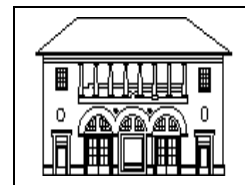


# THE JOURNAL OF LOCAL HISTORY

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Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library  
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## The President's Message

This is the first issue of "The Journal of Local History" to be published quarterly by the Archives Board. We are working hard to give the members of this organization a real journal of interesting material. We hope the journal will have from 40 to 60 pages, each issue.

Since this is the first issue, we must admit that we are struggling a bit to get it out on time and to get an interesting journal. We are trying to work on a template for the first time in our lives and it is a very new process to us. We are told that once we get it it will be much easier. .... We'll see.

The Union Cemetery is 150 years old this year and the Historic Union Cemetery Board will be looking at ways to make it a very special occasion. You can help us in this process by making plans to be there at 10 AM on Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>.

## The Cloud Family

It is with great sadness that I write this preamble  
to the

### *Cloud Family*

March 20<sup>th</sup> 2009 Jean Cloud passed away. At 102 years old, she lived a long life that touched many people. I am sad to face this loss, but my life has been enriched by our longtime friendship

The Cloud family plot in Union Cemetery is along the back fence toward the back of the cemetery.

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### *The Cloud Family continued*

The burial book lists, George, Joseph, Joseph James, Marguerite W., Nellie Ada and Susan W. Cloud. All these folks are related to Mrs. Jean (Reynolds) Cloud who is so warmly loved in Redwood City in her 102<sup>nd</sup> year as this is being written. The history of this family is a major part of San Mateo County history because Jean's father in law, Roy Cloud, former Superintendent of Public Schools in San Mateo County, wrote a two volume history of the county and the people who have called it home.

Plot #56 along Central Avenue in Union Cemetery contains the grave of Wesley Ashcraft Wilsey and his son Jessie Wilsey. Wesley was the patriarch of the family that came to this area from Indiana in 1853 with his wife Marie Fulkarson Wilsey and children and one hundred head of cattle.

Wesley's brother Walter and his family along with a substantial number of neighbors accompanied the Wilsey family on the journey in covered wagons which took the better part of a year. William settled in Colusa County and Wesley settled first in San Francisco where he established a dairy farm. When San Mateo County was established in 1856 Wesley moved to Laguna and reestablished the farm.



*Grandma Wilsey at age 86. Born in Kentucky in 1808, Married Wesley Ashcraft Wilsey.*

The children were educated in the Crystal Springs/Laguna Elementary School.

When Wesley arrived in Laguna he purchased property high on the mountain near the summit where the grass was deep and lush and there were substantial redwood trees nearby that he could use to build his house.



*Joseph J. Cloud, father of Roy W. Cloud*

Jessie, who died in 1916, was buried in the same plot as his father.



*Roy W. Cloud*

One of the children that came with the family was Mary Adeline. Mary married Joseph James Cloud and they had a son, Roy Walter Cloud who became famous in San Mateo County as a great educator.

Roy W. Cloud married Sophie M. Kobelt and they had a son, among other children, his name was Roy Noble Cloud who married Jean Reynolds in Monterey on June 24<sup>th</sup> 1934. Mrs. Jean Cloud became almost as well known in Redwood City as her father in law and it was Jean who started this whole thing about rehabilitating Union Cemetery. She got me involved because she was so very persuasive and because I literally grew up in that cemetery, because I lived so closely.



*Roy Noble Cloud*

All the money that is spent on buying these books on Union Cemetery goes directly to the Historic Union Cemetery Association, the organization that was formed to turn the cemetery from its former deplorable situation into a true memorial park



*Jean Cloud*

Buried in plot #205 are the following people, George Cloud, age 43 who died in December 1903, Joseph J. Cloud, age 25 who died in February 1894, Joseph J. Cloud, age 68 who died in November 1897, Marguerite W. Cloud, age 3 who died in April 1892, Nellie Ada Cloud, age 30, who died in January 1900, Susan W. Cloud, age 27 who died in June 1898.

Needless to say, this plot is a bit crowded.

Miss Nellie Cloud was born in Elko, Nevada and lived the first decade of her life in that city. Nellie completed her studies at the University in Elko and came to San Mateo County where she obtained a job teaching at the Pilarcitos School House. She left that position after a year and went back to school at Stanford University in an effort to increase her skills and get her teaching certificate. Following that she returned to Redwood where she taught school for more than six years. During this process she became ill and was unable to continue.



*Fanny Hughes, Nell Cloud & Zoe Fox*

Nellie traveled to Auburn and then to Pacific Grove in order to find a climate that would help her physical condition. She was unsuccessful in these efforts and her condition became worse. She died on January 18, 1900. The services were held at the Congregational Church and she was laid to rest in Union Cemetery.

Roy Noble Cloud worked on several jobs while married to Jean and the couple moved from Monterey County to Alameda County actually living in Berkeley for several years before moving to Redwood City. Roy worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad for a number of years before retiring to his home on Edgewood Road.





*Roy Peterson, Roy Cloud, Hjalmar Holmquist, Sophie Kobelt (Cloud), Maude Beeson and Ethel Fox.*

Roy Noble Cloud passed away on August 8, 1987. A sad day in the mansion on Edgewood Road but a day in which Jean Cloud was, in a sense, freed to accomplish the many things she did following. We will miss Jean, especially those of us who were close to her. When I saw her that last day of her life I really expected her to get up and go to the library.

Here is a final picture of Jean Reynolds Cloud as she appeared as a young woman. While she was every bit as beautiful in her later years she was absolutely stunning as a young lady.

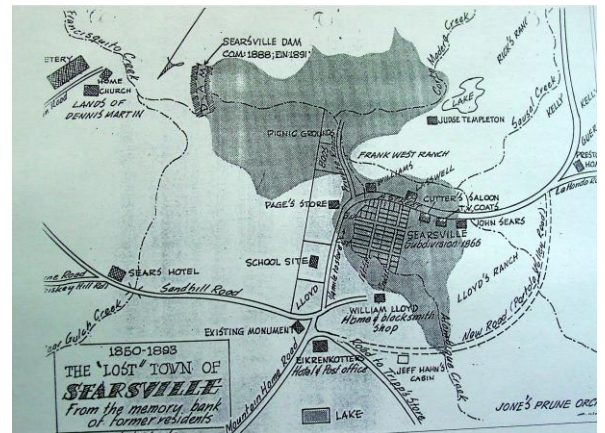


*Jean Reynolds (Cloud) in her later high school years. Her pre-performing years.*

## Ghost On Wheels

*By John Edmonds*

The Knights family moved into their new residence on Sausal Creek in the town of Searsville in the early 1850s. Abel Knights was working in the lumber industry which was the primary employment in that area at the time. Abel and Elizabeth Knights had a son whom they named Simon who grew up to be one of the best known men in Redwood City and throughout Southern San Mateo County.



*The Town of Searsville was just west of today's Portola and Sand Hill Roads intersection and a 1/4 mile south. It was never swamped by the dam and water. (smcha)*

Simon worked, when he became of age, in the lumber business as so many of his neighbors did but rather than going west when the timber ran out on the east side of the mountain he chose a different business.

The San Mateo County Gazette wrote about Simon Knights first efforts on June 29, 1869: "S. L. Knights has put on a stage between Redwood City and the Summit House on the San Gregorio Turnpike. The stage leaves Redwood City every afternoon on the arrival of the first train from San Francisco and returns from the Summit House in the morning arriving in Redwood City in time for the 9 o'clock train for San Francisco. By this arrangement passengers can make the trip from the Summit House and Woodside to the city and back

on the same day.”

Simon and his family were still living in their home at Searsville when his new career began. He established an office in the American Hotel at the foot of Bridge Street, now called Broadway. A Street stopped at Redwood Creek and Bridge Street continued on the eastern side to dead end at the American House. Soon Mound Street or Main Street was added in front of the hotel.)

The Summit Springs Hotel opened in 1868 and became something of a small city about a half mile east of the ridge on what we now call King’s Mountain Road. The hotel originally opened because it took all day to cut and mill the lumber and haul it up from west of the ridge to the top. The only way down was on the established logging road where the hotel was established. It had a stable, a Chinese laundry, a saloon and very nice accommodations.



*The Summit Springs House on King’s Mountain Road  
1/2 mile east of Skyline.*

Simon Knights purchased lots 1, 2 and 3 in the block bounded by Phelps (Middlefield), Beech, Heller and Cedar Streets in Redwood City. It was here that he constructed his stables and kept a substantial number of horses and wagons.

Simon Knights Stage Line was not the first stage line that traveled from San Francisco to San Jose. The first was the Whistman, Hall and Crandall stage line. It drove and established the route, overcoming the difficulties of the large number of creeks which had to be crossed. The first line started in January 1855, five years after California was admitted into the union.

This route continued with several different companies running it until the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad was established in 1864.

A poem written by a passenger describes, to some extent, the experience that many felt, in riding the stage coach. It doesn’t compare well with the description of the experience on Simon Knights stage coaches.

Creeping through the valley, crawling o’er the hill,  
Splashing through the branches, rumbling o’er the mill;  
Putting nervous gentlemen in a towering rage,  
What is so provoking as riding in a stage?

Spinsters fair and forty, maids in youthful charms,  
Suddenly are cast into their neighbors’ arms:  
Children shoot like squirrels darting through a cage –  
Isn’t it delightful, riding in a stage?  
Feet are interlacing, heads severely bumped,  
Friend and foe together get their noses thumped;  
/dresses act as carpets – listen to the sage:  
“Life is but a journey taken in a stage.”

The east – west route was a different matter. Since the most of the people lived in Redwood City and Searsville and there was a substantial demand for a mail system, the post office chose the stage company as their postman. The stage company decided to purchase two larger stage coaches and to run to Woodside and Searsville in addition. They then decided to extend their route even further.

The new route went from Redwood City to Whiskey Hill in Woodside, to Searsville. Over Old La Honda Road to the Weeks ranch on the La Honda Road, then west to La Honda where they changed horses at the Sears Stables. Then on to Bell, west of La Honda and San Gregorio, then over Stage Road to Pescadero. The coach stopped at each of the points listed and people were able to get out, stretch and visit the saloon briefly.

Leonard Fisher and Samuel Murch were expert wagon builders who had a wide reputation for their highly competent work. They had a building on Cassia Street between Heller and Mound Streets.

The stages were constructed on the second floor of this large building and they were very large coaches carrying nine passengers inside and eight passengers outside behind the driver.



*Leonard Fisher and Samuel Murch built two stage coaches for Simon Knight. The building was on Cassia St. between Heller and Main Streets in Redwood City.*

The coaches worked with four horses in good weather and six horses in poor weather. The coaches weighed 1600 pounds, considerably less than the burdensome Concord Stages which weighed 2200 pounds.

The only mishap on record occurred as one of the coaches caught a rear wheel over the side. It was immediately pulled up and nobody was injured but people were a bit shaken by the incident. There are no holdups or robberies or any other incidents on record. The new coaches were built by Fisher and Murch in 1873 and were used until the motor vehicle came into existence.

When the two new coaches were put in service the Gazette was lavish in its praises. Daily connection with Pescadero will commence on the 26<sup>th</sup> May." John Poole was the regular driver for the Knights stage line although Simon Knights himself often took the reins.

Passengers described the experience on Knights coaches as "exceptionally comfortable, very competent drivers and very reasonable fares when compared to other stage coaches." Redwood City Democrat January 28, 1892

In 1874 the stage line was turned into a joint stock company with a capital stock of \$12,000 divided into 120 shares of \$100 each all of which were taken up by the new board of directors

including Simon Knights, E. M. Armstrong, Hugh Kelly and Doctor A. T. McClure.

November 1875 the entire stage line went up for auction and was purchased by a new partnership of Simon Knights and George Wentworth. .

Times and Gazette June 2, 1877: "Redwood City and Pescadero Stage Co, Simon L. Knights Proprietor. Stage leaves the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot every morning at 10 o'clock for Pescadero via San Gregorio Creek Road. The stage leaves Pescadero at 9 AM connecting with the 3:49 PM train for San Francisco. Fare from Redwood City to Pescadero is \$2.50." This was the ad that the stage company placed in the paper.

One of the interesting stories that came from the days of competition between Knights Stages and the Levy Brothers Stages in San Mateo is the anxiety that was created when the passengers from the two stage lines met in Pescadero, usually at the Swanton Hotel. It seems that many passengers got off the train in San Mateo when the Levy Brothers announced "the quickest and most reliable route to Pescadero." The folks who traveled from Redwood City spoke of the "beautiful redwoods, the pleasant stage stops and the beautiful grassy hills from La Honda to the coast." There was often a very pleasant picnic lunch prepared in La Honda and the passengers were very impressed with John Sears's Many returned just to La Honda to stay in the hotel there several days to enjoy the fishing and hunting and the pleasant time in the redwoods.



*Knights' 17 passenger stage coach. One of the largest in the west*





*Knights' stage coming down the hill into Pescadero*

The early 1890s were profitable years but toward the end of the century things were changing. The Knights Stage Company began running a tri-weekly stage to Mountain Brow and Bella Vista in addition to their stage runs to Pescadero running them on Tuesdays and Thursdays from Redwood City. More people were living on the coast in places like Purisima, Lobitas, Pigeon Point and Tunitas. The Ocean Shore Railroad was being built. The business of the stage line dropped off, Simon was getting older so he retired. He turned the stage line over to his son Walter who operated it to fewer and fewer customers before the First World War.

The Redwood City Democrat reported on June 10, 1897: "Walter Knights has started an evening stage from Redwood City to La Honda and Bellvale, the new post office on the Bell Ranch. Operations in the oilfields there have attracted quite a number to that section and Walter is determined to afford the public all traveling conveniences. The stage will run daily except Sunday.

Simon Knights, Leonard Fisher and Samuel Murch are buried in Union Cemetery on Woodside Road in Redwood City along with many other pioneers from the decades discussed in this chapter and book.

This is the introduction of an article in the Redwood City Democrat on January 6, 1916. It continued, "Her husband will recover," so ended the life of one of the most beautiful women and most popular women in Redwood City. Dagmar Hynding was born in Redwood City and studied through the grammar and high school in this town.

## The Mysterious Mrs. Plump

"Found Dead in Bed Alongside Unconscious Form of Husband"

*By John Edmonds*

She married Will Plump, the son of Gevert Plump the original owner of the Eureka Brewery that stood at the southwest corner of Bridge Street and Mound Street (Broadway and Main).



*Dagmar Hynding on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July preparing to join the parade. She was in her late teens in this picture.*

The Hynding house was on Marshall Street in the block directly behind the courthouse. It stood right about where the title company stands today. When Dagmar married Will Plump they moved into the Plump house which stood on Main Street just about where, in the 1912 period, it met Mound Street.

Dagmar's father, Chris Hynding, moved to the same house that Will Plump purchased when they moved. Will Plump was, during this period, the owner and operator of the Alhambra theatre which stood on Main Street just south of Broadway. The building is still standing and is being reconstructed following a fire at the present time.

"Tuesday morning when the news was spread around that Mrs. Dagmar Plump was dead and her husband Will Plump, the well known manager of



*The Eureka Brewery which stood on the southwest corner of Main and Middlefield*

The Alhambra Theatre, was dying, the city was startled and shocked. The lifeless body was found by her father, Chris Hynding, when he went to the couple's room in their home on Main Street at ten in the morning to call them to breakfast. There was nothing about the room of the condition of the bodies that would that death was caused by poisoning or gas asphyxiation. Nothing about the room had been disturbed during the night. At first glance both Mr. and Mrs. Plump seemed peacefully sleeping.

Drs. J.L. Ross and E.J. Chapin were hastily summoned. The body of Mrs. Plump was taken charge by Deputy Coroner Crowell and removed to the parlors of the James Crowe Company.

All Tuesday Drs. Ross and Chapin assisted by Drs. Dolley and Dykes worked on Will Plump and finally succeeded in saving his life.

He regained consciousness shortly before midnight and yesterday was reported improving. He is unable however, to tell anything that might assist in unraveling the mystery connected with his wife's death and his own condition."

The couple had celebrated their twelfth wedding anniversary a few days before and they seemed particularly happy and cheerful.

For those who knew them and celebrated with them their sudden tragedy was particularly painful emotionally. This was a very difficult period of grief for the entire community of Redwood City. Dagmar was so very well loved by the entire community that those who new her would never



*A map of Redwood City, taken from the Polk Directory, of 1905. It is difficult to read but if you look carefully you can see Mound and Main Streets. The Plump house was somewhere between that intersection and Broadway.*

forget her. Dagmar was buried in the Plump plot #170 in Union Cemetery.

Several weeks later they did announce that the death was due to gas asphyxiation related to a leak in the gas line coming into the bedroom heater.

But, unfortunately, the story doesn't end quite there. The Redwood City Democrat reported on October 18, 1917 that Chris Hynding ended his life with his army revolver. Will Plump summoned the authorities again, in his home, when he discovered his father in law unconscious in the same bedroom that Dagmar had died. "It is believed that business worries coupled with the loss of his daughter a year before have led to this act of finality."

"Chris Hynding was one of the pioneers of San Mateo County. He settled in Redwood City many years ago and soon became one of the leading citizens of the city. He built and conducted Redwood City House on Main Street for many years which property he owned along with other property in South San Francisco at the time of his death."

Chris Hynding was a native of Denmark and was 73 years old. He was buried in Union Cemetery in plot #178.



# The Town of Searsville

The Town Under the Lake

By *John Edmonds*



*The Beach (c 1956)*

When I was about 10 years old my parents started taking our family to Searsville Lake. We were both very good swimmers by then and we immediately took off around the rafts that surround the swimming area. My father warned us not to dive too deeply because he honestly believed that there was a town at the bottom and we might hit our heads on a chimney.

Later, from 1956 to 1959 I was a life guard at Searsville Lake and I remained curious about the town. I remained curious until present when I had the opportunity to research the subject. In this picture I am probably on one of the guard towers. Early spring was always a dangerous time because the school kids from across the bay came in large groups and several buses. We often had to go in after one or more who thought they could do more than reality. Thus the following:

In 1841 many of the Irish families in Frampton, Quebec, Canada decided to migrate to the United States. They left Canada for western Missouri in order to avoid the Cholera epidemic that was sweeping that area of Canada. After but three years they were still being affected by disease but they did prosper in an area with much better soil to grow the many vegetables and fruits that they were familiar with in the old country.

William Martin and his sons, Dennis and Patrick (John joined them later at Searsville) met the Murphy and Sullivan families who were looking into a wagon train to travel to California where a preacher had told them of the beautiful deep soil and beautiful valleys for growing anything. The Martin family consisted of just the three men, William's wife having died from cholera in Quebec. The Murphy and Sullivan families were substantially larger, especially the Murphy's' who had a number of small children and several older sons all of whom could do men's work on the trip. The five Sullivan family members were all young as their parents had both died from disease. Two more members were born during the trip.

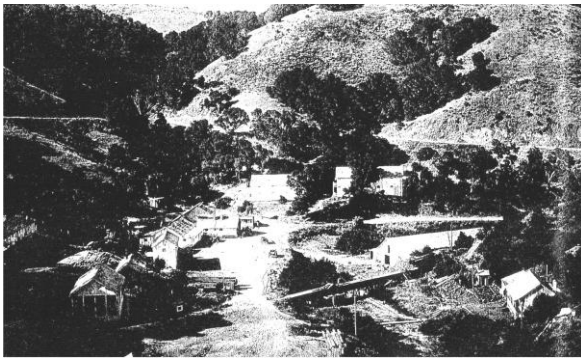
Elisha Stevens organized the party for their trip to California. He had a little experience traveling in the slow high-wheeled prairie schooners pulled by oxen. The party got underway in 1844, at the Humboldt Sink East of the Sierra Nevada in October. A light snow began to fall which resulted in substantial differences of opinion about which route to take. They decided to take the route that would later be called the Donner Pass for the ill fated Donner Party that took the same route some months later.

In January 1845 all the members of the Stevens-Murphy Party were gathering at the Yuba River in the Northern Sacramento Valley. They gradually made their way to Sutter's Fort where they found employment and rest.

On October 30, 1845 Sutter sent Dennis Martin to the redwoods with three Indian boys to cut timber for the further construction of the fort. Sometime during this trip or on a subsequent trip shortly after Martin met a fellow Irishman John Coppinger. At this meeting he was able to negotiate the sale of 1,500 acres paying \$1,500 the acreage included the areas generally of today's Sand Hill and Portola Roads to Alpine Road with an eastern boundary east of Whiskey Hill Road.

Coppinger legitimately felt he owned this property and sold it to Dennis Martin in good faith but the boundaries were always very ill defined and the Spanish land grants were equally poorly defined.

It should be noted that several decades later the Arguello family filed a law suit saying the Pulgas Rancho extended to the Skyline ridge area including all of the property sold to Dennis Martin. A conspiracy between Simon Mezes, the attorney for the Arguellos and John Coffey Hays, the federal surveyor and a former resident on the property were able to convince the court of the valid position of the Arguellos. Thus the Martins were forced off the property.



*This photo shows the canyon in which both Simon Knights and Horace Templeton lived. It is the only actual picture of the town of Searsville that I know of.*

Nonetheless this occurred years later and Dennis Martin built the first water powered sawmill in 1850 in San Mateo County on the San Francisquito Creek a short distance from the confluence of Bear Gulch Creek. It was primarily a shingle mill but it preceded any other mills by several months. Unfortunately this mill was swept away within several weeks of its completion. Charles Brown built a mill on Alambique Creek and has erroneously been given credit for the first mill.

On the subject of who gets the honor of building the first mill, Dorothy Regnery did a far greater examination than anybody before her. She quotes a deposition given before the United States Land Commission in her book, *The History of Jasper Ridge*, "Dennis Martin and others rushed from the redwoods to the gold placers. Martin contrary to the general rule was successful: and returned in the fall of that year and erected a water-power sawmill on San Francisquito Creek about three fourths of a mile below Searsville. This was the first sawmill ever built in the county. But it only ran for a few

weeks, when it was carried away by a flood." The Martin family occupied the property in late 1845. They built their residence and Dennis developed the ranch with cattle and other animals. Vegetable gardens were established and fences were built. As the family grew the house grew to make the house more comfortable.

When gold was discovered on the American River in 1848 Dennis Martin joined with John and Daniel Murphy and Charles M. Weber and formed the Stockton Mining company. They worked briefly on the Mokelumne and Stanislaus Rivers. They moved around to other rivers and were very successful. Before the year ended they had been successful enough to retire from mining and return to San Francisco and the Peninsula dissolving the company.

Dennis Martin married Mary O'Niell on February 19, 1849 at Mission Dolores in San Francisco. Mary moved into the house at Searsville and made a very smooth transition. Six children were born to Dennis and Mary the first daughter was named Mary. Shortly thereafter twin daughters were born, Lizzie and Ellen. Joseph, their only son, was born next. He was followed by another daughter, Agnes.

The next project for Mr. Martin was to find a way to get his milled lumber to Redwood City. The only way was overland and in order to do that he needed to establish a road and since there were creeks to cross he needed to build bridges. He did build the bridges and the roads. Now these were originally wagon trails but they were the precursors of Whiskey Hill Road and today's Woodside Road. They led to Redwood Creek where he built one of the first rudimentary docks. He also built a rudimentary schooner calling it the "Mary Martin" after his wife. The schooner did good duty for Martin as it hauled the milled lumber and shingles to San Francisco and San Jose.

Martin built a second sawmill on what became recognized as Dennis Martin Creek and here he shipped larger numbers of milled lumber to Redwood City. This second mill was built in 1851 and it was near the Alambique Creek close to where the two creeks join each other. His example brought other lumber men to the Searsville area not the least of which was Horace Templeton who purchased a substantial piece of property between Alambique Creek and Dennis Martin Creek and along Sausal Creek.



*Saint Dennis Church, Searsville*

He built his house on Sausal Creek and plotted out the town of Searsville in the area between the two creeks.

But before we get into the town itself we should look more at Dennis Martin and his generosity. Dennis was quite successful with his timber business and that, on top of his small fortune won at the gold mines, put him in a position of substantial wealth. He recognized the need for a school in the growing community and went to work building one. When it was finished he put his children into the school and a number of children from the community came to school as well.

Sunday mornings were missing something for this staunchly Catholic family so the school that he built began being used as a church on Sunday. As



*Sanctuary at St. Denis, Searsville*

a new school was being built in the town of Searsville itself the need for Martin's church dwindled. Martin then converted the school to a Catholic church.

Martin donated the land to the Catholic Church. It was the only church between San Francisco and San Jose and drew its congregation from a fast growing area of southern San Mateo County. Martin purchased a giant solid silver cross and six silver candlesticks from Rome after they had been consecrated and brought them to Searsville. Archbishop Alemany came to Searsville and dedicated the church to Saint Dennis in honor of this generous man. When the church closed its doors the cross and candlesticks along with the various church records were given to the Church of the Nativity on Oak Knoll Ave in Menlo Park. They can be seen today in the front of the sanctuary.

Martin furnished the church with a choir loft, good and proper pews, a beautiful altar and pulpit. He purchased other materials such a record book for attendance at Sunday services, baptisms, marriages and funerals. The community deeply appreciated Dennis Martin and so did the hierarchy of the Catholic Church on the San Francisco Peninsula.

Dennis Martin also built a cemetery called "Saint Dennis Cemetery" and located it a few feet from the church and his house. There were some 45 burials in this unconsecrated cemetery. Those buried were from Searsville and were worshipers, or the children of worshipers, at St. Denis. A number of Martin's family were buried in this cemetery as was Dennis himself.



*Tombstone at St. Dennis Cemetery*



Dennis was the last burial. A number of migrant workers were buried here and so were several Indians. Dennis outlived his wife and several of his children and his brothers and they are all buried at Saint Dennis Cemetery.

So what happened to this church and cemetery? Well, they stood vacant and unattended for many years. Gradually they deteriorated and were finally torn down. I, the author, went out to that area on horseback several years ago and all that is visible is a white post with no writing placed where the church, house and cemetery were originally located.

While all this was taking place on the Martin Ranch other things were happening in town. For one thing a Mr. Cameron, an architect designed Dennis Martin's old mill on San Francisquito Creek into large grist mill. He invested in two French burr stones four feet in diameter and a large new water wheel. The building was 25X30 feet in size. A first class miller was employed. The mill was a grand success providing a sufficient amount of water was flowing from the mountains,

The San Mateo County Gazette reported on February 23, 1861: "Destruction of a mill dam. Besides other damage of greater or lesser importance, done by the late storm and which we did not hear of in time for our last issue, was the destruction of the mill dam of Cameron's grist mill, near Searsville. Which casualty renders the mill useless until the dam is replaced." Then, by June, a J.P.Beck and T.Bullen opened the "Redwood City Flour Mill. The spot was leased from Dennis Martin and they were using much of his original structure. They used the two burr

stones and added two smaller stones.

By November 1861 the partnership was dissolved and Mr. Beck continued the operation himself.

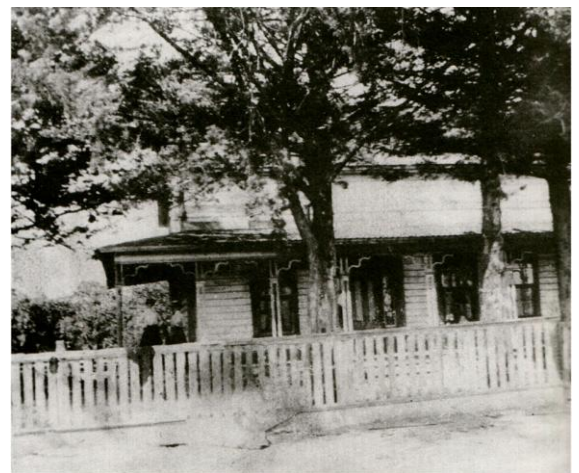
The political scene changed in the area of Searsville which affected Dennis Martin quite a bit. The Arguellos, owners of the "Las Pulgas Rancho" decided that they were the proper owners of all the land from the bay to the skyline ridge and south to San Francisquito Creek. They put their attorney to work to prove this truly invalid request. Simon Mezes got together with John Coffee Hays, the federal surveyor for the federal government in California. Now Hays was famous for his role with the Texas Rangers in defeating the Mexicans in that war and when he came to San Francisco in 1850 he was immediately elected Sheriff of that County which included what is now San Mateo County.

Martin built that old sawmill on San Francisquito Creek into a grist mill and began milling flour. This was definitely a boon to the burgeoning town of Searsville and was quickly successful. Unfortunately it was only successful when the water was running during the winter and spring as in the summer and early fall there was insufficient water power to turn the wheel.

On August 4th 1855 Martin purchased, for \$21,000 the South Ranch with money he borrowed from his brother Patrick. Patrick died the next spring and Dennis has a document sworn before a justice of the peace, probably Templeton, that declared that his father and his brother John and his sisters relinquished any rights to the South Ranch.



*John Coffee Hays*



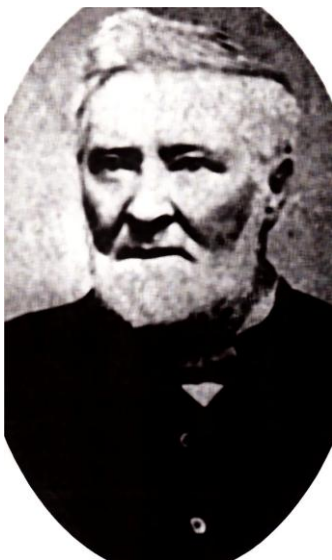
*Martin's South Ranch House*

The Town of Searsville was somewhat dispersed over quite a space but the primary residential area was based on a series of streets A through C streets on the map that Horace Templeton platted out and had certified. But many people purchased property outside the platted section which was only a small space between where the Alambique Creek and the Dennis Martin Creek empty into the San Francisquito Creek. Templeton lived and built his ranch on the upper part of Sausal Creek, The Knights family moved in below him on Sausal Creek a built their home and ranch. August Eikerenkotter purchased land east of the Alambique Creek and built his home and a substantial hotel. William Page built his home on the south side of San Francisquito Creek. John Sears built his home near Page and built his blacksmith shop there as well. William Lloyd built his home a short distance from Eikerenkotter on property he purchased from Eikerenkotter, he also built a blacksmith shop.

Moses Davis came into town and purchased land south of today's Whiskey Hill Road and Sand Hill Road intersection. Here he bought a substantial hotel, built by John Sears with a saloon and gambling rooms on the first floor and sleeping rooms on the second floor. He opened for business on April 9, 1859 with his partner William Maxfield. The partners also opened a stable and provided space for wagons etc.

This hotel, early on, became Horace Templeton's favorite hangouts as he loved to

play poker and was good at it. Templeton was also the justice of the peace at Searsville during these early days. However, after Templeton became the county judge, the hotel burned to the ground. They soon found out how good a poker player he was by the wires that ran between the first and second floors and through the walls that allowed a confederate to signal an opponent's hand. The Gazette said, "Many a poker player has been relieved of his capital and show conclusively that it requires more machinery than is generally known to carry on the business of gambling successfully. It was nothing more nor less than a complete poker telegraph. Templeton purchased a large house on Phelps Street (Middlefield Road) in Redwood City where he lived after moving from Searsville and while he was the county judge (1860 – 1872) in about 1870 the house caught fire and burned to the ground. Templeton had insured the house for three times its value. Sounds like Templeton could make even a rotten fish smell good.



*Augustus Eikerenkotter*



*Lena Eikerenkotter*

Augustus and Lena Eikerenkotter, had moved from South Carolina to New Orleans where he met and married Lena. He had been born in Prussia in 1817 he came to this country in 1834. He came to California in 1850 chasing after the illusive gold nugget. He arrived next in San Francisco where he entered into the hotel business for a year when he purchased land at the junction of two roads one from Redwood City, the other from Woodside. The property was next to the Alambique Creek. The land was not part of Templeton's platted town. He had to

buy the land at least twice in order to get proper title. The property consisted of 160 acres.

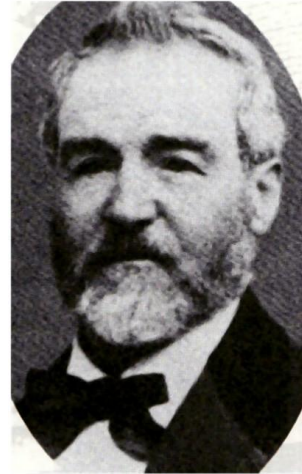
The Eikerenkotter's built a substantial two story hotel, in 1853, and a separate house in which they lived. The structures faced the road to, what is now, Portola Valley. Eikerenkotter also went into farming on his large area that he owned. By 1860 he was harvesting and selling 1,600 bushels of wheat, 250 bushels of barley, and making 500 pounds of butter. He must have owned a sufficient number of cows and the facilities to make butter in order to produce that much for sale. He also grew coffee and was able patented an early instant coffee in cubes. It was considered greater in taste than the ground coffee.



*The Eikerenkotter Hotel at Searsville*

Another early pioneer was William Lloyd who was a blacksmith by trade. He built a house and a shop on 12.75 acres of land that he purchased from Augustus Eikerenkotter. He intensively farmed the rest of the acreage he purchased harvesting 180 bushels of wheat in 1860 as well as keeping one horse several cows and chickens. He purchased 59.4 acres on the south side of Alambique Creek from Horace Templeton thus increasing the size of his farm rather dramatically.

William Lloyd came from Wales to Utica, New York at an early age. He came west at age 28 in 1852. As most of the others he came to the gold country and settled first in Placer County, however, he didn't stay too long because he set up his blacksmith shop at Searsville in 1855. He was a wheelwright as well as a blacksmith and these skills put him in good stead with the population at Searsville as the increasing number of men coming to cut lumber needed more and more wagons for transporting their material to Redwood City.



*William Lloyd*

John Howell Sears is the man after whom the town was named and the subsequent lake was named. John Sears came to the redwoods in 1852 considerably later than a number of other more prominent people and he left the Searsville area for La Honda in 1862 where he built a hotel, a blacksmith shop (applejacks today) and a home. He became the postmaster at La Honda as he was for a short period at Searsville. The first formal post office was established in 1868 and Edwin D. Bowman was the first town post master. As well as the hotel Sears built a store in which clothing and dry goods were sold and just about anything else he could get at a good price that he felt he could sell. Undoubtedly liquor was among the items.

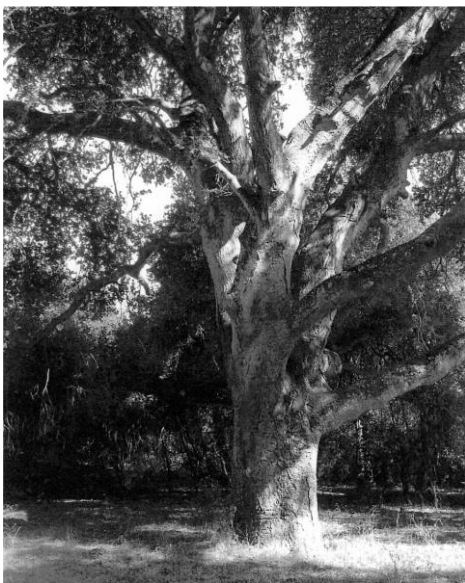


*John Howell Sears*



Sears built a hotel at Searsville out on the east side of town near where Sand Hill Road and Whiskey Hill Road intersect today. This was the hotel that was later purchased by Moses Davis in which Horace Templeton spent so much valuable time. It was during Sears stay at the hotel that the post office became established, at least transferred, which resulted in Sears name becoming attached to the town. Sears moved to La Honda in 1861. In the winter of 1861-1862 the rain soaked the forested land around Searsville and caused heavy movements of mud. One such mud slide destroyed the Home of Simon Knights and Simon and his wife and two children ran for their lives. Unfortunately his youngest son did not move fast enough and was drowned in the mud as he tried to escape through a window. This son became the first of the Knights clan to be buried in Union Cemetery. Within 3 miles of Searsville every sawmill was swept away. Every bridge over numerous creeks were all swept away. The actual date of this tragedy was January 24th 1862.

Alexander Peers first appears in the Searsville picture when he purchased 2,240 acres of land and a mill from Hanson and Ackerson, the Redwood City Lumber Company, who had purchased it from William Page, along Peter's Creek. A road had been, or was being, developed along the Creek which eventually was called Page Mill Road even though Page owned it but a very short time.

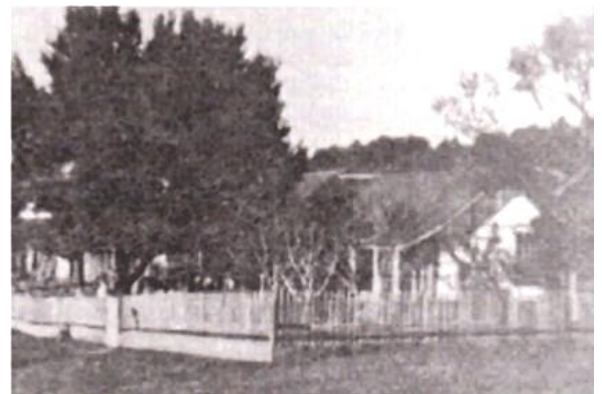


*The Laurel tree at Page's Store as it appears today. Photo taken by author.*

Page did become the Searsville post master for a short period of time as well. He took over the position from Edwin D. Bowman who had served in that position for some three years and was the original post master for the town.

William Page was a popular man in the town, as an original settler in the area he was recognized immediately by many of the lumbermen who came from the Placer County area because of Page's earlier efforts at the hard work and little success of searching for the lucky strike. He was not known to be lucky in that pursuit but his luck changed when he found his way to San Mateo County.

William Page had three sons and a daughter born in Searsville and one son, who was eight years old, died on the 1st of May, 1876. The Page residence was to the southwest of the main, platted, part of town and he planted a number of unusual trees that are still standing proudly even though their planter is long gone. Page also built a store on his property at Searsville but we do not know what he sold. An add in the San Mateo County Gazette on August 16th 1862 announced, "Latest arrival of spring and summer goods at the "Farmer's Exchange, Searsville, San Mateo County.....all kinds of dry goods... ready-made clothing... groceries, boots and shoes, hats, caps, syrups, tobacco and cigars etc, etc. The subscriber has also established in connection with the store, a lumber yard, and is prepared to furnish to purchasers dimension lumber



*William Hughs' house*

William Maxfield came to the redwoods early in 1859 and was able to join with Moses Davis in purchasing Sears' hotel. It became a popular structure for the entire town as many widely advertised balls and other events as well as the

gambling were generously given by the partners. Davis, like Templeton was well known for success at cards. Maxfield purchased substantial acreage from Templeton but, unfortunately, he died at age 40 in 1863. His widow continued to live at Searsville and was given help by many of the townspeople.

Another William, William Hughes also came to Searsville and affiliated with a number of lumber mills as a young man. One of the mills that worked for a substantial amount of time became known as the Hughes mill. This mill was destroyed by fire in 1876.

Hughes was ruined financially but he managed to get financially healthy again by selling his lumber to the booming silver mines in Nevada and eastern California. Hughes had a number of profitable hobbies one of which was a race horse named; "Billy Johnson" the horse was quite successful during the early 1890s for his already wealthy owner.

William Hughes built his house on "A" street at the corner of Eikerenkotter Lane in Searsville. This street was close to the Alambique Creek and on one occasion a young girl about six years old fell into the rushing stream, she was accompanied by her younger brother in crossing the creek on a log. Hughes thought the brother was in the creek as well and dove into the muddy water trying to find him. There was great fear that the child was lost. Then a number of townspeople came running up and after them followed the brother they were looking for. The rescue and subsequent search were a valiant effort and he was considered hero by the entire town and a substantial party was thrown for him at, where else, the Davis-Maxfield Hotel. When Horace Templeton departed Hughes rapidly became "Top-man" His wealth played a large part in his new role.

Hughes moved his family to Redwood City in 1890 just as the new Searsville dam was about to open. He went into the banking business in Redwood City and became vice-president of the Redwood City Commercial Bank. He held that position until shortly before his death.

William Hughes has the largest vault in Union Cemetery and with him in that vault are the rest of his family and John and Abigail Boynton. John Boynton married Abigail Hughes and the

Boyntons lived with the Hughes while they lived at Searsville. John Boynton passed away in 1881 and was the first to enter the vault.

Harriet and William Hughes lived first in Aurora, Nevada when they came west. They settled there in search of gold in 1852. Aurora was a booming gold rush town at that time and a deep mining town for the riches. There were a number of mines near the town and its existence was based on these efforts. Lizzy Boynton agreed to join them in Aurora but after a year she returned to Searsville. Even though she remembered that the year in Aurora was one of the happiest periods of her life she recognized that she needed to be near people and Aurora was diminishing as the gold diminished.

In 1867 the Pacific Coast Business Directory listed the following business in the town of Searsville...

August Eikerenkotter, hotel keeper

William Lloyd, blacksmith

William Page, general merchant and postmaster

Nathan G. Smith, butcher

Joseph Spaulding, saloon

Joseph Stillman Spaulding came to California in 1852 with a group of lumbermen and friends from Maine and arrived in Searsville in 1855-1856. Joe and a partner, "Spaulding and McKeen" opened a mercantile store the assessed value was \$50. Joe returned to Maine in 1859 and then returned to Searsville with his brother, sister and his brother-in-law. The Spaulding's built a shingle mill in Pescadero and worked it for a little while until the gold bug bit them again and they were off to Idaho in 1862.

By 1864 the Spauldings were back at Searsville and Joseph fell in love and married Lisa Evans. Templeton sold the Spauldings some property on "A" Street, property that some of his relatives had been living in while he traveled. Lisa became very well known for her great kindness. She established a boarding house and she taught a substantial number of Chinese to cook American style even though they could not speak English.

When Joseph died in mid-April, 1884 he was living in Mayfield the newspaper said, "The deceased was an old resident of this and Santa Clara counties, he was a native of the State of New Hampshire and at the time of his death was aged 77 years.

Mr. Spaulding is the father-in-law of John Stafford, proprietor of the Pioneer Stables of this town. The interment will take place at Union Cemetery tomorrow.”

In 1878 the Searsville School had 98 students and the town was at its inhabited peak. It was soon after that the water company began making inroads.

In the mid 1860s August Eikerenkotter donated the land on top of a small hill on the road that bore his name for a school house. Within a short time Eikerenkotter Lane became the focal point of the town of Searsville. Five structures were built in addition to the school, Eikerenkotter's hotel on the north end, William Lloyd's blacksmith shop, Page's mercantile store and the Hughes' residence. The school house was used for a number of purposes in addition to education. The county elections were held there and all the town meetings. There was often a large party at the school with a small band and lots of liquid refreshment and the entire county was invited.

The Gazette reported on April 4th 1868: “Election notice. Notice is hereby given to the qualified electors of the Searsville School District that an election will be held on Saturday the 25th day of April at the School House between the hours of 8 AM and sundown, at which time will be submitted the question of voting a tax to maintain a free school in said district. August Eikerenkotter, William Page and John Johnston, trustees.

The Arguellos began selling off their ill-begotten property at Searsville in 1884. On February 12, 1883 Luis Antonio Arguello sold 1,509 acres to Leland Stanford. Of this, 1,034 acres were part of Martin's North Ranch. Stanford had already purchased 151.53 acres of the North Ranch and he had previously purchased the entire South Ranch.

In 1875 a very small amount of gold was discovered on the property. This resulted in several people with mining experience to arrive. There were several mines and one mine known as the Larko mine was worked by some ten men in 1875 but this also ran out of steam. One such glory hole went some 180 feet down but they had to stop due to the large amount of water that filled the hole.

They drilled several glory holes but were unable to find any color by Grosso 1890. Most of them departed but one young man, Domingo, who remained on the property for the rest of his life.

Grosso built his house on the property of the mine and filed a claim as a minor continuing his efforts at finding gold. His claim was approved and he worked a little bit every week in order to keep his claim active. He received financial help, it is believed, from the wife of one of the original minors. Grosso became known as “The Hermit” by Stanford students who hiked in the area after the turn of the century.



*Domingo Grosso*

Domingo Grosso was a very clean individual considering where he lived. He was always ready for visitors and as soon as he saw them coming he changed into very clean clothes. His three room house was clean enough that some people said you could eat off the floor. Grosso was originally, people believed, from Genoa, Italy. He spoke and read Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and English and all fluently. Around his house he planted many flowers, vegetables, fruit trees and nut trees. He literally ate out of his garden; it was only when company was coming that he went out and purchased fowl or meat.

Grosso kept a considerable amount of ore under his house and displayed it to people from time to time. The ore contained small amounts of silver and had come out of the mine he was working near his home. People said he was certain he would find a streak of silver. He never did unfortunately.



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Grosso gradually began showing his age as he passed his 70th birthday. He continued living in his customary style but he was not able to do the manual labor at the mine that he used to, he never gave up the idea that he would hit a strike. After the turn into the 20th century he slowed down considerably and as time went on he suffered a stroke. Finally on April 16, 1915 his condition was so deteriorated that he was taken to the county hospital where two days later April 18, 1915 he died.

The Gazette on September 30, 1871 reported, "Joseph Davis Hardin, a pioneer of twenty years standing in this county died suddenly in Cotton's Saloon on the afternoon of Thursday last, from the effects of alcohol. Mr. Hardin was from Kentucky and was a member of the family from which Hardin County takes its name, a son and daughter, all that remains of the deceased's family and many other Hardin's still residing in that section. Mr. Hardin took up his home at Searsville of this county at an early day, keeping batch and spending his time farming, getting out timber and hunting. He was a Kentuckian in size being over six feet in height, honest and peaceable."

In 1871 the Crystal Palace Saloon was sold by Joseph Spaulding to Jimmy Mulligan who was known as a celebrated bar tender. This sale occurred on December 21, 1871 and by December 23, 1871 Mullin ran an advertisement in the paper announcing a Grand Ball at the Crystal Palace Saloon, "the freshest of cigars and the purest of wines and liquors always on hand"

On November 23, 1878 the first evidence of the Spring Valley Water Company intentions became anxiety in the residents of Searsville. The Gazette wrote: "Will we sell out or not?" is the all absorbing topic now agitating the residents of Searsville and vicinity. The survey of the Spring Valley Water Company shows that the lake to be formed by the proposed dam at the Murray place will entirely submerge the site of the town.

At Eikerenkotter the surface of the water will be on a level with the eaves of the store. (This would have been physically impossible because there is no structure that would hold the water at that level.)

March 8th 1879 a complaint was filed in the 12th District Court, in Redwood City, by the Spring Valley Water Company against all the landowners in Searsville. Some thirty-eight families were named from Louis Arguello (land owner but not resident) to Charles McLaughlin forcing them off their land. (Now the reader must recognize that the San Mateo County Gazette originally was pretty much anti the water company and said so rather plainly. The water company simply bought the paper and changed its name from "Gazette" to "Times and Gazette" and a new editor and the paper became much more favorable)

By January 1887 the water company was sinking shafts on San Francisquito Creek and the threat previously made seemed to be happening. Many of the residents of Searsville had torn down their houses and moved to Redwood City and put the houses back up. The dam would be built in the vicinity of the Dennis Martin South Ranch and very near where he built the first sawmill in San Mateo County, the one that was washed away in the early 1860s.

In August 1891 they were pouring cement, some 14,000 barrels which were brought from San Francisco by railroad and the sand was brought from North Beach to Redwood City by schooner and landed at the foot of Main Street on the new wharf owned by Frank's Tannery. It took six horse teams to haul the cement and sand from Redwood City to Searsville in wagons specially developed for that purpose.

During this period the remaining residents of the Town of Searsville took down their houses and either moved them or burned them and moved to Redwood City and in a few cases Woodside. (Thus the answer to the question at the beginning of this essay.)

The Times and Gazette on November 31, 1891: "Searsville is Gone. The end of San Mateo County's oldest village."

The Times & Gazette wrote an article titled "Searsville's Big Dam." It will cover 300 acres with water. ....Saturday last a Times & Gazette representative went out to see the big Searsville dam.

The road thither is by Woodside turning to the left at Hanson's Exchange. Then up hill and down dale until you get tired of the dust, over a bridge, through a gap in the fence, by a new road about a quarter of a mile. The first building is a long horse barracks to the right and right here is a chance to water your steed. To the left are various structures, two being for sleeping quarters. In these quarters did not see any of chamberlain's walnut sets and the decoratings were not always in good taste. We realize the absence of toilet conveniences while the delicate flavor that floated in and out was not that of perfumed soaps..... Near by was the big dining hall and hanging to it the kitchen department, meat refrigerator and store room. Two cooks and a baker are constantly busy preparing palatable food for Superintendent Green's men. (Note, some 200).

T.L. Johnson, the obliging civil engineer, said that the dam would have a present height of 60 feet, it would be 50 feet at the base, 14 feet at the top and 300 feet long and that the lake thus formed would cover 300 acres of surface. The excavation will be 20 feet below the turf and the dam will be a curve crowning inward with a radius of 450 feet. At present the great delivery platform is finished. Below it 20 feet the machinery platform with two sets of power and mixing machines are nearly complete and 20 feet below that the temporary bridge on which delivery cars will run to dump the cement into conveyance pipes for the puddlers below. In the excavation below some eighty men were at work picking, grading, shoveling, wheeling, pumping and dumping."

A notice published in the paper Dated San Francisco, October 16, 1878... Spring Valley Water Company... a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, for the purpose of supplying pure, fresh water to the inhabitants of the City and County of San Francisco, claims the water running in and flowing from the San Francisquito Creek, in the County of San Mateo, to the extent of all the water flowing in said creek at the City and that said appropriation and the diversion thereof will

be made at a point near and just below the junction of Bear Gulch Creek with said San Francisco Creek by means of a dam erected across said creek and a conduit to carry the waters thereof to the Crystal Springs Reservoir then to be discharged into the present works of said corporation.

Dated: San Francisco, October 16, 1878  
Spring Valley Water Company  
By Charles Webb Howard, President,  
State of California, County of San Mateo"

This illustrates beyond doubt that the water company intended to use the Searsville water, along with the Crystal Springs water solely for the purpose of use in San Francisco.

The water company bought land that August Eikerenkotter had sold to a man named Heatley in 1869 which he had farmed for 15 years. Eikerenkotter had cleared the 147.67 acres of oak trees and brush for his plantings. The water company continued buying up land whenever it became available. Joseph Spaulding owned land right in the middle of where the water company needed to go and he refused to sell. Spaulding had several lots and he wanted \$2,000 for each lot which was a tremendous amount of money in those days. One of the water company officials introduced Spaulding to two very beautiful young ladies who were desirous of purchasing the property. Apparently there were tenants living on the lots and Spaulding had rented the property. He was having trouble with the tenants. Spaulding was sympathetic with the women as he got to know them. He sold them the lots at a good price and they transferred the deeds to the water company, their employer. There apparently was no great anxiety experienced by the inhabitants of Searsville who remained in October of 1891. This is quite a bit different from what James Swift wrote for the Times and Gazette Newspaper who wrote that it looked like the water would be coming up in the next 24 to 48 hours, the way boards were being torn off houses and barns. It is true that the water company wanted the residents to feel that way, in a sense but, at the same time, many of the residents who remained were being

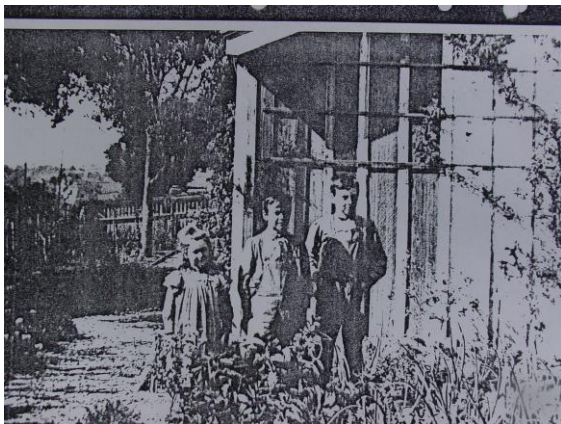
employed by the water company. A good example is that of Edgar Bernard Batchelder,



*Sears Dam c1950*

Batchelder had worked for the Spring Valley Water Works at their rock dam at Pilarcitos Lake west of San Bruno. He established his house at Searsville and went to work as a foreman for the water company with the responsibility of dam security.

The Times and Gazette reported on October 19, 1889: "Last Saturday evening quite a large gathering assembled at the House of Mrs. Frank Boos. Dancing, the chief amusement of the evening was kept up until morning."



*Batchelder children at their house at Searsville  
Lucy, Edgar and Allie*

Frank Boos had been a member of the United States Marine Corps during the Mexican War. After the war he came to the gold fields of California and worked somewhat successfully at the diggings. He then traveled to San Mateo County and settled at Searsville and took up logging for a living. He was popular and was elected to the school board and served in that capacity for the rest of his life. He married Maria Crisantha Valencia in St. Dennis Church.

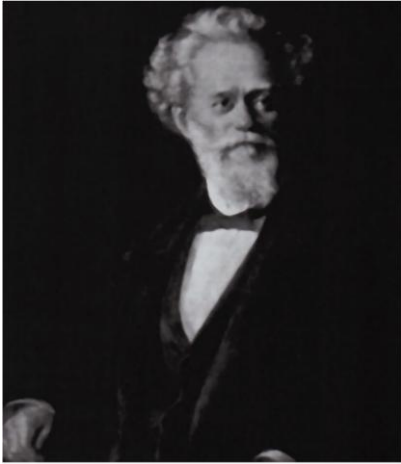


*Frank & Maria Boos*

The beautiful area that was Searsville became an attraction for wealthy San Franciscans. In the area that became Portola Valley one of San Francisco's most treasured emblems was developed. Andrew Hallidie had designed an aerial tramway in the gold country for hauling ore across hilly areas to the stamp mills further up stream. When he came to San Francisco he was already wealthy but he observed the difficulty people were having moving across the muddy and dusty hills that make up the geology of that city. Hallidie also recognized the beauty of the Searsville area and elegance of the natural surroundings. He purchased property in what is now known as Portola Valley in today's 800 block across from today's Valley Inn.

It was on this property, which extended all the way to the ridge we call Skyline today. In 1894 he built a tramway, with Chinese labor, from, on the top of Old La Honda Road at Skyline 7,341 feet to the Christ Church of today, on Portola Road.





*Andrew Hallidie*

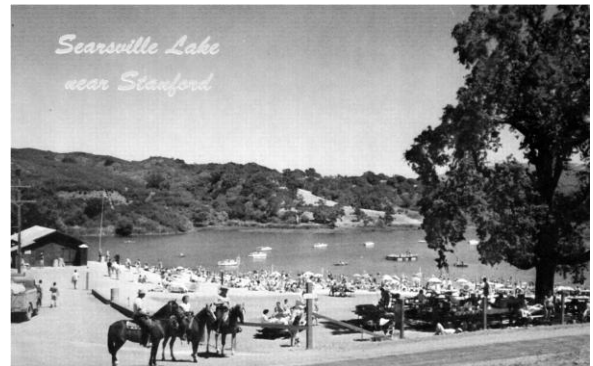
Giant towers kept the wires some 120 feet above the ground. He attached iron buckets carrying 100 to 300 pounds and three passenger cages which held up to 1,200 pounds. A round trip took about an hour.

This was the demonstration for the development of the Cable Cars of San Francisco. Unfortunately Andrew did not see much of his future work as he passed away before the turn into the 20th century. But it is certain that the cable cars were developed in Portola Valley, California.

There is a street in Woodside that runs off Old La Honda Road called, Preston Road. This street is named after E. F. Preston who purchased the ranch of John H. Titus near Searsville for \$9,500. The Times and Gazette noted on August 16, 1890 "that the property has several valuable mineral and sulphur springs. The property adjoined property Preston purchased several years earlier. The property included a handsome residence which Preston improved to the tune of \$19,480. The price included a contract to C.C. Farrell of San Francisco for added rooms, stairs and stain glass windows. Preston developed a substantial amount of the property into vineyards and built a winery.

After the turn into the 20th century hiking, picnicking and research previously held Dennis Martin's Rancho. It was not until 1922 that the water company decided to sell ten acres to Ernest "Ernie" Brandsten who was well known

and liked as a swimming coach at Stanford. Brandsten's purpose was to create a large recreation area for people of San Mateo County. He called it "Searsville Lake Park" and the Times-Gazette stated, "In the thirty years since ... artificially created ... it has become half full of mud washed down from the treeless hills above ...



*Searsville Lake Park in the mid 50s*

The lake is a beautiful body of water, whose possibilities are only beginning to be realized. Part of this beauty is being developed and capitalized by Ernst Brandsten, who has leased the site on the eastern bank for a resort and has cut trails and bridle paths and offers boating, canoeing and swimming advantages."

The recreation enthusiasts found the lake becoming increasingly popular as time went on. The rumor that there was a town under the lake was perpetuated by Brandsten's encouragement. Swimmers were told not to dive too deeply, as I was, by my father. Those who did dive deeply and probed the bottom found no evidence of a town or anything else but major plant material.

Brandsten sponsored the National High Diving Championships in 1923. But the following year the water seemed to be drying out because of a serious drought that enveloped California. The newspaper did not help in quashing the rumors of a town under the lake when it wrote, "Buried under 50 feet of water some 30 years ago ... the thriving town has been but a memory, reliving in the lake which bears its name.

But today, Searsville Lake is no more. The extraordinarily dry summer has drained the artificial body of water and this week for the first time since the dam was erected, the streets of the old townsite were trodden on."

Silting was a constant problem for Searsville Lake. By 1929 Stanford was again dredging the lake at a cost of \$25,000 and a new problem arose. J.A. Folger built an earthen dam on a tributary of Alambique Creek. He stocked it with carp. When winter came in 1930 the dam caved in and sent the carp down Alambique Creek to Searsville. The carp attacked the natural fish who swam in the lake, all of which caused the some of the sportsmen to play a game of putting a certain amount of money into a kitty for each carp they caught and the first fisherman to catch a trout won \$5.00. This illustrates the damage that was done to the native fish by Mr. Folgers's negligence.

By 1955 the 450,000,000 gallons of water that the lake contained after the original dam construction had been reduced by silting to 250,000,000 and the cost of dredging had increased so much that it was impossible for Brandsten to continue his efforts at improvement. It was in that year, 1955, that Brandsten sold the property to Austin and Stuart Clapp. Austin and Stuart Clapp were from Southern California. Austin was an attorney and a Stanford graduate who had trained under Brandsten in the swimming program. I came into the picture at this point and worked as a life guard beginning in 1956 during the spring and summer swimming periods. I left the program after the 1958 year when I went into the service. During this period the Clapps, who lived on the property, built a hamburger, hot dog and sandwich shop with soft drinks. They built a bicycle bowl to Olympic dimensions; they built a bath house where people could change in and out of swimming attire.

The main problems for all the owners of the recreational property were the constant need to abate poison oak and the fact that people were constantly trespassing by climbing over barbed wire fences. The silting problems continued.

In 1975 the University decided to support the Zoological Department in their effort to close the facility permanently. They commissioned the Stanford Research Institute to do a study to evaluate the damage that was being done by the public access to the various research areas. They found that there were 500 to 600 paid attending customers each week day during the spring and summer of 1975 was 103,000.

Money to buy out the Clapps and the park was permanently closed.

In conclusion, I don't think anybody who reads this essay will think there is, or ever was, a town under Searsville Lake. I don't think anybody will blame the University for closing the park under the circumstances and I hope everybody who remembers how much fun we had at Searsville Lake will cherish those memories. The only remaining things of the Town of Searsville are the two trees that Page planted in front of his home and store. If Stanford decides to drain the lake, and there has been some discussion along those lines, the most they might find of the town are two small cement foundations to a Chinese laundry that was further down the hill than the town itself.

One final point: the great majority of the people discussed in this paper that were part of the original town of Searsville. are presently resting in Union Cemetery.



*Civil War statue on the Grand Army of the Republic plot, Union Cemetery*

## Editor's Note

Hope you enjoyed the new and improved Journal of Local History of the Redwood City Public Library. Please send us a line at [gsuarez@redwoodcity.org](mailto:gsuarez@redwoodcity.org) or call me, Gene Suarez, at 650-780-7098.

We welcome any comments or constructive criticism. Our next issue will appear in the Fall 2009. From all of us at Redwood City Public Library's Archives Committee, we wish you a pleasant Summer.

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