

BELMONT LIBRARY
1110 ALAMEDA
BELMONT, CALIF. 94002

Vol. 9

CARLMONT HISTORY
By
Russel Estep

From Enquirer-Bulletin

1990-1991

JNDEX

1. Military Parade in 1917 through Belmont.
2. The Belmont Museum in Twin Pines Park.
3. Our Belmont Police Department.
4. The Morgan Oyster Company.
5. ~~Some~~ teamsters in Belmont.
6. Naming of Belmont Subdivisions.
7. Naming of Belmont streets.
8. Earthquake effects in Belmont.
9. Some of Those Who Made Belmont What It is.
10. Mr. Johnstons Real Estate Office.
11. Transportation in Early Belmont.
12. Some early real estate offices.
13. How some Peninsula Cities were named.
14. Docents are needed to help out in our museums.
15. Swimming in Belmont.
16. Belmont's Ham Radio Operators are There To Help.
17. Belmont Started out To Be a Gentleman's Town.
18. Belmont's Early Realtors.
19. Belmonsters Help One Another.
20. Belmont's First Cemetery.
21. Senator Sharon replaced Ralston in the large house.
22. The flood in Belmont in 1984.
23. A business slump hits Belmont.
24. Health Sanitariums in Belmont.
25. Belmont's Christmas Tree.
26. Developing Belmont Country Club Properties.
27. The Arguello Settlers.
28. Dog Training Center for The army in San Carlos.
29. Hobbies of Belmont People.
30. Travel in 1795.
31. The 1915 World's Fair In San Francisco.
32. Belmont's City Council in Early Days.
33. Dr. Will H. Rebec in Belmont.
34. Belmont's Service Clubs Help Belmont Citizens.
35. There were People Who Treated Horses Badly.
36. Cisterns Under some Early Houses.
37. The First El Camino Real is Now The Old County Road.
38. Belmont, Flower Capitol Of The World.
39. Early Cures For Ailments in Belmont.
40. Early House Construction.
41. Two People Who were Born In Belmont More Than 80 Years ago.
42. Movies Were Produced In Belmont.
43. Early City **Officials** Served Without Pay.
44. Radio Station **KFO** used To Be In Belmont:
45. Belmont's Early Christmas Tree Was Cut Down In The Night.
46. Ham Radio Operators In Belmont.
47. When Embert M. Brown came to Belmont from Hawaii.
48. Everyone Had a Milk Cow.
49. First Fire Truck Was Purchased in 1936.
50. Transportation in the Old Days.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

It used to be that when a circus was coming to town a parade was held the day before. It built up interest and the circus crowd became larger.

Before World War I the government needed to create more enthusiasm from the citizens. A company of cavalry was sent from the San Francisco Presidio to stir up interest. They were from the Sixth Infantry although some rode horses. They passed through Belmont on the El Camino Real — now Old County Road. The year was 1917.

The men camped overnight in Menlo Park at Camp Fremont, and continued to San Jose the following day. In San Jose, the group went to Luna Park which used to be at the north end of 17th Street, where Highway 101 is today. At the park, they got on a sham battle. Dozens of boys along the Peninsula went to San Jose to watch the event, myself among them.

In the sham battle, the soldiers used blank cartridges. They made a lot of noise. Teams of two horses pulled old-fashioned cannons while the horses were running and pulling the guns. They turned suddenly, and men loaded the old cannons very fast and then fired them. I wondered how long it took to get the horses accustomed to the pandemonium.

Foot soldiers raced ahead, then fell to the ground, and fired. It was all practice going to France.

When the "battle" was over, the men tossed their unused shells onto the ground. Dozens

of boys picked them up. My own pockets were soon bulging.

Four years later my father's nine-room house in Shasta County burned. I happened to be there. What a racket those blank shells made as they became hot and exploded. The great noise resembled the sham battle I had witnessed.

Getting back to seeing the soldiers coming, I saw them marching. The officers rode horses at the front of the line. Next came the foot soldiers, and last were the horse-drawn old fashioned cannons. They made good time, coming 25 miles from San Francisco, then another 25 miles on to San Jose.

Apparently the soldiers and sham battle aroused interest, for many war bonds were sold soon afterward. People understood that money was needed to keep the men marching.

A song was being sung called "Over There," and you heard it wherever you went.

When the men went to France some were killed and their families were given flags to display that a son had been in the service. If a gold star was on the flag, it meant a soldier had been killed.

Two days after the sham battle in San Jose, the "parade" of soldiers passed through Belmont again going north. America entered World War I in 1918. It was supposed to end all wars. World War II came 21 years later and we were immediately involved. We must hope World War II ended "all wars."



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Expressions of patriotism seem to come and go. Like the weather — changeable. However, if something arises against our country, thousands of people make themselves known. Just now, it seems to be the American flag. People whom no one thought were especially good citizens cry out about the flag. They feel personally insulted when it's burned.

Some good citizens start museums in their towns. Although they never thought of it before, they want to preserve our heritage.

Belmont has a museum. It is at the rear of the George Center mansion in Twin Pines Park. It is open Wednesday afternoons. Volunteers do their best to keep it in order. Most are senior citizens.

The Belmont museum ranks with some of California's best. Everyone in Belmont should visit it. There are items on display that were used by early Belmont citizens. Tom Sievert is president of the historic committee. Belmont couldn't have a better president and we should consider our city to be fortunate in having this knowledgeable and efficient man.

The committee intends to add more items as they are received. One item in the future will be the old Belmont train depot sign, "Belmont!" Ruth Barrett Parish has it up at her home in Calistoga and she will donate it when someone has time to go there to pick it up.

At our Belmont museum is a glass case displaying Indian items that were found in Belmont. Baskets, pestels, grinding rocks and other interesting things are on display.

Among early Belmont items is a child's sewing machine that operates with a small crank. (There was no electricity in the early days.) Doris Vannier donated the item. Also she donated a child's highchair used by her in Belmont 85 years ago.

There are many photos of early Belmont people. One old photo shows Red Rock Hill that used to be between the railroad tracks and the Bayshore freeway. Its soil was used for fill

when the highway was built. Another picture shows Shantytown, a group of buildings which used to be across the highway near the bay.

There is a display of magazines and books. Two of the books are "Belmont, As We Remember It," and "Heritage of the Wooded Hills." The first is a number of stories by old-timers who lived in Belmont many years ago. Some have expired since their stories were written.

Belmont isn't the only town with a museum. San Carlos has a good museum beside its firehouse on Laurel Street. The building was provided by the Lions Club.

Redwood City has a heritage house where the first county clerk lived. Many persons visit it there across from the courthouse.

Our American heritage and patriotism has risen greatly since flag burning.

Where there is a negative, there is always a positive. The burning of the American flag results in the opposite of what the flag burners want. Museums containing things of our heritage bring out patriotic feelings and people visit the museums and donate whatever they can. Belmont is keeping abreast of the rest of the country.

We are proud that we have an excellent museum. You are invited to come see it, and to see what Belmont was like a century ago.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Before 1926, Belmont's police protection was from deputy sheriffs. They could be called from Redwood City. There weren't many people here and crime was almost nonexistent. Occasional disturbances did occur at the Janke Picnic Ground, where we find Twin Pines Park now. Some men drank too much and fights occurred.

In the early days, horse stealing was considered to be a terrible crime. Punishment was usually by hanging. No old record seems to exist about such punishment in Belmont.

On Oct. 18, 1926, Belmont's City Council elected H.C. Caldwell to be city marshall. After serving about a year, he resigned and Belmont reverted back to deputy sheriffs from Redwood City.

By 1929, Belmont had been growing and had a population of almost 1,000. There wasn't much money in the treasury. The City Council hired W.E. Curtis as police chief at a huge salary of \$75 a month. A deputy was employed to serve without pay. Apparently a problem arose, for Chief Curtis was discharged on April 21, 1930.

Next, the city employed Irwin Nielson as police chief. Then the City Council hired William Neilson as assistant to the chief, and hired another officer July 2, 1930 and on Nov. 18, 1931 still another officer. Now Belmont would be well protected if anything should happen. But the police officers and police chiefs kept changing.

On Dec. 2, 1932, Fred Johnson Jr. was hired as Belmont's police chief. The town was growing. The population had grown to 1,228. World War II was calling many men to serve in the military. Wiley Nugent was hired as a police officer in 1942.

On June 10, 1947, Officer Stan Botto was advanced to chief, but he was fired July 26, 1948. Next, the city appointed Walter Lindholm as chief. He resigned on Dec. 15 and James Lyall was hired as chief. Jim Lyall was popular and was a member of the Lions Club, but he died in office. Lyall Avenue was named after him. Previously he had been a sparring partner for Jack Dempsey.

By now, the population was up to 5,567. Lyall was replaced by George Trenam. Chief Trenam passed away and was replaced by William Singer in 1972. Then Singer left and was replaced by Floyd "Sandy" Sanderson.

After awhile, he left and our present chief, Steve Staveley, took his place. Steve is doing a good job and we hope we will be with us for many years ahead.

Staveley has some good officers, including Lt. Joe Pierucci who "gets along with everyone." Pierucci replaced Lt. James Scales, who retired and presently teaches criminology at the College of San Mateo.

After so many captains of our ship, Belmont has finally settled down to normal unexcitable living. Everyone is happy. And the Belmont ship sails smoothly on smooth seas.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

With summer coming, many young people are thinking of swimming. While early Belmont people swam in the bay, our young folks would find it polluted.

The Morgan Oyster Company had to discontinue their operations in Belmont because of pollution. At that time, it came mostly from the sewer pipe running down Ralston Avenue to the bay. Now pollution comes from some of the many factories near the bay. It wouldn't be advisable to go swimming in the bay water anymore. The county and state have been trying to clean it up but there still seems to be pollution.

After the Morgan Oyster Company closed their operations, our youths were left with no place to swim for several years. Then the Belmeda pool was constructed. It was north of Belmont's library on the Alameda. I swam in it many times and enjoyed my swims. Swimming events were held there and many competed. The pool was large — so large I couldn't swim across it, for I do not swim very well. Now it is filled in and gone.

There is a swimming pool at one of our high schools, but this doesn't seem to be sufficient for our Belmont young people. When we go to resorts in the mountains, we always see young people swimming in the pools.

Over at Santa Cruz, the beach is always crowded in the summertime, and many people are from Belmont. The Santa Cruz beach is more safe than other beaches because it doesn't have undertow.

In San Francisco, we see signs posted along their beaches stating, "No Swimming." Then

we notice tourists clothing hanging on some of the signs and the owners of the clothes in the water. The San Francisco beach has considerable undertow and it is a rare weekend when the Coast Guard doesn't have to rescue someone.

The first settlers in Belmont didn't have the luxury of swimming pools. Most of them had wells dug and drew the water at first with a well bucket and rope across a pulley.

When pumps became available, there was no electricity to run them. Some people installed hand-powered pumps and found this a great improvement over the well buckets. They heated water on their woodburning stove and poured warm water into the wash tub on the living room floor and took turns bathing every Saturday night. It was the chore for the last person to empty out the water and rinse the tub so it would be ready the following Saturday night.

Belmont people enjoy sports and there have been some famous swimmers who came from Belmont. One was a world-wide champion, I've been told.

When we travel to Hawaii, many of us have seen people from Belmont swimming at Waikiki Beach. There is no undertow there and sharks seldom come inside the reef. Like the Santa Cruz beach, it is safe to swim.

I mentioned earlier that I do not swim very well. Actually I swim very well for eight feet. That's how wide the creek was where I learned to swim. There were rocks upstream and down stream.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

When vehicles in Belmont require lubrication, many people go to one of the fast lube outlets and have lubrication done in minutes. But things haven't always been this way.

At first, old timers lubricated their wooden wheel carts with bear grease. This was probably the only lubricant available. Bears were plentiful on the Peninsula in the later 1700s and early 1800s.

When iron-tired wooden wheels came into use about 1820 and bears became scarce, wagons were lubricated with the fat of cattle and hogs. It was many years before petroleum grease was available.

Teamsters preferred mica axel grease. It lasted longer and prevented squeaking wheels. It was applied with a wooden paddle. Teamsters greased their wagon wheels every 25 miles. If they didn't have a crude wagon jack, they managed to lift the heavy wagon with a pole across any available object. Someone would sit on the pole after slipping a wheel outward a small amount. Two dabs with the axel grease usually was sufficient. With a well-greased freight wagon, the team didn't need to pull so hard. It would be easier on the horses.

Teamsters usually felt proud of their teams and would try to make their work as easy as possible. People looked down upon teamsters who didn't care for their teams. Many fights erupted when someone was seen abusing a team of horses. People took the side of the animals.

There were no ball bearings on freight

wagons. The wheels simply revolved on the axel and when not greased regularly, friction developed.

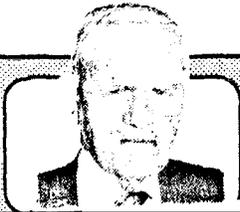
Even in later years after oil was discovered, the teamsters still used axel grease. They claimed it lasted longer than the oil. On hot days, the oil would drain from the axel in a short time. The viscosity of the oil was high, but it wouldn't last.

The first oil wells were in Pennsylvania. Mica axel grease was made from the crude and was in great demand after 1875.

Stages operating between San Jose and San Francisco needed to have their axels greased when they reached the half-way mark at Belmont or San Mateo. They left each place with teams trotting.

Many years ago, someone tried to discover oil along our California coast, but didn't find enough to make their exploration profitable. Wells were drilled near Pescadero and other places. One man reported to me that an exploratory well was drilled near Half Moon Bay. I do not remember any abandoned derrick there.

Of course, there are other things which cause vehicle wheels not to turn properly. There was that Belmont boy in 1916. He drove his family's new car to meet his dad at the train station. When they arrived home, he informed his dad that the new car needed lubrication as it didn't seem to have much power. His dad examined the car and discovered the hand brake hadn't been released.



belmont history

by Russ Estep

When a town begins to grow and add subdivisions much attention is given the changes by its citizens. Soon they forget all about the various differences and controversies and settle down to normal living, much like when a man starts to gain weight.

People notice the difference, then they forget about it and later they accept it and pay no attention. Belmont hasn't always been as large as it is now. Some of our subdivisions were brought about by promoters, others were from necessity.

Consider the hilltop toward the south end of Belmont, west of the El Camino Real. It was in the county until gobbled up by San Carlos. Belmont couldn't supply water to the area. Mr. Louis Morton paid a \$5,000 deposit to hold it while he was trying to get the land into Belmont. He wanted to build houses on the view lots. Finally, he just gave up and lost his deposit. San Carlos provided the utilities and other builders developed the land.

There was much publicity about the land and Belmont seemed divided as to what should be done. All became quiet after San Carlos took the area into their city. Now, it is sur-

rounded by dozens of Belmont houses, both east and west from the border lines.

There are still occasional conversations as to why Belmont didn't supply the utilities.

Down across the Bayshore Highway is Redwood Shores. The Redwood City Council considered some ambitious men who wated their city to grow to collect more taxes. Belmont needed the land since it was adjacent to our city on the eastern side.

Discussions abounded very noisily as to why the land wasn't taken into Belmont. Suddenly, Redwood City acted and Redwood Shores were added to Redwood City to the amazement of some Belmont citizens.

Much of Belmont was developed by Monroe, Miller and Lyon. They named their project Belmont Country Club Properties. The area was taken into Belmont without any fuss because our town was small at the time. (1924 to 1927). The trio who started the big subdivision filed bankruptcy and hundreds of good lots sat vacant until after World War II after which building began.

There was then subdivision out where

See Page 18

Ralston Middle School is located. Mr. Culligan built houses there and Belmont took the project into the city limits.

Before starting it his superintendent came to my office asking whether I would like to sell houses out there. I suggested that the area was so far from town that he might as well

build up at Mt. Lassen, the Muir Tr Yosemite, or Lake Tahoe.

He laughed and left my office. He later b houses over the tract and named the str as I suggested: Tahoe Drive, Yosemite Dr Muir Drive. I couldn't visualize how gre: Belmont would grow. Well, we can't all smart. Even in Belmont.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

If you had lived in Belmont in the late 1800s and been away since then, you would find changes if you returned now. Streets and roads wouldn't be in the same places.

The Alameda de las Pulgas didn't connect, as a street, into San Mateo until about 40 years ago. There was a trail but no way for cars to go from San Mateo into Belmont. When the street was finally connected so you could drive a car through, it was a great convenience for Belmont and San Mateo citizens.

Also the Alameda de las Pulgas didn't go straight southward from Ralston Avenue. It turned off Ralston Avenue about where the Bank of America is located. Then it went southward around the football field and reconnected with the southbound Alameda near where the mortuary is. Turns were sharp and cars had to go slow to stay on the narrow roadway.

The road was a single track where the road connected and lined with trees along the side. It was a dirt roadway and beautiful to travel on. A photo and painting of it is in our new Belmont museum in Twin Pines Park. The painting was done by Mrs. Halstead. She was a talented person and painted many Belmont scenes.

The El Camino Real was what we call Old County Road. It was moved west of the railroad tracks in 1918 during World War I.

The road to the coast didn't follow its present route. The old road is called Belmont Canyon Road and is very winding.

Clee Street used to be a field and when realtors tried to sell lots in the field where their city maps showed a street would be, their buyers usually declined to purchase. The lots were usually priced by their owners at from \$400 to \$600.

Sixth Avenue used to be called Schmoll Street. It had been named for one of Belmont's

early families. Later, the name was changed to correspond with other numerically named streets in the area.

Quarry Road was given its name because it terminated at the redrock hill. The hill was called Newhall Hill by some because the Newhall family lived at the south end of it. It was a large hill between the railroad tracks and the Bayshore Freeway. The redrock from the hill was used for fill when the bayshore road was constructed.

Ruth and Anita Streets were named for the two Swift family girls. Their father was a San Francisco lumber dealer who lived in Belmont. Before the streets were put in, the area was a field where chrysanthemums were grown. People called the flowers "mums."

Johnson Street had been a well-traveled gravel road until the El Camino Real was moved west of the tracks in 1918. Then more width was needed and Johnson Street disappeared.

Janke and Flashner lanes both disappeared as Belmont grew. Development gobbled them up.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

People didn't worry about earthquakes when Belmont was a small town. They knew solid rock (bedrock) was just below the surface. Houses wouldn't receive enough pressure to move them off their foundation.

As Belmont grew out toward the west where there were more hills and steeper terrain to build upon, the city required builders to bore holes down to bedrock and place iron reinforcing rods in them, and then pour concrete into the holes up to the surface. The holes were usually about 18 inches in diameter. Then the usual perimeter concrete foundation was built over the supporting piers. This provided a very good foundation.

County officials were aware of early Belmont's shallow bedrock and when a county committee met to plan for a major earthquake, they decided that in case of such an emergency, persons from adjoining towns could be moved to Belmont temporarily.

Individuals sometimes built their own homes without a contractor and mistakes were sometimes made. A house on a steep slope on Marburger Street slipped a little and had to be demolished several years ago. It lacked reinforcing rods in a deep hole to support it on solid rock below.

Later, houses on the same street have had no problem as far as I can determine. While bedrock is very shallow in downtown Belmont, it is there farther out, but deeper.

Belmont had very little damage to the small conventional homes during the October 17, 1989 earthquake. The houses built north and south of east Ralston Avenue hardly suffered

any damage in the earthquake in October.

There were some amusing incidents during the October quake. Mrs. Janice Madruga had just driven over some "slow" bumps in a parking area when the quake hit. She happened to look into her car mirror and noticed another car crossing the bumps and her car was shaking. She instantly thought, "That's strange. I am sitting here and he crossed the bumps and I'm feeling my car shake." Then it occurred to her that there was an earthquake.

I have heard there was minor damage to the 116-year-old Ralston mansion, but it has likely been repaired by this time. As far as I have heard, there was no damage to the George Center mansion in Twin Pines Park. They say it was built out of concrete so that probably helped. Actually the damage from the October earthquake was very spotty.

Belmont is prepared for almost any kind of disaster. We have good communications as provided by the ham radio operators. My own ham call is W6AUC and our group practice every Monday evening on 147.85 khs. There are many check-ins from other cities. If another earthquake comes, our city is prepared. We hope we can tell them there is no damage here.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont has had some men and women who have made great efforts to help our city. One was Juel Christensen who owned Christensen Nursery. He was very active in the Chamber of Commerce for many years. He passed away several years ago. It was Juel who headed the project to have the first trees and shrubs planted along the entrance to Belmont from the Bayshore Highway. Now the growth is large and hides the buildings on the north side. He did many other things for Belmont.

Then there was Lloyd Malech. He owned Malech Engineering on Old County Road. Lloyd died several years ago. He had been instrumental in getting crossing arms at the Ralston Avenue and Harbor Blvd. crossing. He was responsible for lighting on Old County Road. He had also been president of our Chamber of Commerce.

Then there was George Tiegel, owner of Tiegel Manufacturing Company on Bragato Road. He invented and manufactured storage battery assembly machines. People had to assemble batteries piece by piece prior to his invention. Following his invention, batteries could be assembled in groups in only a fraction of the time. Prices dropped and the entire country benefited. He was a past president of the Chamber of Commerce. While he was president, the big effort was to get a highway built from the west end of the San Mateo bridge directly to Ralston Avenue. George didn't succeed, but he tried.

His company is still in business and is operated by his two sons, Eric and Raiph. Eric has been a president of the Chamber of Commerce.

Then there was Ed Hannibal. He was greatly respected and people called him "Mr." Hannibal and wouldn't even think of addressing Mr. Hannibal by his first name. He was our telegraph operator and train station agent when we had the old train depot here. We could ship things on the train-track side of the depot on the high platform at the north end of the depot if we wanted to send them by railway express.

The Chamber of Commerce tried to have the old train station restored but didn't have enough money in its budget. The historic building was torn down and replaced with the present building. The present building was moved here from East Hillsdale Blvd. in San Mateo. It had been a real estate office and its owner had been in some kind of trouble and had closed his office.

Mr. Ray Kelly was another Belmont man who worked hard for our city. He had been city clerk when Belmont was first incorporated and had worked all his life trying to make Belmont a better place to live in.

Annette Alexander had owned the Alexander Sanitarium which is now the Belmont Hills Sanitarium. She had been generous and had made donations to Belmont youths. She

See Page 11

was a director of the Chamber of Commerce. A park is named after her. She died many years ago.

Belmont wouldn't have been the wonderful city it is now if these civic minded persons hadn't spent a part of their lives trying to make it so.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In research we often find very unusual things about Belmont. One is that we have three streets that were never named. Actually, however, they were roads at first. Nobody thought they would ever become busy streets.

Davenport Bromfield, a surveyor who laid out Hillsborough, was a very old man when I knew him 40 years ago. He told me about North Road, Middle Road and South Road and why they were laid out. He hadn't laid them out, but he knew the men who did. It is easy to verify the need for the three roads as to how the land was at that early time. A picture in our new Belmont museum shows the old train station and the bare hill to the west beyond it.

Mr. Bromfield was familiar with Belmont and he told me that several people wanted to build houses on the top of that bare hill. Teams with Fresno scrapers cleared the brush and scraped enough earth so wagons could traverse the distance to the hilltop. No names were given to the roads, and one of them terminated at Daisy Lane. Daisy Lane was

changed later to Notre Dame Avenue, after the college moved to Belmont from San Jose in 1923.

Belmont was a very small settlement. Its center was Ralston Avenue and the new roads were north of it. Accordingly, people began designating the new roads as the one to the north, one in the middle, and one to the south. No official names were given. They were north of Ralston Avenue and most of Belmont. The names were fitting and Belmonsters can still know where someone lives when they say they are living on one of the three roads. No one calls them "streets."

Another mystery for new people is where was First, Second, Third, and Fourth streets? Our numbered streets paralleled the El Camino Real, toward the south end of Belmont. Fifth is the first street west of El Camino Real. The others are non-existent. The others were intended to be east of the railroad track, but that area developed with east and west streets, not north and south.

When El Camino Real was widened in 1918,

one street was eliminated. It had been Johnson Street, named for an early settler. The wide El Camino Real gobbled it up.

Mr. Johnson had been an early real estate man with an office on the south side of Ralston Avenue just west of El Camino Real. He was an uncle of Doris and Florence Van-

nier. Their parents too had been early settlers.

Belmont is one of the very few cities in the United States where no Market Street, Broadway or First Street are found.

Everyone is invited to visit our new Belmont museum where you may view photos of early Belmont. It is open Wednesday and Sunday afternoons.



carlont history

by Russ Estep

Sometimes Belmonsters must drive a block or two to find a parking place while they shop. To attend a special event such as a concert in Twin Pines Park, some Belmonsters had to park three city blocks away. It bothered them to walk that far. Doctors often advise people to walk more. We see them walking morning and evening trying to follow their doctor orders.

Seventy years ago, people thought nothing of walking 10 or 15 miles.

Once when I was young and had been called to Shasta County to manage my dad's 3,000-acre cattle ranch, I walked 10 miles after someone had untied my saddle horse when I was attending a country dance. I had probably squeezed another fellow's girl too tightly.

Before everyone had automobiles, many people traveled by horseback. They tied their horses to hitching racks or trees. Most stores provided the hitching racks, although some only provided a single post with a three-inch metal ring to hold a rope or bridle reins.

Old photos show a hitching rack in front of the Waltermire and Emmett Store on Ralston Avenue, at Old County Road. The picture shows several vehicles with the teams standing, untied. One must wonder if the vehicles were available when the owners were ready to go home.

Horses sometimes were old and tired and gentle. These animals welcomed the chance to

rest. They wouldn't run away. Other horses couldn't be trusted to remain standing while people shopped.

Teams occasionally ran away. Sometimes, the wagons were upset and their contents spilled by the roadside. One such event occurred at Redwood City in 1890. No one was hurt, but the owner began whipping the horses when he caught them. Bystanders sided with the horses and one man fought with the driver and told him never to beat his horses again. Presumably, he learned a lesson.

Many early men dismounted from their saddle horses and dropped the bridle reins on the ground. Most saddle horses appeared to believe they were tied up. They seldom moved to run away.

With wagons, the teamster always set the brake before leaving his wagon. His team couldn't go far even though they might start to leave.

We see some people taking good care of their automobiles — washing and polishing them weekly. It used to be the same when we had horse-drawn vehicles. One man in early Redwood City decided to paint his buggy. He painted three wheels red, then his paint can was empty. He drove his buggy around for several months with three red wheels and one green. Everyone laughed when they saw him passing.

Transportation has changed dramatically in the last century.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont was a small town in the 1920s and 1930s. When I drove my Model T Ford around town, the streets were narrow dirt roads.

Alameda de las Pulgas had beautiful eucalyptus trees along its sides, especially near where Carlmont High School was built. I found it a real pleasure to drive there.

The hills north of Ralston Avenue, east of the Alameda, were bare except for a few large homes built during the late 1920s. Horses were pastured there in the field.

The rolling hills west of our Carlmont area were bare except for the large white house owned by the "Macaroni King." His home became the California Sanitarium. When I visited a friend there one time, I noticed the "Macaroni King" had silver doorknobs. There is a picture of the large house in our Belmont museum.

There was a golf course west of Cipriani Boulevard called "The Rattlesnake Course." When a group of us were in San Mateo at "Victorian Days in the Park," a man stepped up to our table and told us that he had killed a rattlesnake out there. Many snakes used to be in undeveloped Belmont.

All View Way was a single track dirt road until after World War II. I owned a house at the west end of the road and kept it rented. My wife wouldn't live so far out of town. My renters killed several rattlesnakes. Now the street is paved and built up on both sides. The homes there have a wonderful view.

Toward the end of World War II, while I was foreman for Baker Construction Company, I built many houses in Belmont. Many were where the other golf course used to be, on level ground west of the Ralston mansion.

West of El Camino Real, and toward the south end of Belmont, the hills were mostly

bare. At that time only a few houses were there, mostly with tile roofs. They had been built between 1924 and 1927. They had been restricted to 1,200 square feet.

The land east of the railroad tracks was mostly bare land.

The hills west of the highway and north of Ralston Avenue were mostly undeveloped. Later, some streets were put in and named Anita, Ruth and Belmont avenues. The first two were named for daughters of Mr. Swift who had owned some of the land. Chrysanthemums were raised on some of the land, especially where we find Irene Court.

Juel Christensen hadn't moved his nursery to Belmont yet from San Francisco. The land he purchased was bare. Later, he donated land for the Masonic Building and Masonic Way.

The Belmont Casino on Old County Road had been flourishing for many years by 1930. During World War II, a lady named Elsie operated a bar on Old County Road across from the casino. It was popular.

James Monroe, Joe Marino and Paul Gardiner were active real estate men many years ago. Jim Connolly owned many lots farther out in Belmont and was very active in selling them. D. St. George operated the former Johnson real estate office in the block west of El Camino Real on Ralston Avenue. Sprague Smith worked for him before opening his own office. Norman Meyer was active here after leaving the Paul Gardiner office. Louis Morton and Ken Henker were members of the early Lions Club and were selling real estate.

All these men did much to help our city by bringing people to the area. They were a real asset to our city, and helped Belmont grow.

Correction from last week: Yes, Belmont does have a Broadway Street.



earlmont history

by Russ Estep

After trains came to the Peninsula in 1863, the railroad company advertised various stops along the line. Years later, a name appeared on train schedules which nobody understood. It was "Pumork." It was supposed to be halfway between San Carlos and Belmont. Yet nobody could find it.

The people understood the names of Peninsula towns. They knew San Mateo had been named for Saint Mathew, San Bruno for Saint Bruno, San Carlos for the King of Spain — who wasn't a saint. Burlingame was named for Anson Burlingame, who had owned a thousand acres where the town was.

Redwood City was named for the lumbering nearby in the Woodside area. San Jose was named for Saint Jose; San Francisco for Saint Francis. Palo Alto was named for two large redwoods that used to be growing near El Camino Real beside the railroad tracks. (One remains.)

Millbrae was named for D. Ogden Mills, who owned a large estate there and had a huge house high up on the hill. He had been secretary of the U.S. Treasury. The town was not started until 1927, however.

Daly City was named for John Daly, a cigar-smoking real estate developer. He probably never dreamed his town would grow to the extent we find it now.

The train trip from San Francisco to San

Jose took two hours. The woodburning engines didn't travel very fast and they stopped often. We can find a resemblance to our early Peninsula trains by riding the famous Skunk Train from Willets to Fort Bragg. It stops almost anywhere to take on passengers or to drop off mail or packages. The 38-mile trip takes about three hours each way, not including the half-hour stop at the halfway point.

Our Peninsula is probably fortunate that early people gave such good names to Peninsula towns. In other parts of California, we find unappealing town names. There is Buzzard Roost east of Redding on Highway 299. The early miners in California's foothills were gamblers and some early settlements became known by names suited to their environment.

One was Ingot, where a large gold flotation plant operated until it was closed in the 1920s. The gold was melted and formed into ingots for easy handling.

There are many early California towns which have become ghost towns.

There never was a town named "Pumork" halfway between Belmont and San Carlos. The pumping works is no longer there and no one wonders about "Pumork" anymore. It was simply a shortened version of pumping works which used to be there for the San Francisco water supply.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

When people visit our new Belmont museum, they are shown around and things are explained to them. The people who do this are called docents. Training is being provided for these people.

One lecture lasting one and one-half hours took place on Sept. 13 at Ralston Hall. Other lectures for Belmont's docents took place Sept. 20 and 27. All lectures are held in the evening at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome. There is no charge.

It is believed that when our docents have received training, you may find visits to our museum more educational.

Please keep in mind that docents are human beings. Some will give you more, and better, information about what you are seeing. However, all will have information that untrained docents do not have.

In other museums throughout California, and at historic places, trained people are there to help you. Usually you will find them friendly and that they know a great deal about the history of the place they are caring for.

Some working for the forest service are paid by the state or by the government. Others donate their time. Our local docents will not receive any payment for their time.

Throughout California, some will be retired people in order that they can meet people and have someone to talk to.

Go to any grove of Redwood, or to any historic spot, and you will leave with a good taste in your mouth. There are so many places to visit that you may find yourself traveling all the time.

When you have company, take them to the hilltop over at Pacifica where the Spanish men dismounted from their saddle horses to view the San Francisco bay. There is a monument there and you can see great distances just as the Spanish explorers did.

Most Peninsula cities have local museums, but our county also has a museum. It is at the College of San Mateo. Go there and turn right to a parking lot. You will see a sign on the first floor. Many items of early San Mateo County are being displayed.

They also have many early books for you to browse through. You can see an early carriage used by wealthy Peninsula settlers. You will see photos made from glass plates as were used a century ago, and earlier. Study them and consider the many changes which have occurred since then.

By taking your children or grandchildren to visit museums, you may find they will become interested in history and therefore become better citizens.

If you decide to help in one of our historic places, just contact our history museum any Wednesday or Saturday afternoon.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Several Belmont people have asked where earlier people swam. I told them that before 1924 many swam in the San Francisco Bay. The water there wasn't polluted yet and they found it safe to dive in. One built places where clothes could be changed. Some rented these little cabins for \$10 a year. Others went in back of the little cabins to make their change. All enjoyed their swim.

The Morgan Oyster Company had a building at the edge of the bay where they kept some tools for opening the oysters and a few other items. Then the old sewer line that had been installed from the St. Joseph Military Academy at Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue became used more with larger enrollment in the school, and the oyster beds became polluted. The company closed down. The large piles of shells at the bay side, however, weren't all from the Morgan Oyster Company. Earlier, Indians liked oysters and mounds of shells remained for many years where the Indians shucked the shells. A display of shells shucked by Indians is on display in our Belmont museum in Twin Pines Park.

Belmont boys occasionally swam in Waterdog Lake after they could no longer swim in the bay. There was no lifeguard and parents usually tried to control their offspring and keep them at home.

When St. Joseph School was in operation, it had an excellent swimming pool. The school was taken over by the city when the school closed. It was appropriately known as the Belmeda Pool. It was used for many years until

costly repairs were needed. It was located on the west side of the Alameda, north of the Belmont library.

In 1924, when the Belmont Country Club Properties were being developed, the developers had an excellent pool constructed in back of the clubhouse (Congregational Church). Because of high insurance rates, the pool was filled in with gravel during World War II.

The little creek flowing out of Water Dog Lake never had been dammed up sufficiently for Belmont's youths to swim in. About all the boys could do was to wash their feet. Now several homes in Belmont have private pools in their yards. The Belmont Holiday Inn has an excellent pool.

With good roads to the coast, some families drive there on weekends so their offspring can swim. However, there is dangerous undertow and youths occasionally find the surf is more than they can handle. Rescues by helicopter from the Coast Guard are common.

Many of our Belmont boys and girls have learned how to swim at their high schools. These schools have swimming instructors and usually lifeguards. Children are protected.

It hasn't always been like this. A hundred years ago, the earlier people sometimes used a poem to caution their children. It went something like this:

*Father, may I go out to swim?
Conditionally, my pretty daughter.
Hang your clothes on a hickory limb,
but don't go near the water.*



There appears to be no record of whether our local Indians used smoke signals to communicate. They seem to have everything they needed right here. It is possible they had no desire to communicate with other tribes. Had they wanted to communicate, it would have been quite easy to send smoke signals across the bay. There wasn't any smog in those days.

Belmont has had communicators since the Indians for many years. Old timers will remember the KPO transmitting station and its tower beside the Bayshore highway. Dampness helped and their station signals could be heard for great distances. They had an excellent ground for their transmitter.

A ham operator named Forest Bartlett, W60WP, sent code signals for amateurs to copy coast to coast from Belmont.

Another ham who lived on top of Belmont hill was heard everywhere, although his signals weren't as loud as Bartlett's. He didn't enjoy having a good ground for his apparatus. His call was W6LF, and he used phonetics when people couldn't hear him well, as in "W6 Leaky Faucets." Some people may have thought he was serious — that Belmont lacked plumbers.

Presently, there are a group of ham operators practicing every Monday evening to be ready if a disaster should start here. My own ham call is W6AUC and I join the group weekly. Although most have low-band equipment, they run their net on two meters. They operate on 147.45khz, which is very adequate for their practice sessions. Usually about 30

hams check in.

There is excellent fellowship among Belmont's hams. They have get-togethers monthly and about twice a month they meet for breakfast. They compare notes as to whom they have contacted and about what the distant hams had to say.

These fellows have helped out when disasters have occurred throughout the world. Most have phone patches so they can help more efficiently. When someone far away wants to reach our east coast, and can only hear us on the west coast, we make collect telephone calls to whomever they want to speak to. This allows the phone company to receive considerable extra income.

The Morse Code reaches out farther than voice transmissions and most Belmont hams can use it. There is almost always someone "on the air" in Belmont. Some hams are retired and others use their equipment on days off.

Some people ask whether ham equipment will cause interference in telephones or TV. The answer is "no." Filters are being used by hams, and newer equipment has these filters built in. Modern ham equipment won't interfere with TV when used in the same room.

The FCC allows hams to use up to 1,000 watts. With a good antenna, 100 watts will reach around the world when conditions happen to be favorable. All ham operators must be licensed and licenses are obtained from the FCC following a rather difficult examination regarding electronics and operating practices.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There were a number of settlements that flourished during the time when our west was being settled. Later, many petered out. Some, in the Sierras, leave interesting names. There was Hangtown, Buzzard Roost, Rough and Ready, and many more.

Belmont was in a good location and survived. Being halfway between San Francisco and San Jose was a natural. No boom, such as gold or mining, brought about Belmont. Early settlers found this was a desirable location in which to live. The climate was good and transportation convenient. Daily horse-drawn stages soon began operating not only north and south, but over the hills to the coast.

Towns that continued to grow in population had good reasons for their growth. San Francisco's was shipping and San Jose's was prunes.

During the 1920s, as many as 25 ships were arriving and the same number sailing from San Francisco each day. The port was busy.

If you had a desire to see a foreign country, it was easy to sign aboard a ship. After receiving a first-class commercial radio operator license, I soon found myself bound for South America as a radio officer. Presently, most shipping is going to Oakland. Belmont hasn't had international shipping.

At San Jose, the people had many hopes for a deep sea port at nearby Alviso. Newspapers often carried enticing stories about how that could be accomplished. But it never happened.

Missions San Jose and Santa Clara were operating ranchos. Gringos began arriving and planting prune trees. The trees were all over

the valley, right up to the city limits.

Notre Dame College was established on west Santa Clara Street. You will find a street with that name just north of the old DeAnza Hotel. It moved to Belmont in 1922.

The El Camino Real was a two-lane gravel road in the 1920s. East of the railroad tracks were hay fields and after the hay was cut, milk cows were to be seen pasturing there.

Most of Belmont's hills were bare in the early 1920s.

Belmont was more of a gentleman's town than California's foothill towns. There was Ralston's mansion, the Ross house, the Alexander Sanitarium, and the macaroni king's house, which later became the California Sanitarium. The large house of George Center stood in what is now Twin Pines Park.

The developers were advertising the Belmont Country Club properties.

St. Michael's Chapel was built in 1920. The St. Joseph Military Academy was operating.

The early Central School had been dedicated and the old school on Old County Road had been sold for \$62.50.

The Hanson house stood on the north side of Ralston Avenue and several other houses stood on O'Neill, Waltermire, and Emmett streets.

The blacksmith shop had closed, and been replaced by a car repair shop and gasoline station.

Belmont was showing growing pains, but was growing in a way that would bring it up to the fine city we see now.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Businesses in Belmont operate differently than they did a century ago. It used to be that when a man wanted to sell or trade his property, he met with the buyer himself without a real estate person. Sometimes they sat on a log and whittled while they dickered. Why they whittled I'll never know. Perhaps it helped to keep them calm so they could reach a decision. The seller would try to get his price, but if the buyer refused to quite approve of it, they would suggest a cow or calf, or team of horses, to make it an even trade.

When they finally agreed on terms and price, they went to an attorney who would search the records and when that was done he would present the seller with his bill, and an abstract of title.

The abstract of title would include all deeds prior to the transaction. Since California was, at that time, a newly settled state, there wouldn't have been but only a few deeds.

The first real estate man in Belmont appears to have been A.P. Johnson, whose office was in an old house on the south side of Ralston Avenue, a few doors west of El Camino Real. Johnson is shown in an old photo sitting at a roll-top desk in his office. He was an ancestor of Doris Vannier.

Finally, title companies started operating. One of the first, and still in business, is San Mateo County Title Company. They provided people with abstracts of title and

guaranteed that the title was clear.

In my old Belmont files, I have two of these abstracts of title both dated about 60 years ago. Both are by the San Mateo County Abstract Company in Redwood City. The title company has changed its name and goes under the name of First American Title Co. now. They are still in business.

There are quite a number of title companies in our county now. They are important when selling property and help keep things from becoming unraveled. Realtors too, must be very careful in drawing up papers.

Forty-four years ago, there were only 16 realtors in our area. Now our board has more than 1,200 subscribers to the Multiple Listing Service. Forty-four years ago, the deposit receipt forms for writing up a sale consisted of one page. Now there are four and all but one is double sided. To protect the sellers, all must be filled out. One dollar is legal tender and in the past 44 years I have accepted \$1 from customers as an advance deposit on houses when they had no more in their pockets. Each increased the amount the following day.

Belmont citizens are fortunate in that the California state Department of Real Estate keeps close track of persons in the real estate business. There are no logs left for men to sit on while they whittle, and men no longer carry whittling knives in their pockets. I guess things have improved.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Although Belmont was settled by other than common laborers, many business people needed to start their day much differently than we do now.

They burned wood to cook and heat with because they had no electricity. They had to get up early to feed their horse or horses and to milk the cow. If they could stay in bed until 6 a.m., they thought they were having a holiday. The horses stomped and cows would bawl, wanting to be milked.

When the housewife was ready to build the fire, she sometimes found the woodbox empty. If her children weren't up, she would have to bring in wood herself. Wives didn't live as easy as most do now.

After cooking and serving breakfast, she would need to wash the dishes. The bucket would often be empty and she would need to go out to the well and draw some water with a well bucket or pump it with the pump handle. Either would require some effort.

Possibly, the well would be low and only half a bucket could be drawn. Droughts occurred then the same as now.

When she returned to the kitchen, she sometimes found the kitchen full of smoke because she had forgotten to turn the damper. She had one advantage though. With a door open she wouldn't find the kitchen temperature much lower than it had been. Belmont's climate has always been moderate.

Her husband would soon come in from feeding the horse and milking the cow. She

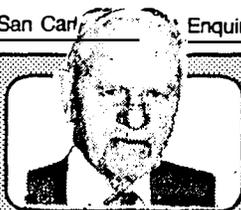
would strain the milk through a cloth and place it in a burlap-covered cooler. Then she would place breakfast on the table, but the baby would be crying. It would be an hour later before she could sit down and attempt to eat her own breakfast. Already she would be tired, and the day had hardly begun.

They didn't have a telephone yet and the only one in Belmont was at the Waltermire and Emmett store.

A man on horseback rode up to the gate and informed the family that another neighbor lady was in labor. They needed help and there was no hospital. Hurriedly, the woman washed her dishes, put them away in the cupboard, then washed her hands and walked to a neighbor's place to help her. The husband had taken the train to San Francisco to work in his office for the day.

The nearest doctor was in Redwood City and it would take more than an hour for him to harness his horse, hitch it to his buggy, and drive to Belmont. Neighbors had to help each other.

This condition still exists and in Belmont we often find neighbor helping neighbor. Although Belmont has grown from a tiny frontier village to a population of more than 26,500, its citizens are friendly and work together. Service clubs have been formed and groups have consistently pulled together to improve Belmont and to help our citizens. No doubt this will continue. Belmont is an unusually good place in which to live.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

As I visited with friends in Belmont, we noticed some children actively burying something in the yard. The woman explained to me that their pet bird had died during the night and the children had become attached to it. They would miss their pet and they were giving it a funeral. She said she had told them to toss it into the fireplace, but they wanted their pet to have a proper funeral. They placed a crude wooden cross on the pile of dirt when they had finished.

All the children were crying and I could sympathize with them, since I lost my pet dog, "Teddy," when I was about their age.

There is a large pet cemetery at Colma but Belmont has none. There are other cemeteries here though.

The first item in old records that I can find tells of an effort by people in Belmont to purchase "The Mound" for a cemetery. This item is dated Dec. 20, 1873 and was in the "San Mateo Gazette." No mention is made of whether the land was purchased.

Another old item of approximately the same date tells of Father Dempsey purchasing 10 acres of the "Daily Tract" for a cemetery. A note on the old record states that the "Daily Tract" was opposite the Catholic School. Since this was many years before the Catholics purchased the Ralston estate, I wonder just where the school had been located.

There is an old pauper cemetery out at the west side of Belmont, and this may have been what Father Dempsey purchased. This cemetery hasn't been used for many years, and is overgrown with vines and tall dry grass. There are a few dilapidated grave markers and a few have numbers carved into wooden

crosses. Possibly, the numbers would indicate the person who was buried there.

The location of this old graveyard is north of Ralston Avenue, and west of Christian Drive, near Lori Avenue. There is no sign or marker, but the area is easily identified by the old wooden crosses and occasional stakes marking graves. Only indigents were buried there, according to old records.

Early Belmont people were sometimes buried at the old cemetery on Woodside Road in Redwood City, or taken to Colma to one of the several cemeteries there.

William Ralston was buried in San Francisco at the Laurel Hill cemetery which was covered by the large Safeway store. The old gravestones there were mostly used for riff-raff for the south tower of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Some people say bad luck comes when graves are disturbed, and the Safeway store hasn't succeeded so it was removed a year ago. Two of Belmont's early settlers had been buried in back of the little house in Twin Pines Park, but their remains were later removed and taken to the old Redwood City cemetery.

Ivan F. Phipps of Portland, Ore., started the cemetery on top of the ridge between Belmont and Half Moon Bay. After getting it started, he sold it at a large profit.

When he came into my real estate office about 30 years ago and told me he intended to start the cemetery, I tried to discourage him. I told him nobody would want to be buried up there on that windy hilltop. But I was wrong. He knew what he was doing and succeeded. He said that when people in Belmont live where there is a view they prefer to be buried where there is a view also. He was right.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

There were some changes made after Sen. Sharon took over Mr. Ralston's property in 1875. Sharon began advertising that guests in the Palace Hotel could stay as long as they wished in Ralston Hall by paying an extra dollar a day for their Palace Hotel rooms. Many took advantage of this offer. They came to Belmont by the new train running down the Peninsula, and welcomed the opportunity to stay awhile in the country.

Mrs. Ralston had moved out of the large house and was living in the gardener's cottage at Carlmont. Old records tell of her living there for two years, then moving across the bay to Oakland.

It was Sharon's son who started Sharon Heights in Menlo Park. Old timers will remember the huge house where the shopping center is now out on the west side of Menlo Park. The large two-story house had its exterior covered with shingles. It possibly contained more than 10,000 square feet of floor space.

After having lived in the Ralston mansion awhile, young Sharon wouldn't have felt cramped in his Menlo Park home.

In Belmont, Sen. Sharon entertained almost as much as Ralston had done. Sen. Sharon's daughter married Lord Hesketh of England in the mansion and it turned out to be one of the Peninsula's high points that year. Many famous people attended the wedding and

reception. One old item tells that at least 50 carriages filled the driveway and barn area, with grooms watching the horses so they wouldn't run away.

One interesting thing about the old Ralston mansion is that nobody seems to have lived in it for very long. Count Cipriani had the south, downstairs portion built and lived in it for about 10 years. Ralston bought it in 1864 when Cipriani returned to Italy to participate in Garibaldi's war. Then Ralston lived there 10 years. Each seems to have been limited to 10 years. Considering their influence on Belmont, the time seems short. The residency of Ralston and Sharon ended with their deaths.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur has lasted until the present. They purchased the property in 1921 and occupied it in 1922. It is likely that College of Notre Dame will still be in Belmont a century from now at least, and maybe much longer. Notre Dame has a good reputation and has turned out some outstanding graduates.

Belmont has grown into a fine city of 26,500 but there is one thing we don't have. We don't have a jail. Non-conformers are taken to the Redwood City jail. Our police department is efficient, and over the years has grown from a single officer to more than 50. We are well-protected. Crime is low. When out-of-towners arrive in San Francisco and want to go to the country, they must go farther than P-



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Have you visited Belmont's museum lately? One item would be of special interest. The grinding rocks dug up at Twin Pines Park are of various sizes. Most of us had never seen mortars and pestles smaller than a standard size of about 10 inches in diameter. Some of these are as small as 6 inches. They vary just as modern women's dishes in their cupboards vary.

Someone has donated a complete uniform which was worn by students at St. Joseph's Military Academy in Belmont. The school was where we presently find the Carlmont Shopping Center.

The shopping center land has become considerably more valuable than when William Roth purchased it. He paid \$11,000 per acre which was thought to be very high but now the land would be worth many times that.

A man has asked me if there is a large spring near the shopping center. I explained to him that there is a large pipe under the parking lot and it carries water from Water Dog Lake toward the bay. A large spring feeds Water Dog Lake.

Old records tell of William C. Ralston having 100 Chinese working with picks and shovels and wheeling the dirt in wheelbarrows to build the dam to form the lake. What a long lineup that must have been — one barrow back of the next being pushed by coolies.

It is likely that Ralston could get his laborers quite cheaply. Old records tell of him paying only a pittance when the men built the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Ralston's carpenters received as much as \$1 a day but they were the skilled men. Probably no carpenters were employed in construction of the earth-fill dam at Water Dog.

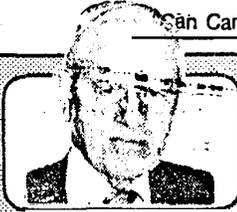
There is no lifeguard at Water Dog Lake, so swimming is discouraged. Besides that, the water is cold.

In 1984, we had more rain than usual and drainage from the hills flowed down into the little creek. It overflowed. Some offices along El Camino Real found mud an inch deep on their floors when the flood receded.

A furniture man had stored new oak furniture in a Matson Navigation Company shipping container and after the flood he located it near San Carlos. The flood had carried it there. The main reason for the flood was that the culvert for trains south of Harbor Boulevard had become pulgged beneath the tracks and water couldn't flow through.

Also, a man from the street department entered a large pipe that carried water under El Camino Real from Fifth Avenue to Old County Road. He was to clear out some rubbish that was blocking the flow of the muddy water during a storm in 1984. He cleared the pipe and then couldn't return to Fifth Avenue against the strong current. Another man tied a rope around himself and floated downstream and rescued the workman.

Without any rain now, and a drought for four years, such exciting things do not happen. During a drought in the 1920s, people sang "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More." If this drought continues, they may sing it again.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In these unsettled times with many businesses slumping, it isn't easy to get many groups together. People seem to have other things to do. Many don't have time to attend club meetings or even the Chamber of Commerce. It didn't used to be this way.

An old newspaper item dated April 4, 1878 tells about an I.O.O.F. Lodge picnic. It was held in the Janke Picnic Ground (now Twin Pines Park) and more than 7,000 attended from San Francisco, plus another 1,000 from San Jose and around here. The people came on trains from up and down the Peninsula.

During August of this year, I attended a similar lodge picnic at Saratoga and only 1,500 were there. How things have changed.

The slump affects nearly every lodge and club. For instance, our Belmont Lions Club used to have 50 members. Now it is down to 18. Other service clubs have similar declines. In some, it is difficult to have a quorum when they vote.

Many labor unions find attendance at meetings far below normal. Some people are changing to real estate, hoping for a sales commission. Attendance at the multiple listing breakfasts is about as high as it has been. About 250 attend regularly. New persons from other businesses keep joining. Some old-timers haven't handled a sale of property for many months. Some of the new people seem to think they will very soon be driving Cadillacs. They will likely change to another profession after a few months as their debts rise.

Prices on property are falling, but not

enough yet to attract many buyers. Buyers' offers of 50 percent less than the listing prices aren't low enough to attract sellers so far.

People who aren't working join protesters for one thing or another. They seem to enjoy being in a crowd. They may be seen almost any time in San Francisco yelling and blocking streets.

There have been protesters for many years. In 1894, many people joined the big railroad strike. Others picketed at stations. When the Great Depression began and stocks fell in 1929, there was hardly any picketing or demonstrating. People spent their time searching for work. Some sold apples on San Francisco streets. They purchased them for 5 cents and sold them for 10 cents. Some made enough in a day to buy a bowl of soup.

Builders at present are having a problem selling the new homes. Some have been offering their houses for rent. The builders must make construction loan payments.

Presently, the place where we can always find a large gathering is at St. Anthony's Dining Room in Redwood City. People are being fed and some bring their families. Other people donate money for the food.

Belmont doesn't have hungry people. A few years ago, the Lions Club collected money from members to purchase Christmas baskets for hungry families. When the baskets were delivered, it was discovered that several of the recipients had Cadillacs parked in their driveways. They didn't need help. We in Belmont are very fortunate.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

In the 1950s, the mechanic who operated the car repair shop on El Camino Real, two blocks south of Ralston Avenue, sold various car parts. One accessory sold by him was the Hassler shock absorbers, which were used on Model T Fords. They were coil springs that attached to each end of a car's front horizontal spring. Cars equipped with Hassler shock absorbers provided drivers with a much more comfortable ride.

The name isn't common so it may be that Dr. Hassler, who operated the Hassler Health Center near Belmont, was the inventor. He might have made his money from sales of the shock absorber so that he could start Hassler Health Hospital, mainly for persons with tuberculosis.

It was well-known that clean air and rest helped persons with tuberculosis to recover. The Hassler Hospital closed several years ago, but there were other hospitals that treated tuberculosis here in Belmont. Another was the Howard Foundation hospital.

An old newspaper item dated June 12, 1924 tells about Charles S. Howard of Hillsborough providing \$200,000 to start a tuberculosis hospital in Belmont. He turned the money over to the Charles S. Howard Foundation. Howard was a wealthy automobile man. He also had owned Gallant Sir, a big winning race horse.

The hospital he established was on the north side of Carlmont Drive, near where the Merry Mopet Nursery School was established later.

The Howard Foundation treated and cared for hundreds of patients. After lengthy convalescence, most patients recovered. The location was ideal — with clean air and plenty of rest.

With modern medicine, the hospital became outmoded and was closed. It was replaced with apartment buildings.

Then there was the California Sanitarium, located in the largest Splivalo house on the short street connecting Lyall Drive and Carlmont Drive.

Splivalo had been a manufacturer of macaroni in San Francisco. He was a well-to-do man and his large house had silver door knobs, which I discovered once when visiting there.

Patients with tuberculosis were referred to Belmont from all over California. Our climate was considered to be that good.

We presently have several sanitariums, but they are for different ailments. They are the Belmont Hills sanitarium and the Hill Street Convalescent Hospital. The Belmont Hills sanitarium treats alcoholics and drug patients and the Hill Street Convalescent Hospital cares for old folks.

Belmont citizens live a little longer than people in some cities. People from other places are often surprised when visiting with local people when they discover their age. Local people sometimes appear to be 10 years younger than they really are.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

After the Spanish took over the Belmont area from the Indians, they celebrated Christmas. It has been celebrated here since 1795.

In 1956, when Charles Cook was Belmont's mayor and I was president of the Chamber of Commerce, we did some things that haven't all been done since then.

We purchased a Santa Claus suit that fit Charley. Then we borrowed a little red wagon. We purchased a large bag of hard candy all wrapped and ready for distribution. Charley boarded the little red wagon but he was so stout that his sides overflowed. I handed him the bag of candy and another Chamber of Commerce member pulled the wagon and Charley along Ralston Avenue. He tossed the wrapped candy to children along the way as far as the Alameda. Then the little wagon and Charley were turned around and Charley was pulled back to El Camino Real. People laughed and Belmonters had a good time.

There used to be a beautiful redwood tree on the south side of Ralston Avenue in the first block. It was Belmont's official Christmas tree. Chamber of Commerce members Juel Christensen and Al Penna arranged to have lights and decorations put on the tree. It was beautiful when the lights were turned on that Christmas Eve. Many people came to admire it. Some people from a church sang Christmas carols beneath it.

Ed Vallerga thought we should have some decorations across Ralston Avenue. He called the Pioneer Flag Company of San Francisco and we rented five strings of lights and decorations. That was all the treasury could spare. But they were much admired. George Tiegel furnished a fork lift which we had to use to place the strings of decorations up high so they wouldn't interfere with traffic.

Of course, the electric company objected to the strings of decorations being on their poles. Everyone was too busy to remove them until Christmas had passed. In following years our Chamber, with some financial help from Mrs. Annette Alexander, purchased many strings of decorations. Finally, there were enough for the first two blocks of Ralston Avenue and four at Carlmont Village on Ralston Avenue. Some merchants along El Camino Real complained and wanted to be included, saying Christmas came there as well as on Ralston Avenue. We purchased wreaths and these were put on poles along El Camino Real.

The beautiful redwood tree was removed one night when the office buildings were being built on the south side of Ralston Avenue.

Presently, Belmont's official Christmas tree grows through the dining room of the Pine Brook Inn. Following an annual party to celebrate lighting the lights on the tree, the mayor turns the switch. The tree glows beautifully.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Almost from the beginning it appears that water in Belmont has been rather limited. An old article in the Redwood City Tribune dated Feb. 10, 1925 states that the developers of the Belmont Country Club Properties would provide water only to those person who purchased their vacant brush-covered lots. Others couldn't tie into the water pipe. I do not know where they found water, but they apparently found a source.

At first the capital stock of their new company amounted only to \$5,000 — not much for development of 980 acres.

Their first application was filed Feb. 24, 1925. They developed 10 subdivisions starting with Belmont Country Club Properties Number One. It was followed with other similar subdivisions up to and including No. Ten.

The developers hired a bulldozer to scrape streets. They laid out the roads 40 feet wide, but only scraped them wide enough for a single wagon or car.

The developers had the clubhouse constructed. It is now our Congregational Church. A large swimming pool was constructed behind it. The pool has been filled with gravel.

The developers had a solidly constructed entrance gate with substantial posts for the entrance to their first subdivision. It was on El Camino Real at the north end of Belmont. It was completed March 11, 1925.

Then a sales force was needed and the firm of Monroe, Miller and Lyon was asked to take over and sell lots. These men had buses bringing people down from San Francisco on

weekends.

The prospects were provided with free box lunches. Then they were driven around our Belmont hills on the newly constructed dirt roads. The sightseeing trip ended in front of the clubhouse where the sales crew had a little found office. It is still there.

With such good treatment, most people purchased lots. Prices were comparatively high, being about \$3,000 each, but the price included a membership in the country club.

A nine-hole golf course was built below the clubhouse. It was where we find Fairway Drive, Chevy Street, Avon Street, etc. Prior to the golf course, that portion of Belmont had been a pasture for horses, and before then it was Mr. Ralston's hay field.

The Union Paving Company was given a contract to pave our Belmont streets. In lieu of payment, they acquired many Belmont lots. Some of their lots were still available as late as 1947. I sold several.

There were several other subdivisions in Belmont but the Belmont Country Club Subdivisions were by far the largest.

Some of the lots were very steep and were not built upon for more than 50 years. Bedrock is shallow under much of Belmont, and presently builders bore down to it and put in long piers up to foundation level. Those houses likely are as safe as those with perimeter foundations.

With the slump in real estate sales the builders aren't doing much building at this time. However, things will change someday.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The year 1991 has rolled around. This makes 195 years that a new year has been celebrated in Belmont. The year 1795 was when the Arguello family received the 34,200-acre land grant which included part of San Mateo, all of Belmont, San Carlos, Redwood City, Atherton, Menlo Park, and a little of Palo Alto. The land grant was given by the King of Spain in appreciation of Arguello helping to establish the Spanish in California. He had been in charge of the San Francisco presidio, as well as several appointments.

The Arguello family first lived where Cordilleras Avenue and San Carlos Avenue meet. There was a spring there and, for many years, a monument. The monument is gone and the spring seems to be piped into the sewer.

In 1821, the Arguello family moved north of San Carlos Avenue to a new headquarters on Cedar Street. About a block north of San Carlos Avenue, on Cedar Street, there is a wide place where the Arguello settlement was located. A small old house on the north side of Cedar Street is claimed to have been one used by the Arguellos. It is still occupied. When I examined it a few years ago, I found it to have been well-built of redwood and that it had double walls and several decorations not found in many buildings.

San Carlos Avenue was first used as the Arguello driveway to El Camino Real. (It is now Old County Road.)

Several members of Belmont's history committee have been doing research on old

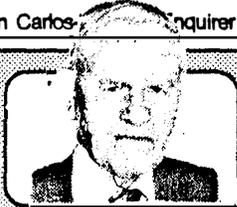
buildings. They have found several, but not as old as 1795. One of the oldest is the little house on the north side of Frances Street, near Notre Dame Avenue. It was moved there from the Ralston property several years ago and had been the gardener's cottage when Ralston was alive. Incidentally, Ralston's death came in 1875.

Most of Belmont's old buildings were constructed in the late 1800s, such as the pink building and the Opportunity Shop across the street. What our city may do following the research is apparently not yet finalized. Someone has suggested that a marker be installed in front of our historic buildings. Some owners of historic buildings say they hope the city fathers will no longer require taxes. Because the city always seems to need money, it is doubtful that these property owners will get their wish.

When the research project is completed, the history committee will likely have pamphlets printed telling the location of historic buildings so people can drive by.

Our older buildings were built with studs and double walls — unlike houses in the gold country. Those were mostly built with boards and batten, and single walls. They had to be built quickly and that way was fastest.

As years pass, our buildings become older and older. English people laugh. They don't consider a building old until its age reaches 2,000 years. It will be a while yet before Belmont's older buildings reach that age.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Land use in San Carlos and Belmont has changed since World War II. For instance, some other carpenters and I built the dog training center up on Crestview Drive in San Carlos. Now the hilltop is covered with large condominiums. That is a big change there since 1943.

Before we built the Army Canine Corps center, the hilltop had a nine-hole golf course. The Devonshire Country Club occupied the area. Their clubhouse was on the east side of Crestview, and I had found the view terrific when eating there.

We worked 10 hours a day building the center. It was a hurry-up job and Mr. Culligan was the contractor. Club Drive was just a single-track dirt road. I found it interesting to see the workmen's car lights winding up Club Drive before daylight, and returning back downhill in the evening after dark.

Some people asked what was going on, and they sometimes said they heard dogs barking. We couldn't tell them where the sound came from. The government had a slogan back then — "Loose lips sink ships." No one talked during World War II.

After the war, they probably learned where the dog barking sounds came from. After the war the buildings and kennels, officers and soldiers' barracks were removed. It had taken a group of us six weeks to complete construction, but the work was destroyed in half a day. All material was

removed, and the hilltop reverted back to bare ground.

The large and beautiful clubhouse had burned, and that area is covered now with expensive condominiums and houses. The Devonshire Country Club is no longer there. Golfers miss it and the good lunches at the clubhouse.

Every carpenter working on the construction vowed that when the war ended he would build a house on the hilltop. All had enjoyed the wonderful panoramic view when working there. As far as I know, none ever lived there after the war. The view encompassed the bay from San Jose to San Francisco.

Incidentally, there were many Army Canine Corps dogs trained at the center. One was especially intelligent. When his trainer spoke to him, he appeared to understand everything that was said. I believe he was the same breed used now by the police.

Another area that has changed drastically is the location of Belmont's airstrip. It was located where the Sterling houses are, in the area north of Raiston Avenue and west of the Bayshore Freeway. The airstrip was not paved and it extended from east to west. I once won a contest by writing, "Why everyone should learn to fly," and my award was a free ride for myself and family. I had previously flown many times, but this was the first flight for my wife and daughters in 1946.



earl mott in his bry

by Russ Estep

Most children play with toys and value them highly. Most adults play with grown-up toys and refer to them as their hobbies.

Some have boats, some have horses, and some have airplanes. But they are grown-up toys. People relax with their toys and wouldn't part with them for anything.

They often attend meetings of other people who enjoy the same hobby. They have picnics together and luncheons. They go on tours together. Horsy people ride in parades so they can wave to the crowd. Boaters sail in regattas and races. Some men even have toy trains. They are known to place the track around their living room or dining area. When you visit them you had better not misstep on the train track.

The horsy people don't participate in rodeos. They ride their horses on weekend "just to exercise the animal."

Some yachts are large and costly to operate. Wives sometimes complain that "that darn boat is getting more attention than I am."

Probably the greatest hobbyist of all was Lucius Beebe. He had a private railroad car. Lucius made considerable money from his book about railroads. He purchased a railroad car and had it furnished and decorated better than many homes.

About 20 years ago, the car was placed on a spur track in Belmont, so everyone could see its interior. Many Peninsula people visited it. It was located across the main railroad tracks, a short way east of Old County Road and south of Harbor Blvd.

When I went through it, I noticed the living portion was well-furnished; the dining area had a dining table complete with a white tablecloth. The kitchen was similar to home kitchens. The two bedrooms were suitably furnished: one for Mr. Beebe and one for his cook and housekeeper.

I wondered about the many places he visited. The car would have been left on sidetracks here and there. He would have had to rent a car to go into the towns.

His private railroad car is presently in the railroad museum at Old Town in Sacramento. You can't go into it but it is easy to look into the windows. The interior appears to be comfortable.

If you go to Sacramento, you will find the old car inside a large old brick museum building. It is surrounded by wood-burning steam engines and other equipment, all no longer in use.

One railroad car has a motor under it so it moves just as it would if traveling down the track. You can hear the whistle from what appears to be up ahead. Sound effects are provided.

The biggest difference between children's toys and adult toys is the price. Adult toys are more expensive.

If the subject comes up about hobbies, always be certain that you avoid the word "toys." Better to compliment the person about his scientific research. Then change the subject. Most men wouldn't like it if you said they were "playing with toys."



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Before the development of transistors, most of the Peninsula including Belmont was bedroom communities. The new companies and their factories in Silicon Valley brought changes.

Belmont's population in 1940 was 1,228. Now it is more than 24,000. San Jose has grown far more than anyone could imagine. Their population is considerably more than San Francisco. When people say they are "going to the city," we must wonder whether they are going north or south.

Builders have frantically built houses trying to keep up with the growth. Some have been caught with completed houses in which they are unable to find buyers. As the recession advances, builders suffer more and more. They must make construction loan payments. When their large homes stand vacant, some are amenable to offers. They need to keep food on their tables.

Belmont may not grow so fast for a few years, but it will continue its growth. Who would have thought that tall buildings would be constructed near where the Sea Scouts used to be? Other tall buildings will be built for offices or factories in Belmont.

So far, both San Carlos and Belmont remain "two-story towns." We all like it as it is. But it will continue to change. Someone has said to me when there is no change there is death. Belmont is a live town and this won't happen.

There have been continuous changes

since this area became settled. It is hard for us to imagine our city as a part of a huge cattle ranch. Yet that is what it was in 1795 when the Arguello family owned 34,200 acres here, which included most of the Peninsula.

They used lamps, had no electricity nor running water and they traveled by horseback or in horse-drawn vehicles. They cooked on wood-burning stoves. We think they lived primitively, but they probably felt that they were living very modernly.

Roads were unpaved and there were potholes, and it was rough going when they traveled.

To drive to Mission San Jose or Mission Dolores took all day. When they arrived, they had to stay overnight. Old records indicate that they didn't travel often. Sometimes, creeks were high in wintertime, and roads were dusty in the summer. Traveling was uncomfortable.

The southerly end of San Carlos was a large hayfield before World War Two. Belmont hills were mostly bare. A picture in the Belmont museum shows the lack of houses in west Belmont. There are other old photos in the Belmont museum.

Belmont's museum is open each Wednesday afternoon from 1-3 p.m. There is no charge. You would find interesting things on display if you visit it. You would get some idea of how Belmonters used to live.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The completion of the Panama Canal was celebrated in 1915 with the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Belmont was a small town at that time. Most people traveled on the train to see the fair. I went there many times with my grandmother. We would go on the train to Third and Townsend, then take a street car and travel to the Marina where the fair was held.

I was 12 years old and remember the first thing we saw was the Tower of Jewels at the entrance. On the right when we walked through the Tower of Jewels was the engineering building where spark radio signals were being sent loud and clear. I had wished I could understand the code, but it was several years before I had mastered that.

A very large mogul steam engine was on display and the cab was right in front. It was to be used to pull long freight trains over the Cascades on the way to Portland.

We saw a beautiful dining table and chairs that had been made by school children in the Philippines.

We walked and walked through the Fine Arts Palace. It doesn't seem so big now, but when I was 12 years old it seemed immense.

There was a small train running along the edge of the bay and we rode it.

Lincoln Beachy looped the loop overhead in his biplane. Later he had an accident and was killed.

The year 1915 was only nine years after the big earthquake, but San Francisco was rebuilt so you couldn't see any damage.

We visited the Japanese building which was moved to Belmont after the fair and became The Van's Restaurant. It is still operating.

We also visited the Ohio building several times and, after the fair, it was towed down the bay to become a restaurant. It burned, however. Hap Harper had plans for it which were cancelled following the fire.

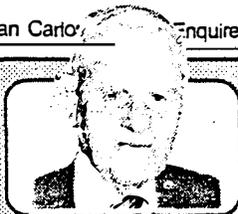
There were many ferryboats out on the bay — some running to Oakland and some to Sausalito. People came from everywhere to visit the fair. It only lasted one year because World War II started for some countries and they withdrew their exhibits.

Many countries had exhibits at the fair. I think we visited all of them. Of course, we didn't do this in just one day. We were there many times. It took a while to do the exhibits justice. I thought they were all outstanding.

Probably, most California and Peninsula people visited the fair in 1915. Crowds were large.

The Marina area was later built up with houses. It is covered now from Lombard Street to the bay. The houses are built right together and when earthquakes come only the end houses have damage usually.

Riding the steam train to San Francisco seemed wonderful. The noise of the puffing engine was something we don't hear anymore. When we go to San Francisco now most of us drive our cars and fight heavy traffic. Things in Belmont aren't as they used to be.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Since ancient times, when men have met, someone must be a leader. Even the Indians met as a group to discuss things. Items found in Twin Pines Park indicate that an Indian tribe had lived there and likely was called together now and then by their chief.

When Belmont was being settled by white men, they soon chose their mayor and councilmembers. Many important decisions were made. Later councilmen met in the old Central School. However, the school building was torn down and replaced with a Safeway store. A new Central school was constructed on Middle Road.

Finally, the council voted that Belmont should have a City Hall. The council made this decision on June 29, 1943. They purchased 12 vacant lots on Sixth Avenue south of the fire station. The price they paid for all 12 lots was \$3,500.

A City Hall was constructed and meetings were held there. It is still our City Hall.

Some newspaper writers used to poke fun

at Belmont. No one knows why. The result was that some people sort of looked down on our city because of it. Folks crowded into the City Council room because of the adverse publicity. Soon, a larger meeting room had to be constructed to accommodate the crowds. It is our present council chamber. About 30 or 40 years ago, the room was often crowded with people. Some said they came for the show.

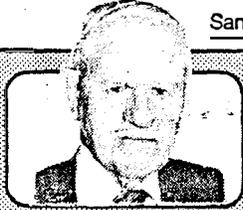
Belmont was smaller then. City expenses were accordingly small. The budget for 1943-44 was only \$23,000 and that represented a \$2,000 increase from the previous year. The tax rate was raised to 80 cents from 73 cents. Many complained. The amount was barely enough to pay expenses.

Some councilmembers wanted to discuss items that would be coming up at later meetings and they met for lunch at a San Mateo restaurant. Reporters heard of it and headlines proclaimed a "wine and dine" situation.,

The Brown Act was passed in Sacramento and it became illegal for councilmembers to meet separately from the others at their regular meetings. People in nearby towns laughed at happenings in Belmont. One of our best councilmembers, Charles H. Cook, became a scapegoat. Wally Benson took some of the heat. Wally was more or less a political figure and was often seen smoking a cigar like a big-town politician. People loved him, and were proud of local talent.

Another well-liked councilmember and later a mayor, was Ed Vallerga. Another was Dr. Morton Podolsky. There were others. Business was conducted and problems settled efficiently, just as now.

Our present council in Belmont do their work well and crowds are rarely present. Publicity is given in the papers ahead of time and citizens discuss them over their back yard fences and at their regional meetings. They reach decisions and advise their favorite councilmembers of what they would like voted for or against. Then they trust the council to vote correctly and don't bother to go to the meetings. Probably this is as it should be. Belmont, as a city, is running smoothly. We have good councilmembers.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

As California became more populated, its citizens had more stress. Not that the early miners didn't have stress. It was quite awful when a miner worked for weeks thinking he had found gold, only to be told he had found iron pyrite, referred to as "fools gold." This happened hundreds of times. The substance resembled gold.

Other things happened in early days as the population increased. Some people needed a psychiatrist. Belmont had one.

Dr. Will H. Rebec, a noted psychiatrist, came to Belmont in 1929. He became a staff psychiatrist at Twin Pines Sanitarium. He helped thousands of patients, and Belmont became known as a medical oasis.

Dr. Rebec worked with Judge Ben Lindsey to get our California laws changed to help psychiatric patients. Shock treatments were used, but infrequently, following the change. Patients recovered faster, and were not treated so cruelly.

A year after Dr. Rebec arrived in Belmont, he purchased the Twin Pines Sanitarium and continued to operate it until his death. He died Sept. 10, 1941 at Mills Memorial Hospital in San Mateo (later called Choche Hospital).

Dr. Rebec had never been married and resided with his mother, who lived at Twin Pines. She lived for many years after her son's death and died Nov. 12, 1858. She became half-owner of the sanitarium. She resided in the little cottage at the rear of the large George Center home. She was 96 when she passed away.

Dr. Rebec was born in Michigan. He studied medicine in Europe for 10 years

before starting his own practice.

He was a member of the San Mateo County Health and Welfare Board. He was a member of the state Medical Association, the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Rebec was also a director of the National Association of Private Psychiatric Hospitals. Obviously, he was quite a man.

He had competition at the hospital because Mrs. Annette Alexander owned and operated the Alexander Sanitarium next door. She had established her hospital (now Belmont Hills) in 1929. Both hospitals were full most of the time.

When we visit Twin Pines Park and walk around in it, we often think of patients having been there, and what beautiful surroundings they were in.

All kinds of patients were sent to Twin Pines Hospital. Dr. Rebec treated them all. One patient needed a notary public and his wife took me to see him. They greeted each other with extreme friendliness and then she told him she had brought me to notarize divorce papers. He responded, "That's fine, honey?"

She then told him that her attorney said she should have the house, shopping center, the five apartment houses, etc.

He didn't bat an eye, and said, "That's fine, honey. Where do I sign?"

When we left, she commended that "he was her fifth husband, and the worst of the bunch." She was glad to be rid of him.

I felt sorry for the man, and decided that he might be a multimillionaire.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

The Belmont Lions Club has been active in helping the blind and people with poor sight since it was formed in 1947. They have purchased hundreds of eyeglasses for Belmont students who need them. They have paid for eye examinations when their treasury permitted it. Although they have had fund-raisers, they haven't always been flush.

Belmont's service clubs do much to help the community. The Rotarians, Kiwanis and other service clubs do a considerable amount to help Belmont's youth.

Belmont Lions have paid for expensive surgery for several people during the past year. They send the patients to the Lions Eye Foundation in San Francisco where the club is a member. Cataracts and other problems have been taken care of.

The club has purchased white canes now and then as they have been needed. Some Belmont citizens are blind. The Lions Club has also helped to pay for guide dogs for some people who couldn't afford the expense.

Recently, when visiting the Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael, I was amazed at the number of sightless people. There was an annual graduation for those with the dogs. I attended. I learned that the organization is supported mostly by Lions' Clubs in California and other western states.

The organization has many acres of land and several large buildings, and they employ 104 persons full time.

At the graduation ceremony, sightless people were guided by their newly acquired dogs to the front of the crowd. Once there,

they told where they were from and how much they appreciated the dogs.

A demonstration was given and it was amazing to see the dogs perform. They all appeared to be well-trained and did everything their new masters asked them to do.

When a blind person came to the top of a stairway, the dog would stop and wait until the person moved their foot ahead. Only then would the dog guide the blind person very slowly down the incline.

When the person stopped, the dog always moved to his left side and sat down.

Several people had come from Oregon and Washington, as well as California. Each had had their dog for many months to become accustomed to it. Each had also spent one month at the training center with their dog.

Most of the guide dogs appeared to be golden retrievers, but there were some black dogs and an occasional brown one.

Many of the dogs are bred at the center. The 4-H Club members take the dogs for a year before they are given to a sightless person. The 4-H Clubs help blind people very greatly by this project. They have also donated dogs.

Although many people in Belmont do not hear about it, our service clubs are out there doing a great job. We should all be proud of their work here. And we wonder why more people don't join the Lions Club. They only have 18 members.

Both men and women are welcome to join.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

One old building in Belmont was the Grand Saloon. It was built by Mr. A. N. Ranger and completed July 29, 1871.

His advertisement in the *San Mateo Gazette* in the county library states that it had just opened and was ready to serve the public. It was built out of concrete and located adjacent to the pink building.

Mr. Ranger's advertisement states that it was fitted in fine style and that he was ready to greet old friends. It is still there and its

exterior is painted blue. It isn't very large, but there weren't many people in 1871. It was adequate. It is one of Belmont's oldest buildings.

The word "saloon" was dropped when Prohibition came. The word is seldom used anymore. We have bars and liquor stores now.

Old saloons usually had a hitching rail and watering trough out in front. These were to induce patrons to stay longer.

Usually, people drank their whisky straight. Nowadays, they nearly always order mixed drinks.

Teamsters and others sometimes became drunk and beat their horses. In one incident where this happened, a man named Karl Hemsted sided with the animals and thoroughly thrashed a driver who was beating his horse. Most people usually sided with the horses. They became alarmed when they saw someone abusing a team.

The straight drinks often caused men to become intoxicated. The word then was "drunk."

One man whom I knew of came home drunk. When his wife protested, he threw an ax at her which stuck in their log cabin. She left it there and showed it to him the following morning after he sobered up. He understood that he had almost killed his wife and had barely missed hitting her. People said he never drank again.

When the west was wild and Belmont was new, it wasn't unusual for one man to treat a stranger to straight whiskey, then to in-

duce him to play poker. This probably happened many times at the Grand Saloon. Usually, the stranger wouldn't know what was happening until all his money or gold dust was stacked in front of the dealer.

There were some sad occurrences a century ago. One cattleman had just sold his beef and was planning to purchase food and clothing for his family for the coming winter. He entered a poker game and became a loser. His family suffered through the winter without proper clothes and food. The following year, he was sober enough to go to his bank before entering a card game at the nearby saloon.

A century ago some awful things happened, but I wasn't here to personally witness them.

We often hear of automobile drivers zigzagging down the highway, but we never hear of them "beating" their cars. A century ago, some people beat their horses. Perhaps things are better now.

This is the 10th year I've written this column.

351



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Our rains came late this year. This has happened before and we were sure there would be a drought. We are not up to our normal amount of rain, but possibly our rains might continue so rationing won't be needed. Droughts have occurred now and then for many years here.

The large William C. Ralston home was built with a cistern under it. When it was discovered many years ago, however, it was empty. Those who discovered it reported that it was large enough for a boat to be used to cross it. It held considerable water. It could be filled from a nearby well and then used when needed.

Another building with a large container under it is the old pink building. Two members of our historical society recently explored under the pink building at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. They were Tom Sievert and Denny Lawhern. They located a trap door in the store building and lowered a ladder and climbed down it. They reported that it was built of bricks and was empty.

While we do not know what its use had been, it might have been either a cistern to store water or an old hiding place.

Denny reported that it possibly had been built as a part of an earlier building, and then the pink building was built of wood above it later — in 1903. Many exciting

speculations can be made about the room below the pink building, such as that it was a liquor hiding place during prohibition, or a place to hide their days' money or gold receipts.

It's possible there are other hidden rooms under old houses in Belmont. Several years ago, I was showing a house for sale in the lower section of Redwood City. The winter had been rainy and some floods had occurred.

When a client and I entered the house, the owner cautioned us not to open a certain door. The client forgot and opened the door and started to step through. The owner called to him to wait. She quickly closed the door, but before it was closed I looked through the opening and saw muddy water up to the living room floor level. The client didn't buy the house and I always wondered afterward whether he could swim. But let's get back to cisterns.

Forty years ago when the former German consul's house in Hillsborough came on the market, I went through it. There was a large cistern underneath which would have held enough water for many months. It was about eight feet deep and 30 feet long by 12 feet wide. It was empty when I saw it.

When I was shown through the house, I was more interested in the many secret passageways and hidden doors. The German consul had lived there in 1918 during World War I.

There may have been some other early Belmont houses that had cisterns. If cisterns were in use now, we might not have so many dry lawns in the fall.



belmont history

by Russ Estep

It is hard to think of our El Camino Real as it used to be. It was what we call Old County Road now. Then, in 1918, it was moved west of the railroad tracks where we find it now.

When it was first moved, it was only a gravel road; then the road was paved and a few years later it was widened to two lanes. How modern and ahead of the times that seemed to be!

Still later, the two lanes were widened to three lanes. However, three lanes seemed to produce accidents because people were hitting their cars head on in the center lane. Many were killed. Four lanes were established many years later. Accidents were fewer.

There was gravel along the sides of the pavement and it was many years before the gravel was replaced with pavement to the curbsides.

Businesses along El Camino Real were few and far between for many years. Now we have business establishments on both sides. The same condition existed in San Carlos. The Bruce Bauer Lumber Company was one of the first there. However, San Carlos is planning an underpass in their area and some businesses will be closing in a few months.

A used car dealer and several other businesses also will be moving, according to my informant. It seems that the railroad tracks will be moved slightly west when work begins. Belmont and San Carlos continually change.

Belmont is planning an underpass at Ralston Avenue and we wonder whether businesses near there will be forced to close.

Many streets intersecting with El Camino Real are narrow. The developers wanted to sell larger lots, so they laid out streets only 40 feet wide. The width seemed very adequate at the time, but now they are narrow.

Traffic was so sparse in the early days that the Angelo Hotel was constructed in the middle of what became Ralston Avenue. It was between what was then El Camino Real and where the railroad tracks were located. An old item in the San Mateo County Library tells of the old hotel burning on Dec. 22, 1866.

The present Opportunity Shop was built a few feet south so that the increased wagon traffic would get by more easily.

Old records in the San Mateo County Library tell of one of the first purchases of property along Belmont's El Camino Real. Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler came to Belmont from Indianapolis in 1922. They purchased the vacant lot at the northwest corner of El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue. A filling station was soon established on the corner, and service stations have been located there ever since. Presently, a Chevron service station occupies the site.

The first gasoline pump was in a cart and the operator turned a crank to put gasoline into an automobile. Later, this was replaced by pumps with glass containers high at the top of the pumps and markers on the glass indicated the amount of fuel customers were getting. Years later, this arrangement was replaced with more modern gasoline pumps by the oil company. Our El Camino Real merchants keep up with progress.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

People as well as towns change so much in 50 years that it is hard to recognize them.

When an old friend came into my office recently, I didn't know who he was. I hadn't seen him for 50 years. Time changes everything. Belmont is different than it was. We know it as it is now, but this is not how it used to be.

The hill at the south end of town was bare, but closer in there were a few stucco houses that had tile roofs. There were houses on both sides of the first block of Ralston Avenue instead of stores.

There was nothing on the east side of El Camino Real. There were no houses along Ralston Avenue except for the first block until you reached Alameda de las Pulgas. Out there there was the St. Joseph military Academy. Their football field was where the shopping center is now located.

There were no houses farther out, except down the hill off Ralston Avenue was the California Sanitarium which had been the home of Mr. Spivalo. He was a well-to-do man who manufactured macaroni in San Francisco. He was called the "Macaroni King."

North of Ralston Avenue were the Mills and Ross houses, up the hill away, west of El Camino Real. Also, the Swift house was north of them.

Chrysanthemums were grown by Chinese people where we find Irene Court.

On Ralston Avenue where we find Chevy Street, there had been a nine-hole golf course. A few English style houses were scattered in the area. Most were two stories and they are still there.

On the hill south of Harbor Blvd. stood the large house of the man who was superintendent of the pumping station. The pumping station was in a large corrugated, sheet-metal building between El Camino and the railroad tracks. South of it and up

the hillside quite a distance was the tall stand-pipe of the Spring Valley Water Company. The water came up Old County Road and the pumps forced it up into the tall stand-pipe. Then it flowed back down under the pressure of gravity and on to Burlingame and San Mateo.

The large house, resembling a castle just mentioned, was occupied by the "King of Belmont" who married the Hanson girl, whom some people referred to as the queen. The house still stands.

The school had been built west of the tracks where the Safeway store is and later, the school was removed to Middle Road where we find it now.

Of course, Belmont's hills were mostly bare, but Monore, Miller and Lyon were frantically trying to dispose of building sites.

There was a house on Middle Road and, of course, the old pink building stood across the tracks. The red hotel across the street from it still remained, and was only replaced with a new building two years ago.

The Hammerson blacksmith shop was gone, and the house near it still remains today.

The church had been moved to Fifth Avenue and the old school house on Old County Road had been replaced by the Central School where the Safeway store is.

There were a few houses north of Ralston Avenue and on Old County Road. The Belmont Casino was still in operation.

The English-style store building at the corner of Harbor Blvd. and El Camino Real hadn't burned yet, where Arnold Mertens and the LoCoco Liquor Store and Morton Realty were.

Belmont, as you see it now, doesn't resemble our earlier town. If you had been away and come back, you would wonder where your town disappeared to.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Early people in Belmont didn't have good access to the doctors that citizens have now. They had to use rather primitive remedies now and then. Sometimes the old remedies didn't help and the patient died. There are two old tombstones in the Belmont museum. Both are dated in the mid-1800s. Both are for young children. The stones were brought from a hilltop west of

Belmont.

When early people had a fever, the remedy used to be to place a pan of warm water under their bed. This usually seemed to cure the fever by the following morning.

When a wart, or other small growth, appeared on someone, the remedy was to get the thigh bone of a 10-year-old cow, rub it on the wart or other growth at midnight,

and then say, "wart, wart, go away. Come again another day!"

The bone would be tossed over the patient's left shoulder at exactly midnight. They said this always cured the patient. I doubt, though, if this was used by our early Belmonters.

Stomachs were sometimes cured by rubbing horse liniment on the exterior of the stomach. It was said to be risky, for the liquid might drip down too far, causing the patient to think his body was on fire. Then he had to run to the creek. Perhaps this too wasn't used by early Belmonters, for the little creek isn't deep enough to help much. The water would need to be waist deep.

Asefetti in a bag hung around the neck was said to cure most ailments.

Teeth could be pulled with a string tied around the tooth, and attached to a door knob. When the door was slammed, out came the tooth. Some young men studied to become doctors. Some had this ambition very early. Dr. Harold Chope was in a class with me for several years. He was the only boy in school who was brought to school in a limousine driven by a chauffeur. The hospital on 37th Avenue in San Mateo was named after him because he had practiced

there for many years. He was known to go out of his way to help the poor.

Sequoia Hospital wasn't established until much later. The other hospital was Mills Memorial Hospital in San Mateo. I spent 11 days there in 1939 after having surgery. I was well-treated and thought the hospital was excellent in helping patients.

Before Sequoia was built, there was a hayfield on the bare land. Their location on the Alameda de las Pulgas in Redwood City is excellent. Their building has been updated and is probably one of the best hospitals on the Peninsula.

Stanford Hospital was on Clay Street in San Francisco before being moved to the campus. A well known doctor, Emmett Rixford, was practicing there in 1917. He operated on my father.

In later years, Belmont had some very good physicians such as Dr. Voris and Dr. Fairburne. When Dr. Fairburne retired, the party at the Belmont Casino was the largest Belmont had seen up to then. Everyone in town came. The casino used to be on Old County Road north of Ralston Avenue. It is gone now, as are our old-time doctors.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont is probably fortunate in having such a good Building Department. The people are sincere, and seem to like their jobs. The inspectors watch carefully when buildings are constructed. It hasn't always been this way.

A century ago, bricks were often used for foundations. When there were no bricks, builders used rocks if they could find suitable, flat ones. In other communities where lava rocks were available, they were often used for foundation supports. One church in Northern California that was built a century ago has lava rocks under it. Young modern inspectors have condemned the building, saying it isn't safe. Yet it has stood for all these many years, and is still level just as when it was built a hundred years ago. There are many other buildings in the foothills of California with similar rock foundations. Concrete wasn't available so early builders used whatever they could find.

Our Building Department now demands half-inch bolts through the 2x8 redwood mudsills to support the house in the event of a heavy earthquake. The bolts are 8 inches long and are placed through the mudsills while the concrete foundation is being poured. Houses not bolted to the foundation could slide during a hard shake. It would be expensive to repair the damage.

Some houses in the Boulder Creek area and Santa Cruz had such damage in 1989.

The bolting to the foundation has been

done in Belmont for many years. Very few, if any, Belmont houses are without the foundation bolts.

Building inspectors watch to see that the studs are spaced 16 inches apart, and ceiling joists and floor joists are spaced likewise. Roof rafters are looked at and if not spaced 2 feet apart, the foreman is asked to change them to comply with Belmont's ordinances.

Prior to starting any construction, the plans must first be approved at City Hall by the Building Department. Changes are sometimes made, but the builder can only start his building after a final approval.

When work starts, the inspector frequently visits the job to see that the plans are being followed. Things didn't used to be this way. We are fortunate that our Belmont construction is watched so closely.

If you travel to the Gold Country, you will notice many dwellings that were thrown together before inspections were being used. Early settlers needed dwellings to live and often board and batten construction was utilized for speed and economy.

Such construction seems never to have been used in early Belmont. Houses built here a century ago were usually the same construction as is used now. Perhaps more time was available. Also, lava rocks weren't available here. Even if they had been, it isn't likely that they would have been used. Belmont is a well-built city.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont children have always had an excellent opportunity to obtain an education. It is available if they use the facilities.

Many years ago, the school was on the east side of Old County Road about a block south of Ralston Avenue. Some children from San Carlos walked to Belmont to attend.

The building was two stories and there were two teachers.

There was also the St. Joseph Military Academy at Carlmont. It was for boys and many attended. Discipline was said to be strict. Perhaps this helped, for every boy who attended is said to have become a first-class man.

Upon graduation most attended Sequoia High School, and many girls attended Notre Dame College after it moved here in 1921.

Some of our Belmont youths started industry and became company officers and presidents. We are proud of our Belmont students. They seem to know which "road to take when they reach the intersection." Most are very intelligent.

Belmont people live well and are very progressive. Some Belmont students have become executives in large companies. Silicon Valley is available and there are good jobs for the educated.

Belmont is ideally located, being halfway between San Francisco and San Jose. Silicon Valley contains many large factories and the opportunities are there for the ambitious. Belmont youths should feel fortunate that their families reside in such a desirable location.

People used to refer to someone from the

Santa Clara Valley as a prune picker. This has changed. The valley now is called Silicon Valley and it contains hundreds of electronic factories. There are no more prune trees.

When our young people tell someone that they live in Belmont near Silicon Valley, the other person thinks of electronic engineers or inventors. There are many of them in Silicon Valley.

Not that prune picking is a disgrace. It's not at all. Some of our older people in Belmont worked during their summer school vacations picking prunes. The local orchard was where Carlmont High School is now. They received 10 cents per box, and were down on their knees in the dust filling their 25-pound boxes. Prunes are picked from the ground. The prunes are left on the trees until they are very ripe and they fall by themselves and contain more sugar than if left to ripen on the trees.

There are still people living in Belmont who have resided here all their lives. Two of these are Doris Vannier and Bert Johnson. Each was born early in this century. They are good citizens and they attended schools

in Belmont before going to Sequoia High School in Redwood City.

Belmont was small then so they didn't need to walk far. Presumably when they attended Sequoia High School they were taken by a school bus.

Doris probably traveled by train when she attended San Jose State College — then called a Normal School.

Both feel very fortunate that they were raised in Belmont.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont has had many industries, but one important one most residents haven't heard about was the making of movies. During the early 1920s, the Paul Gershwin movie company came here and made 10 short movies. Their shorts were seen all over the country as "fill-ins" in movie houses. They were made at the intersection of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue.

Several local boys were "extras" in the movies. One was Bert Johnson. He tells about it.

The movies were called the "Pop Tuttle Series." The main actors were an old man called Pop Tuttle and a very fat girl.

In one scene, the company had Pop Tuttle driving an early Ford car around Belmont, finally pulling up at our train station. The fat girl was in the car and wanted to board the train. A block and tackle had been rigged so that the Ford car would tip up, although the ropes weren't shown. When the ropes were pulled, it appeared like the fat girl's weight caused the car to tip upward so she could more easily step into the train car.

The train station name had been changed to "Plum Center" by permission of the Southern Pacific.

Humor changes over the years, and at that time the scene was hilarious. Even some of Shakespeare's humor isn't funny anymore, but Bert Johnson says the scenes were very funny when the movies were produced.

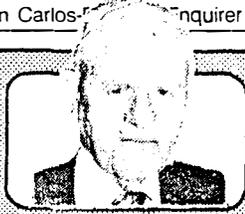
While production was going on, nearly

everybody in Belmont could be found at the location watching the actors. Afterward, some of the movies were shown in the Belmont school and most Belmonters attended the showing. Some people thought the shorts were better than some early pictures.

In another scene, it appeared that Pop Tuttle didn't know how to stop his car. He started it by cranking the engine, but his instructors forgot to explain how to stop it. Incidentally, this happened to many people during the early days of automobiles. People could relate to it.

The Hammerson blacksmith shop was at the corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue. A door had been arranged so that it would splinter if pushed a little. As a crowd watched, here came Pop Tuttle with the fat girl. He frantically tried to get the car stopped but failed to do it in time. He drove into the blacksmith shop and splintered the door, and went through to the rear of the shop. The scene was amusing. People laughed.

No doubt other people throughout the country enjoyed our Belmont Pop Tuttle movies. One person in Iowa whom I spoke to about it said the Pop Tuttle shorts were so interesting and funny it was the high point of every week for he and his wife to go to town to see them. However, he never knew the movies were produced here in Belmont. He didn't know where they were produced. He said he couldn't find Plum Center on a map.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Since the time Belmont officially became an incorporated city, it was discovered that a business tax would be needed. Accordingly, a tax was approved by our City Council members in January 1931. The \$10 tax was less than it is now.

Our city was incorporated in 1926, but a man who owned the property where Carlmont High School is located had objected. He said his property had been included in the city limits without his permission. He sued the city and Belmont's official incorporation was set aside by a judge and wasn't settled for three years. Then in 1929, Belmont became an official city.

Police Chief C. Caldwell, City Clerk O. Callen and Police Judge S.J. Cook had been serving without any pay since 1926.

Various organizations made donations totalling \$2,200, and \$1,000 was paid to the above three officials. Some people thought Belmont was off to a bad start. If it was, it recovered later and is presently a well-managed city.

The cost of living was much less in 1931 and our officials managed to survive. Results would have been different if this had happened with our present inflation. Who could live for three years without an income?

Belmont citizens have always been financially generous in helping when something of need comes up. The Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, Soroptomists and other clubs have made many donations to help Belmont. And they continue to do so.

The Lions, particularly, purchase eyeglasses for Belmont students who cannot afford them. The club has paid for eye examinations for many youths. The club

also referred a woman to the Lions Eye Foundation in San Francisco for eye surgery. She reports that she can see well now, but could barely see before her surgery. The Belmont Lions are members of the Eye Foundation.

Individuals have contributed hundreds of dollars to help the needy in Belmont. Mrs. Annette Alexander, who used to own the Alexander Sanitarium which is now Belmont Hills Hospital, paid for the gasoline for Belmont's two contestants in the Powder Puff Derby many years ago. The year was 1956 and our girls came in fifth among 50 contestants. Mrs. Alexander also had "Belmont, Calif." painted on the sides of the young ladies' airplane.

When our Belmont Sea Scouts needed a boat for practice, Mrs. Alexander purchased a boat and gave it to them. Juel Christensen gave shrubs and trees for lining the freeway entrance into Belmont.

Belmont's clubs and organizations, as well as individuals, do come forward when our city or its individuals need help. This facet has gone by the wayside in many locations. The Pilgrims started it in America and it continues here in Belmont.

Our local people hardly ever fuss about taxes. They know the city officials personally and have faith in them, and they seldom complain when told a tax increase is needed. If someone does complain, he usually soon moves away to another area. Those who stay like our city just as it is, and pay their taxes and city licenses without complaining. Belmont is a good city.



belmont history

by Russ Estep

Many years before radio station KPO moved their station to Belmont, it was set up atop the Hale Brothers store on Market Street in San Francisco. While there it operated with 500 watts of power, but when power was increased to 50,000 watts the transmitting antennas and station were moved to Belmont.

The Hale Brothers had a sister named Mrs. Brown, who had a son named Orrin Brown. He was interested in radio and had a ham station with the call letters of 6CKV, and he had a good "fist."

Orrin was a quiet, likable fellow with many friends. His uncle employed him at the San Francisco radio station as announcer for a children's program. He had hundreds of young listeners. He took the name of "Uncle something or other." Children scrambled to tune him in. The program was very popular.

Orrin was young and sometimes forgetful. After one program, it was reported that he forgot to turn off his microphone. He spoke rather loudly, "Now you little animals. This ought to take care of you for a while. I think you're a bunch of bums."

The text was said to have been a little more rough than this. His uncle immediately fired him. Orrin later worked for Eimac (Eitel and McCullough) in one of their top jobs. He is retired now and lives in Southern California.

In the early years, KPO always gave as their announcement, "KPO, Hale Brothers and the Chronicle."

The company wanted to have a better location, so in the summer of 1932 they pur-

chased 27 acres in Belmont. It was east of the new Bayshore Highway, slightly north of Ralston Avenue.

The FCC had given them permission to construct towers and to increase their power up to 50,000 watts. The cost of the new station was reported to be \$425,000. The station was completed and went on the air Aug. 15, 1932. Their broadcasts could be heard much farther away then.

Following completion of the station changeover, KPO joined the National Broadcasting Company and began announcing NBC.

But back to Orrin Brown. His on-the-air activities continued as a ham operator. It was Orrin who made the first low-power contact across the Pacific Ocean late one night when operating his ham station with Bill Eitel, who later started "Eimac."

One of their transmitting tubes had a broken glass envelope and the boys had been enjoying sandwiches of white Karo syrup. The broken radio tube rolled across the operating table and the filament landed in the syrup. The boys had a new glass envelope installed on the tube and discovered that the tube would stand higher voltage without burning out.

They had the syrup analyzed and obtained a patent. Reports are that this was the first patent of the Eimac Company, and it went on from there to become one of the largest manufacturers of transmitting tubes in the world.

Orrin Brown earned his retirement in Southern California by helping Eimac and the world to make radio what it is today.



On warm days Belmont citizens appreciate the trees. Did you know that originally there was only brush in Belmont? Trees were planted by early settlers. Our hills used to be covered with brush similar to that in back of Carlmont High School.

William C. Ralston liked trees and arranged for many small Eucalyptus trees to be brought from Australia. His men planted many near his house, along the railroad tracks, and some along Alameda de las Pulgas.

Others were planted in parts of San Carlos and Redwood City, and many in Burlingame along El Camino Real.

The roots of the Eucalyptus trees apparently do not extend down very far. Accordingly, those along the railroad tracks have mostly been removed so as to protect the right-of-way.

Those still standing are old, since most were planted while Mr. Ralston was still alive. He died in 1875.

Other Belmont citizens planted trees. Mr. Louis Barrett planted several Sequoia Gigsntia trees. They are of the variety which grows over several thousands of years until their diameter reaches 20 or 30 feet.

Mr. Barrett lived in Belmont, but he was forest ranger for Northern California. The Barrett School was named after him, but as attendance declined the school became a center for recreational activities.

Mr. Smith, who resided in Belmont, planted 2,500 trees.

A splurge of tree planting took place! Mr. Swift liked trees for they provided his living, he having been a lumber dealer in San Francisco. He wanted

trees near his residence. His house was west of El Camino Real, north of Ralston Avenue, in the Swift Tract.

Then William Swift, a relative, came to Belmont and began planting trees around his new residence.

Several other early settlers planted trees on their property.

Mr. Ralston owned 1,000 acres where we find Burlingame. It was sold to Arson Burlingame, but not before he had planted Eucalyptus trees on both sides of El Camino Real in that locality. Many still remain.

We all like trees and are pleased that our city trims and protects them.

Many years ago, some Belmont trees were cutting off the view of a neighbor who lived across the street. He demanded that the trees be topped. Another neighbor objected, thinking it might cause his trees to die. I don't know how this was resolved, but hope the trees were saved.

Belmont's official Christmas tree used to be a large Redwood on the south side of Ralston Avenue, a half block west of El Camino Real. The Chamber of Commerce decorated it and had lights placed on it. The lights were turned on during the Christmas season. Everyone admired the pretty tree.

Then one morning they saw it laying on the ground. The owner wanted to construct a building on his property. Remarks were heard that the lot owner would surely go to hell for cutting such a pretty tree at Christmas time. But he didn't leave here in that direction. He moved away from Belmont and resided a few miles east of Chico — in Paradise.



Belmont history

by Russ Estep

When large earthquakes occur, our Belmont citizens have always been ready to help. Our churches collect clothing and other things to send to the distressed. When a nearby catastrophe occurs, our Belmont people group together and immediately offer their help.

Immediately after the 1989 earthquake, there were hams all over the country calling Belmont and San Carlos. Our local hams answered and handled hundreds of messages. Everyone in the country seemed to have a relative or friend in Belmont.

There are groups of ham operators in both Belmont and San Carlos. When a large quake occurred in Mexico City, our local operators immediately got "on the air" to offer assistance. They were much appreciated.

There are many hams in Mexico and one told about a neighbor near his house living in a trailer. The man was nervous just after the quake and began yelling "earthquake" not realizing it was over. When the Mexican ham glanced out his window, he saw a hog scratching its back beneath the neighbor's trailer. The hog had caused the second quake.

When a large earthquake occurred in Alaska, the Belmont hams picked in and relayed messages and many ran "phone patches" so people living down here could contact relatives in Alaska.

Sixty or 70 years ago, some hams did cause radio interference, but not any more. All hams are regulated by the FCC and are required to install filters

on their equipment. They do not bother their own TV sets when the TV is in the same room.

Many cities have ordered their local hams to raise their antennas much higher so they will be more efficient when needed. Some uninformed city of-

ficials probably do not realize that all hams are licensed by the FCC and that government rules have preference. The government considers our ham operators a big asset when emergencies occur.

Belmont has a group of people who operate the two-meter band. Unlike the hams on the "low bands," these fellows cannot reach out very far. Yet, they too provide communications for their cities. They usually reach out up to 150 miles. Hams with "low band" capabilities carry on from there.

Other people play golf, or tennis, or are interested in baseball. Our Belmont hams stay at home always ready and waiting to help someone. They have established a marvelous record.

Communications are much different than when Indians used smoke signals. First, Belmont had a telegraph that was installed by Mr. Ralston's men. Then there was a telephone in the old pink building. Along came radio in the ear-

ly 1900s. Code was used at first, but nowadays hams speak into a microphone. They communicate all over the world almost as easy as we used to visit with a neighbor over the back yard fence. And they don't bother anyone.

Belmont and San Carlos have become familiar names in many foreign countries due to ham activity.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Many years ago, someone said that real estate people were really the parents of most cities. It was they who sold the vacant lots, and they who decided what place would be a good place for a shopping area or a subdivision of homes. Then they would contact a builder who would construct homes or apartments, or stores on the land. The builder's carpenters did the work.

When Belmont was starting, Mr. Johnson had a real estate office on the south side of Ralston Avenue, a short distance west of El Camino Real. He did much to get the little town going.

Monroe, Miller and Lyon were larger operators and sold hundreds of lots in Belmont. They brought prospective buyers from San Francisco, gave them a free lunch here, and then showed them their vacant lots.

Mr. Monroe's brother, James

Monroe, later carried on and sold single lots throughout the large subdivisions. His office was behind the service station that used to be at the northeast corner of Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue.

Daniel St. George had an office built on El Camino Real north of Harbor Blvd. His salesman was Sprague Smith. The two of them sold hundreds of lots in early Belmont, and after houses were built they began selling them as people moved because they were transferred.

Daniel St. George retired as he became older, and later moved to Southern California. Sprague Smith passed away.

Louis F. Morton established an office on El Camino Real and sold hundreds of Belmont lots immediately after World War II. He was so busy that his salesman, Kenneth Henker, took over.

Mr. Morton retired, moved to Palo Alto and passed away.

Glisson Morris and Robert Manning opened an office in the Carlmont Shopping Center where they were active selling houses.

Paul Gardner established a real estate office north of Ralston Avenue on El Camino Real. He sold hundreds of properties, and purchased and resold many. Rupert Taylor became acquainted with Paul while soliciting advertising for a San Francisco newspaper. Rupert passed the examination and became a salesman and later took over the Gardner office. Both Gardner and Taylor have since passed away.

I had been a foreman carpenter and was in charge of construction for Morton and Baker for several years. On May 5, 1946, I passed the real estate examination and came back from San Francisco and sold two houses that same day. Then I went back to San Francisco and passed the general contractor examination and I built houses.

Early Belmont realtors had single offices. They concentrated their activities locally. Presently, some have expanded and operate multiple offices in other areas. They are like fishermen with large nets.

Another early realtor was Embert M. Brown. He came here from Hawaii where he had been married to a daughter of a king, according to his story. I don't know how they operated at that time in Hawaii, but after Embert came here 44 years ago he used to place his real estate For Sale signs in front of mine. When I asked him about it, he replied that "you always get the best spot." This, of course, was on vacant lots of which there were many then. It amused me. But I had to make the rounds in Belmont hills each morning to move my signs to one side.

I was up early like the milk men. The air was clean and clear, and the trees and grass smelled good. I loved it.

Getting up at 5 a.m. wasn't so bad after all.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

A century ago, entertainment and amusement was different than it is now. Instead of automobiles, everyone used a horse or horses. There was no radio or television.

Public dances were occasionally held and many people attended. This gave the ladies a chance to catch up on local gossip and the men to compare notes on their crops or animals.

Some range cattle still ran loose but other early settlers had already fenced their pastures. Milk cows were kept where they were able to eat grass and were kept in one place by the rope tied to their collar. Most loose cattle stayed near each other when the strongest in the bunch had a cowbell. Cowbells all had different sounds so the cow's owner could locate his cattle more easily.

The cows had to be milked in the morning and evening. Usually that was a chore for any boy who was in the family. The daughter's chore was to wash the milk bucket and strain the milk through a cloth.

The old Belmont Hotel had a large dance hall which was used quite regularly. One advertisement for a dance was placed in the San Mateo Gazette on Jan. 17, 1874. It read, "A Social Ball will be given at the Belmont Hotel on Jan. 31, 1874. All are invited to attend. A splendid band of musicians has been engaged. Tickets, including supper, are \$2.00."

People danced differently then. An old photo shows some women wearing extensions behind their hips. Presumably, they believed their ap-

pearance became improved with the gadget.

Then on Feb. 21, 1874, another announcement of a dance at the Belmont Hotel appeared in the same paper. The item states that "a new lessee of the saloon next door had arranged the dance and would welcome his friends and everyone to the opening. Supper would be provided."

In the San Mateo Gazette of the same date is an announcement that "gentleman by the name of Herbs has rented the eating department of the Belmont Hotel."

An attached note to the above item states that this should have read "of the Belmont Exchange, formerly owned by Mrs. Harding," and that it was now fitted up as a boarding house.

Apparently, the exchange was located in the old hotel.

There were other dances held locally and they were usually well attended. Things seem to go in cycles. Earlier, people didn't dance holding onto each other and, after a century, our young people dance separately, often several feet from their partners.

When they danced closely with other boys, the girls' boyfriends sometimes became jealous. About 70 years ago, another youth had ridden to a dance in the country when someone untied his saddle horse. He had to walk 10 miles over a dusty road, but never could catch up with his horse. He said he got even with the other fellow though. He later married the girl.



carlmont history

by Russ Estep

Belmont was recognized as a very desirable place in which to live many years ago. This item appeared in the San Mateo Gazette July 25, 1874.

"Belmont, three miles north of Redwood City, is one of the most beautiful locations in the county. It is the center of considerable trade, and has three stores, a hotel and restaurant. Here also, some lumber and a quantity of produce is shipped to San Francisco. Near Belmont, in one of the most lovely locations in the State, is the country residence of the managing proprietor of the Pulgas Rancho, Mr. Sidney Meses."

It was he who cleared the titles for Mrs. Arguello when California became a state and her land grant was questioned. Mr. Meses was an attorney. His home was quite large and was located on the hill in back of Notre Dame College. It burned later.

There were other large fires in early Belmont. The gardner's cottage at Carlmont, where Mrs. Ralston lived for two years when her husband died, burned. She had moved to Oakland with her two sons. One of them wanted to be a rancher and he purchased a cattle ranch in the California foothills. Reports say he did very well while up there. The other son was reported to have committed suicide. His grave was beside his father's in the old Laurel Hill Cememtery in San Francisco.

The cemetery there was later removed and a large Safeway store constructed. The gravestones were used for rifferaff around the south tower of the Golden Gate bridge. Hopefully, the

Ralston graves were removed elsewhere before this happened.

Referring back to the gardener's cottage at Carlmont that burned, old photos show that it was a large dwelling, not at all like a small cottage. Photos show that it was south of the group of stores, and that it backed up to the hill.

Old records indicate that many of Belmont's early houses burned. They were mostly replaced with more modern buildings. Early settlers all had wells, and most didn't pipe the water into their houses. There was no electricity. Some had hand pumps instead of well buckets. But a fire would have been noticed very early in the first stage if anyone hoped to stop it with a well bucket, or "hand-pumped" water.

Belmont's first fire truck was purchased in 1936. A photo of it is in the new Belmont Historical Museum at Twin Pines Park. Three young girls are shown on it, and one was Florence Vannier — who was Doris Vannier's sister who has since passed away.

Belmont's first fire after getting the fire truck was at the south end of Newhall Hill, sometimes called Redrock Hill. The newly organized volunteer fire brigade put it out.

Harry Chamberlain was our fire chief for many years until his retirement. He later moved from Belmont. Presently, our city is within the South County Fire Authority and their chief works out of the San Carlos Fire Department office in their City Hall. Our city is well protected for fires. The men respond quickly and efficiently.

