the single line to the leaders he could guide his team anywhere.

Two wagons were commonly used — one behind the other.

Sometimes the teamsters fastened bells to the hames of the lead horses, so a pleasant sound preceded the outfit for folks ahead. Also oncoming wagons had warning to pull to one side to let the big wagons pass.

Teamsters rode the "off" horse so he would be on the side where he could control the brake. Brake handles were usually six feet in length on the wagon's right side, and a rope extended from the pole's top to the driver so he could pull on it to use the brake.

The freight wagons had no seats. The brakes were lined with strips of wood and they worked against the front portion of the metal

wagon tires of the rear wheels on the front wagon. Before starting on a trip the teamster always checked his brakes. When they needed lining he would nail a short strip of wood against the brake shoe. He usually carried some square nails in his pocket and had an old battered hammer in the jockey box.

If a teamster needed to back up his two wagons he had a real problem. If it was only a few feet then he pulled his lines to the wheelers, and had other men try to twist the rear wheels of the rear wagon. If that didn't help the wagon must be unloaded. Sometimes he would have to uncouple the two wagons, unhitch the leaders, and move one wagon at a time. It was a real chore.

When he wanted to stop his teams he would yell "whoa" and the horses would stop. At times on slight slopes he must pull the brake rope to stop the wagons.

If someone wanted to know what he did for a living his response was "teaming." He was referred to as a team — ster. I cannot find the reason for the ster, and it might be better if spelled stir, for teamsters often fought in brawls in saloons, and stirred up trouble. They were usually rough individuals. Most loved

their horses and took good care of them.

One drunken teamster I noticed many years ago had a problem. His horses wouldn't start on a slight hill. He talked kindly to them and stopped and walked under several tightening their harness. When he climbed onto the wheel

horse and tightened the lines, and yelled "get up" all the horses began pulling together and the wagon proceeded up the small hill.

Now-a-days we see drivers of large trucks who are called teamsters. Many folks wonder how they can back them so accurately.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In Belmont there are more than 1,500 licensed businesses. This is remarkable for a city of 28,000. Some of the businesses are unique. A few years ago a man told me he raised homing pigeons and sold several.

The businesses and professional people are a well-balanced group. There are not too many of one kind or another. All appear to be making a living.

Businesses change over the years. Most of those here weren't here in the last century.

One business that closed more than 60 years ago was the Western School of Mines. It was owned and operated by Professor Jens, a mining engineer. His school was at the intersection of South Road and Ralston Avenue. He trained many young men how to place timbers in a mine shaft and how to identify gold bearing rocks.

Another closed and long-gone business was the California Sanitarium. They treated persons with tuberculosis and they were located about one-half block north of Carlmont Drive, but south of Lyall Street. Their sanitarium was successful in helping hundreds of patients during the many years they were in Belmont. They liked our clear air, no smog, and good climate. They closed their facility so condominiums could be constructed on the site.

Another longtime business in Belmont was the Belmont Plumbing Company. They had been at the corner of Harbor Boulevard and El Camino Real for years, but finally moved over to Old County Road about 1951.

An early lively business was the real estate firm operated by Monroe, Miller and Lyon. Their office was a small round building across the Alameda de las Pulgas from the Congregational Church. The building stands vacant now. It was they who developed the Belmont Country Club Properties.

There used to be a golf driving range on Old County Road that is long gone. It was located where the ice skating rink is now. Many Belmont people practiced there.

The Belmont Casino was near there and golfers could drop in at the Casino for refreshments after their practice. Apartments occupy the site now.

Hap Harper operated a travel agency on El Camino Real many years ago. He left to open a restaurant, but presently is a weather and traffic announcer on the radio in the early mornings.

Arnold Mertens' clothing store is long gone. It was on El Camino Real and did a good business until his building burned.

The First National Bank became Wells Fargo and still operates. Belmont was without any bank until about 1953.

Where businesses have closed new businesses have replaced them.

Some cities do not have businesses. Hillsborough gets their operating income from property taxes. Our taxes would be higher if Belmont followed their pattern.

With 1,500 licensed businesses in Belmont our city manages to pay their bills and to give us good services. Belmont is a model city. We should all be proud to live here.

San Carlos-Belmont Enquirer Bulletin • Wednesday, April 11, 1990 • 14



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Squatters and early settlers in Belmont had to drive their buggies and surries to the Tripp store at Woodside to purchase needed items. There was no store in Belmont for many years. Finally, in the 1880's Waltermire and O'Neill opened a general merchandise store at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Old County Road. The building still stands and we know it as the "pink" building.

The store did well right from the start, but eventually Mr. O'Neill decided to drop out and Mr. Emmett bought his portion of the business. The Emmett house still stands as the first building on the left as you turn off El Camino Real onto Ralston Avenue. It is occupied presently by a merchant.

The Waltermire and Emmett store sold general merchandise. Almost anything you needed could be purchased there. They sold shoe strings, shoes, skirts, overalls, cloth in large rolls, tacks, nails, wire, as well as many other things, plus groceries. Of course Belmont people didn't need many groceries for everyone raised a garden. Most had a small vineyard, an orchard, and a cow.

Belmont ladies made their own dresses from cloth purchased at the Waltermire and Emmett store. The cloth was sold from large rolls. It sometimes happened that two women wore

dresses of the same color and pattern.

The ladies didn't usually have sewing machines and they sewed by hand. Sewing machines were invented by Elias Howe and if you have seen his first model in the Smithsonian you will realize what a genius Mr. Howe was.

A small general merchandise store had opened on Broadway in Redwood City but their opening didn't appear to effect the Belmont Waltermire and Emmett store. It was very busy most of the time. People came from considerable distances in their surries and buggies to shop at the large Belmont store. Their store and the Emmett house were both probably constructed with square nails. Round nails weren't available until nearly the end of the nineteenth century.

Another important item carried in the Belmont store was horse collars and harness. These were needed by everyone who used a horse. Also some riding equipment, such as cinchas, latigo straps, saddle blankets were stocked.

Presently Belmont has three large super markets as well as several small stores selling groceries. Of course there are variety and hardware stores.



In 1910 travel between San Jose and San Francisco took two hours. Towns were separated considerably and the train stopped often. Sometimes it was delayed for good reasons.

For instance, when the eucalyptus fell across the tracks in Belmont, the train had to stop while the men who had felled the tree cut it in two places and rolled a portion from the tracks.

There used to be many eucalyptus trees growing along the right-of-way in San Carlos and Belmont. They were large trees and they were planted about 1882.

Records tell of one falling the wrong way. The men used cross cut saws and had to pull them by hand. The work was hard and tiring. Their boss would tell them that they only needed to work part of the time. The other fellow would pull the saw while you rested on the other end.

The men quickly learned there would be no resting. They had to hold onto the saw handle as it was pulled from them.

Because of danger of trees falling across the railroad tracks, most of the trees were removed in later years. Men cut them up for wood, and eucalyptus burns well. The wood was in demand.

The railroad right-of-way in Santa Clara County was sometimes narrow. It seemed that you could almost pick prunes from the train.

The train station at San Francisco was at Third and Townsend. At San Jose it was at North First Street. Freight trains rumbled

through San Jose on Fourth Street for many years causing noise at the San Jose Teacher's College. They were moved to West Santa Clara Street about 30 years ago.

In Belmont if you didn't want to ride the train you could make your way to San Mateo and ride Streetcar Number 40 to the city.

Streetcars to San Francisco went through Colma and down Mission Street. Trains used that route for many years, then tunnels were built to they could go through South San Francisco to Third Street.

When you arrived in San Francisco you had to catch a streetcar to go to Market Street. It was a ride of several blocks.

The early engines burned coal and put out considerable smoke. Later the engines were changed so they could burn oil. This change was made during the 1930s.

Later, during the 1950s, the engines were changed to diesel oil. This is still used. Engineers handle their engines like large trucks, while they sit in the cab and feed fuel into the cylinders. Firemen don't have so much to do.

We miss the sound of the large steam engines, and their pleasant train whistles. Diesel engines just don't have the same sound. As they roar through town they sound like large trucks on El Camino Real. But the running time from San Jose to San Francisco has been greatly reduced. You can travel from Belmont to San Francisco on a train in half an hour, and from San Jose to San Francisco in an hour.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Since the first settlement began in Belmont there have been many improvements and changes. One has been the collection of garbage.

In the early 1800s those people here not only raised cattle but they also raised hogs. A hog was a full grown pig. Pigs were little. First they became shoats, then hogs. They ate the garbage.

There was no garbage collection in those days. People just tossed leftovers across the yard fence. The hogs ran wild. Everyone had a wood stove and burned old newspapers when they finished with them.

Bells were placed on the larger hogs. The bells were of different sizes and made quite different sounds. People hearing them could tell which animals were out there.

In the fall of the year the hogs would be gathered up and some butchered. First they must be hung overnight, then cut up and the meat salted down. Then it was placed in a coffin-sized box for a week. Then removed and hung in a smokehouse. Wood fires were kept going under the hanging meat for three weeks. Smoking with hardwood gave the meat an appetizing flavor. After smoking it was packed again in the large wooden boxes and

covered with salt, where it stayed until winter when it was used. Bacon cured in this way was tasty and bacon sliced from a large chunk served with eggs made a substantial breakfast.

The fires under the hanging meat in the smokehouse had to be tended often. A large fire might catch the walls, and burn the small building. A small fire was safer but needed attention every half hour or so. If soft wood was used there was always a lot of sticky black smudge on the meat. Accordingly oak, or other hard wood was necessary. It burned slowly and didn't spark.

After laborers killed the hogs they immediately rolled them into a tub of boiling water. This loosened the hair and the hides could be scraped clean. Then the carcass was hung on a tree limb and disembowled and left overnight to cool.

When hanging on tree limbs they must be pulled high enough so the dogs couldn't get at the meat. Hanging meat was usually placed in the yard around the house, or in a small corral at the barns.

Of course nobody can raise hogs anymore so other arrangements care for the garbage. Most people have garbage disposals in their kitchens and grind up left over food.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Old records tell of the first trains coming to the Peninsula in 1863. Before then travelers rode horse-drawn stage coaches. Even after the trains came travelers to La Honda and Half Moon Bay still had no way to travel except horseback and in stage coaches.

Traveling in the old stage coaches was often crowded and the coaches were narrow and when six adults rode inside they sometimes became annoyed sitting so close to other people.

Sometimes men had their wives along and they were hopeful that another woman would sit at the other end of the seat.

Riding up with the driver was a good way to view the scenery but when the weather was bad the ride wasn't very pleasant.

Unlike the longer rides across the country, these on the Peninsula weren't too dusty. You were traveling ahead of the dust and it didn't bother greatly when you were inside.

If you had boarded the horse-drawn stage coach in Belmont headed for San Francisco there was a delay in San Mateo. A stage stop at San Mateo Creek is where a plaque is on a parking garage now. It was immediately south of Mills Hospital. When the horses had been trotting most of the way from San Jose

they were tired. A spare team was always waiting at the stage stop and the man in charge had the spare team harnessed, ready to go when you arrived. It required but a short time for your team to be unhitched and to be replaced with the fresh team. Then you were on your way.

While waiting at the stop there would always be a coffee pot sitting on the woodburning stove, ready for passengers. Most appreciated the short stop and took advantage of the rest and coffee, and the outhouse.

There were other stage stops along the way but the "through" stage only stopped at the one in San Mateo. The one at the 17-Mile House and the one in Colma were used by other stages — mostly those on shorter runs.

Each stop had buggies and spare horses to rent, like the Hertz company presently provides. In 1863 a horse and buggy could be rented for a day for \$1.50, according to old records. Usually the horses were gentle but now and then someone would choose a horse that was headstrong. When trains came in 1863 all stage horses were frightened of the engines and would rear and make a great fuss until the trains had passed.

See Page 15

From Page 14

Very soon after the trains came the stage coaches were changed to a different route and were not used anymore between San Jose and San Francisco. People in Belmont preferred the trains.

When stage coaches were used before 1863, many people waited beside the Old County

Road at Ralston Avenue for sounds of the coach as it approached on the gravel roadway. There were no other sounds except birds singing, but the coaches could be heard for about one quarter mile.

Now there are so many other sounds intermingling with the sound of an approaching train that we can only hear it coming for a much shorter distance.

San Carlos-Belmont Enquirer Bulletin • Wednesday, May 9, 1990 • 14



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In 1864, there were no doctors here nor any hospitals. The nearest hospital was in San Jose.

A midwife was sent for when babies were born. There was one midwife in Redwood City and another in San Mateo. The population was sparse and they were seldom busy.

Several farmers lived west of Belmont where the Spring Valley Lakes are. Also, many squatters lived on the Mezes land. In old Belmont records, I do not find that any babies died during childbirth. Apparently the midwives knew how to handle things.

Babies grew into childhood. One boy had a broken arm in 1866 and a neighbor cared for him. The neighbor split a shake and wrapped the sticks with an old torn shirt, then applied the splints and wrapped the arm. It healed satisfactorily.

While there were no doctors in Belmont, when one was needed someone would quickly saddle a horse and gallop to Redwood City to get a midwife. No telephones were yet available so the word had to go by pony express, as it did when a little girl disappeared in the Janke picnic ground during a picnic. The midwife was brought from Redwood City and stood by during a search for the girl.

While searching, several open wells were discovered. The chemical method of making flashlight batteries hadn't been invented. All the people could do was to shine reflections from mirrors down into the well's darkness. The little girl was never found.

The early Belmont settlers often cared for their ill and healed them without a doctor. When someone had a fever, it was customary to place a pan of warm water under the ill person's bed. This was thought to be helpful. Usually the fever was gone by the next morning.

If someone had malaria, the patient was given quinine. It was a powder form and half a teaspoon was a dose. Following the dose, the patient would swallow half a cup of hot coffee.

If a person had a chill, he was put near the wood burning stove and wrapped in a blanket. He was given all the food he could eat. It was thought that a cure would come if they "fed a cold, and starved a fever."

When someone had a stomach ache, he was handed a bottle of horse liniment to rub on the sore spot. If it dripped down a little, he was instructed to run for the creek. Cool water would relieve the suffering.

When no old-fashioned cure could be found, the person suffering was simply given a hot foot bath.

In 1864, most Belmont people didn't know what to do if a person appeared to be drowning. In one case, it was reported two men held a boy up by his feet hoping to pour the water out of him.

It is remarkable that our Belmont population has increased. Our city has grown greatly since its beginnings, in spite of its treatments.



carlmont history

by Russ Estop

Town seems to pass through different stages like a youth growing up. In Belmont, first there was the Arguello period when there were no houses and only brush covering our hills. Travelers passing through used the Old County Road which used to be El Camino Real. Travelers traveled by horseback or in buggies or surries. There weren't many travelers, but a few passed through weekly.

With the end of the Arguello period about 1850, Sidney M. Mezes took over and owned Belmont. He received about 15 percent of the Arguello Spanish land grant for settling the titles. Old records tell of Mezes coming from Puerto Rico. He built his home in Belmont.

There were squatters on his land to whom he sold land with high interest payments. Old records tell of him joining a law firm in San Francisco, and that his real estate dealings were with his own large acreage as he split it up to make sales.

During the Mezes period, Count Leonetto Cipriani came to Belmont. He arrived in 1854 and sold his property to William C. Ralston in 1864. Ralston added onto the Cipriani house until he had 50 rooms. It is a National and State historical landmark.

Trains came to Belmont in 1863, bringing easier access to the area.

The Janke Picnic Ground was started where we presently find Twin Pines Park. Thousands of people used the beautiful park for club and private picnics.

During the Mezes period, William C. Ralston died in 1875.

The Angelo Hotel at Old County Road and Ralston Avenue was sold to another hotel operator and Angelo moved away. Old records tell of him being indicted in British Columbia for embezzlement.

Businesses were started and the Country Store was built. Old records tell of the death

of Mezes before his house burned. The location of his house isn't positively known. Old records mention Mezes using the Ralston driveway. Isn't it doubtful whether a man such as Ralston would have allowed this? Maybe what was meant was a portion of Ralston

Avenue.

There were several very large houses built on the hilltop above the Ralston mansion. A couple of them still stand.

The Mezes period ended and Belmont's more modern period began.

Between 1924 and 1927, the Belmont Country Club Properties subdivisions came into being. The Congregational Church was built for their clubhouse. A nine-hole golf course was developed on the flat land below the club house.

World War II came and dozens of new

small homes were built. The Starling Homes were built north of Ralston Avenue where the army base and small airstrip had been.

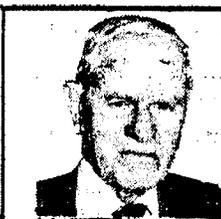
The El Camino Real was moved west of the railroad tracks in 1918. The work progressed slowly with the horse-drawn wagons and the Fresno scrapers.

Businesses were soon established along the new street and continue to operate today.

Ralston Avenue was widened and paved and street lights installed along the street and along the El Camino Real.

Many schools were built and the small city hall was enlarged. Belmont was growing. Now it is an excellent city and we are fortunate to be living here.

12 • San Carlos-Belmont Enquirer Bulletin • Wednesday, May 23, 1990



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont residents have seen many kinds of vehicles as they pass through town. One caravan that attracted attention happened in 1908. In my old files, I have a picture of half a dozen horseless carriages traveling south on Old County Road (then El Camino Real).

Most of them probably came from San Francisco. A group of San Francisco car owners had started a club of owners of horseless carriages. The men wore tan dusters and the ladies wore hats tied on with bright ribbons. Most of the men wore caps. Peninsula winds were sometimes just as strong in 1908 as we find them now.

Another old picture shows a large number of horseless carriages atop the Crystal Springs Dam when it was newly completed. Likely the group also came from San Francisco.

We no longer see these groups traveling along El Camino Real. Cars are more common and people don't get the thrill they used to get. Belmont people do travel, but they do it with their families. With our paved roads, and greatly improved automobiles, Belmonters frequently travel several hundred miles on weekends.

In 1908, when a problem developed with an early car, all the others in the caravan would stop and try to help. Usually someone in the group could figure out how to fix the broken down horseless carriage. The mechanical part was rather simple compared to our modern automobiles. Each horseless carriage owner carried a box of tools and a direction manual.

If the problem was a broken axle, someone would hook his car to the disabled one and

take it in tow.

Car repair shops were not yet in existence. Filling stations were usually a single gas pump in front of a general merchandise store. Sometimes a simple crank pump was attached to a 50-gallon barrel of gasoline. Later pumps had a glass bowl above the pump and the fluid flowed down a hose. You could tell how much gasoline you used by glancing at the bowl.

Metered gasoline didn't appear until after World War I. The pumps then weren't like what we use today. As we examine them in museums we realize how fortunate we are now. The early gasoline pumps couldn't keep up with our present usage of automobile fuel.

After WWI, Belmont had a service station outlet at the corner of the new El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue. A service station still occupies the location.

With the coming of competition from various gasoline companies, all stations began washing windows. Then the operators checked tires. They checked oil. They appreciated your business.

Later, another gasoline outlet came to Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. Then another to Ralston Avenue and the Alameda de las Pulgas. Ray Yonkers operated a station on Old County Road for 30 years. He was well-liked and prospered until his death in 1988.

Our present filling stations are useful but we have to wait on ourselves. In more than 60 years we seem to have gone from no service up to excellent service, then back down to no service. We have to fill our own gasoline tanks.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Doris Vannier was born in Belmont. Her mother lived here for many years before and after that historic event. The mother's name was Adelia Vannier. She was a friendly lady and was well-liked by her neighbors. She had many memories about early Belmont. At one time, Adelia Vannier told me of seeing large herds of cattle being driven through Belmont. She said some of the animals seemed wild and as a girl she and other youngsters stayed near a tree or fence for safety in case a wild cow came near them.

She said the cattle were beef cattle and were being driven to San Francisco, to the butcher yards on Third Street. The area was near the drawbridge, on the bay side of the street, where the odor was unpleasant. Later, the yards were moved to South San Francisco. The Viridin Packing Company was the largest such establishment there.

Adelia Vannier was an elderly lady when I met her. She seemed elderly enough to have known William C. Ralston. He died in 1875. Mrs. Vannier died many years ago and now her two daughters are in their late 80s.

The Vannier family was considered to be progressive and they were good neighbors. Mr. Vannier raised prize chickens. Even the eggs sold for \$5 each, at a time when inflation wasn't nearly as great as we see it now. He won many awards and ribbons at fairs and other gatherings. Following an advertisement, orders came in from across the country.

His daughters, Doris and Florence Vannier,

were descended from the Janke family. One of the Janke family men owned Twin Pines Park and developed it into a popular picnic ground. Thousands of people visited the park from the 1800s to the early 1900s.

Getting back to cattle being driven through Belmont, this would have been on the Old County Road. The El Camino Real was only moved where it is now after World War I in 1918.

A herd of beef cattle would have been strung out along the road for a considerable distance. One cowboy would have been riding at the head of the herd to keep the bunch from taking a wrong turn. At least two other cowboys would have been riding in the dust at the rear. The herd would have been frightened now and then by a passing train. When trains passed, the more intelligent, or wild, cattle would have watched for a chance to escape.

There were always some cattle that were more intelligent than the others, just as there are with people.

Different arrangements were made for moving beef cattle to the markets when the El Camino Real was paved. Corrals were built near the railroad tracks and the cattle loaded into the cars. Cattle cars usually held 50 head. The animals were crowded, but their train ride was short. A cowboy always accompanied the cattle and would poke any that had fallen to get them back on their feet.

Many things happened in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Adelia Vannier was here to see them happen. I feel fortunate to have met her.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The Twin Pines Park used to include more land than it does now. When it was the Janke Picnic Ground, it included the property where The Belmont Hills Sanitarium is located. This was how so many people were accommodated at the picnics. Old records tell of as many as 8,000 persons arriving for a Sunday outing. They must have filled the entire area. Trails led to the top of the hill to the south and many of the young people walked up the hill.

There was a dance platform where dances were held. Bands came by train from San Francisco, and Adelia Vannier told of them marching up Ralston Avenue to the park. Local people enjoyed their music.

There was no Prohibition in the early years and beer was served from barrells. Some people drank too much. Enroute to their homes in San Francisco, following a Belmont picnic, some train windows were broken. The Southern Pacific finally stopped running their excursion trains to Belmont. Following this, many attendees at Belmont picnics arrived by horse-drawn carriages. Some came in horseless carriages. Others came by horse-drawn busses. The busses could bring as many as 25 people per trip.

Boats also brought people from San Jose and San Francisco. An old newspaper item tells of a man trying to come to a picnic on his old-fashioned, high-wheel bicycle. The El Camino Real wasn't paved and gravel was coarse in places. He fell off his bike and dragged it the last two miles to Belmont. Beer soon

revived him and he had a good time as the other men. But when it came time to go home he found that he couldn't stay on his bicycle. He walked to Redwood City pushing his high-wheel bike, according to an old clipping.

Some people owned small sail yachts and when picnics were held, there were always several tied up at the wharf in Belmont. Those people came mainly from Oakland and San Jose. A pier had been constructed at Belmont by Mr. Ralston's men. It was located where we used to see the Navy destroyer in the late 1920s and mid 1930s. The old Navy ship had been brought to Belmont at the time when the promoters were trying to change the name of Belmont to "Port of San Francisco." Old-timers were glad the promoters didn't succeed.

After Mr. Janke died, his picnic ground seemed to die with him. No further advertising was done and people stopped coming. Later, parts of it were sold off and the sanitariums were established. They were the Alexander Sanitarium and Twin Pines Sanitarium.

Many local people think Twin Pines Park is only that part near the mansion. However, if you walk along the attractive trail toward the west and cross the bridge, you will find a large area where picnics can be held. There is a barbeque set-up and some tables and benches. It used to be a good place for picnics — and it still is. Why go out of town for a Sunday picnic? We have excellent facilities here at home, thanks to Karl Mittlestadt, our efficient Park and Recreation director.



Everybody and everything has to have had a starting place. The womb of Belmont was at the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. The streets were roads at that time and had different names. Old County Road was El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue was Road to the Coast. The names were descriptive and everyone knew where they were when they got there.

It was many years before more buildings than Angelo's Hotel stood near the intersection. Angelo's hotel was built about 1850.

By 1856, the wagon travelers had increased so that Angelo's little hotel had to be moved south a foot to be out of the way of passing wagons. The building was added onto and used as the first courthouse in San Mateo County that year. However, it didn't remain our county courthouse for long. When it was discovered that ballot boxes were stuffed another election gave the county seat to Redwood City.

Several years later the little hotel burned and was replaced with a slightly larger structure. This new hotel was built by a Mr. Rowell, who operated the hotel for many years. His completion date was November 1, 1884. He named it the American House.

His building is still there and we know it as The Opportunity Shop. It is owned by Marjorie Mandanis. About the time when Mr. Rowell finished his Hotel Waltermire, O'Neil built and began operating a general merchandise store across Ralston Avenue. It is still there and we know it as "The Pink Building."

Immediately north of the Pink Building was

the grand Saloon. It is painted blue and still standing and used as a storeroom for the operators of the former Waltermire store. Later, Waltermire took in Mr. Emmett as partner and O'Neil sold his interest.

Across the Old County Road, another hotel was constructed. It was painted dark red and remained until 1987 when it was torn down. It was known as The Belmont Hotel.

At the corner south of the old red hotel was a saloon. It was demolished during the 1950s and replaced with a service station.

On the south-east corner of the intersection stood the home and blacksmith shop of Mr. Hammerson. He opened his shop after the death of William C. Ralston, for whom he had been the official blacksmith. He had kept the Ralston horses shod, and all carriages greased and in running order.

In 1942, the first hotel (Angelo House) and its updated portion were added onto as we see it now. Rooms were added at the southerly side.

More people began coming to Belmont and a church and school were constructed on Old County Road, a ways south of Ralston Avenue.

Everyone believed the center of Belmont would always remain as it was then. Changes come as children grow up and towns become cities. If we knew someone as a child, and then saw him a century later, we wouldn't recognize him. It seems to be the same with towns.