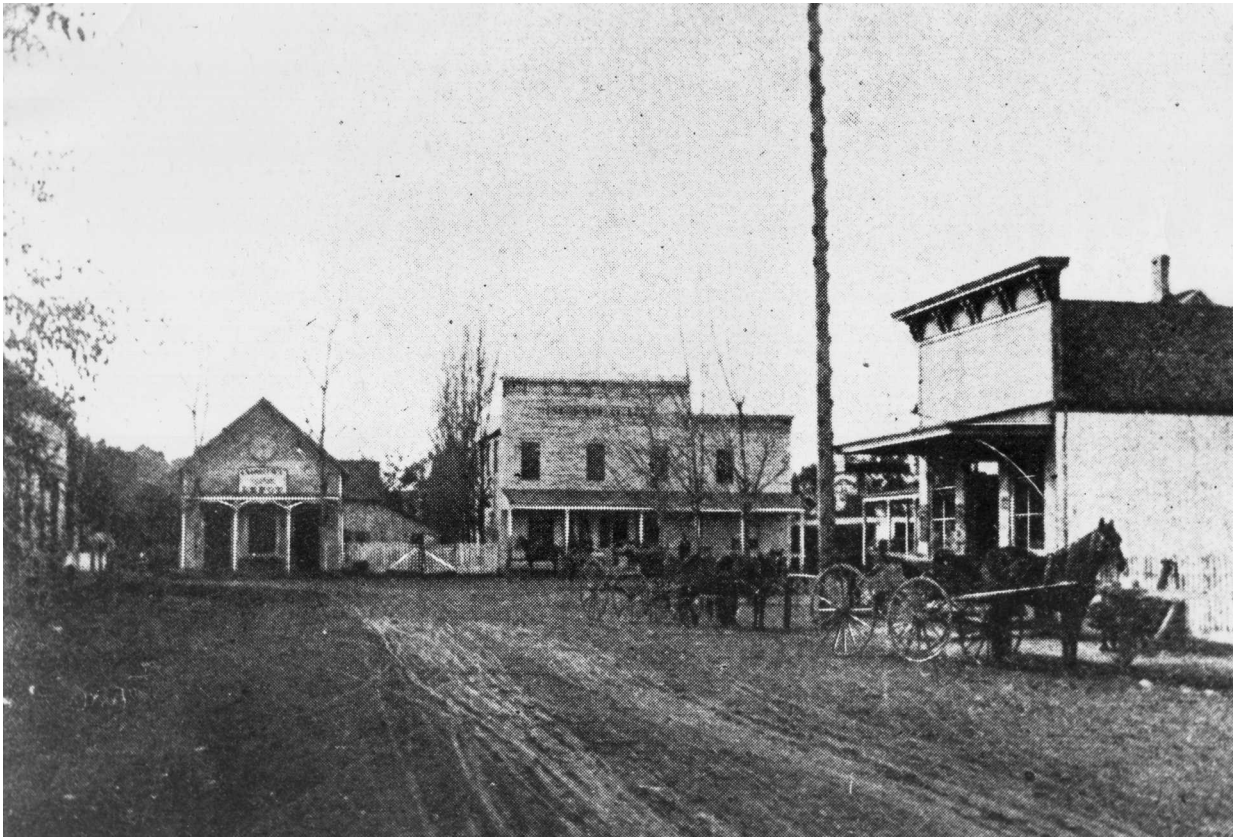


Looking Back

Early Glimpses of Union City



Published by the City of Union City
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the people who settled the lands that became Alvarado and Decoto, and to those who worked to bring about the incorporation of Alvarado and Decoto into one city, Union City.

"Looking Back: Early Glimpses of Union City" Compiled and edited by Nancy A. Nickel

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Cover Photograph: Early image of the first courthouse in Alameda Couty (the building in the middle of the photograph).

Foreword

In 1959, the rural communities of Alvarado and Decoto, fearing the future loss of their identity, determined to fend off the encroachment of neighboring Hayward to the north, and Fremont to the south, and decided to unite and incorporate as a new city to be known as Union City.

In 1977, this fast-developing city has a population of over 33,000, a light-industrial supported tax base and full scale residential, recreational, and retail complexes.

The supergrowth in the last decade has brought the city the usual suburban problems. It is important that the segments of economic, social and cultural life in Union City be brought to an appreciation of the rich historical and cultural heritage that the area possesses and that heritage be recorded as the city and its people grow and change.

In sponsoring this informal history of the area, the Union City City Council and the Union City Bicentennial Committee have performed a great service to the community.

With a thorough knowledge of the past, those who live in the present can avoid the pitfalls of their ancestors and take pride in the achievements of their forebearers.

John Sandoval

John S. Sandoval, area historian and newspaper columnist, was born in Sonora in 1906. He attended high school in Oakdale and graduated with honors from the University of California at Berkeley in 1927. His long time avocation has been the study of California history and that of Southern Alameda County in particular. He has written magazine articles and booklets and is a frequent lecturer. He is a Hayward resident.

Introduction

The celebration of the nation's Bicentennial in 1976 was a fitting time for Union City to look to its past. We did just that. This history is the result - segments of Union City's past and its people, from the time of the Costanoan Indians.

What did early Southern Alameda County look like? How did its people live? Who were some of the settlers in the communities of New Haven, Union City, Alvarado and Decoto? Each chapter is a story of families or events in those communities.

John S. Sandoval, area historian and columnist for the Daily Review, Inc. delved into files, memories, and photograph albums to bring us a picture of our heritage. Community people have loaned us interesting old photographs and we have gleaned from many sources other interesting stories of our early days.

So please - read on.

Table of Contents

Forward	3
Introduction	4
Part I - The First People	
Chapter 1 The Costanoans	8
Chapter 2 The Spaniards Explore	10
Chapter 3 A New Mission	12
Chapter 4 Life on the Ranchos	15
Part II - The Early Days	
Chapter 5 Three Villages	18
Chapter 6 Moments of Fame	23
Chapter 7 Fame, Short-lived	26
Part III - The Early Families	
Chapter 8 The Clawiters, Mays, Hawleys, and Wiegman	29
Chapter 9 The Dyers, Whipples, Meyers, and Barrons	32
Part IV - The Early Industries	
Chapter 10 Salt and Agriculture on a Fertile Land	37
Chapter 11 Beef and Beer in Alvarado	39
Chapter 12 The Sugar Mill Opens	41
Part V - Decoto Beginnings	
Chapter 13 The Decoto Family	45
Chapter 14 A New Town on the Rails	46

Part VI - Early Foundations

Chapter 15	The Guard - A Grand Bunch of Paraders	.....	51
Chapter 16	The Churches of Union City	.....	53
Chapter 17	Schools Then and Now	.....	56

Part VII - The 1900's

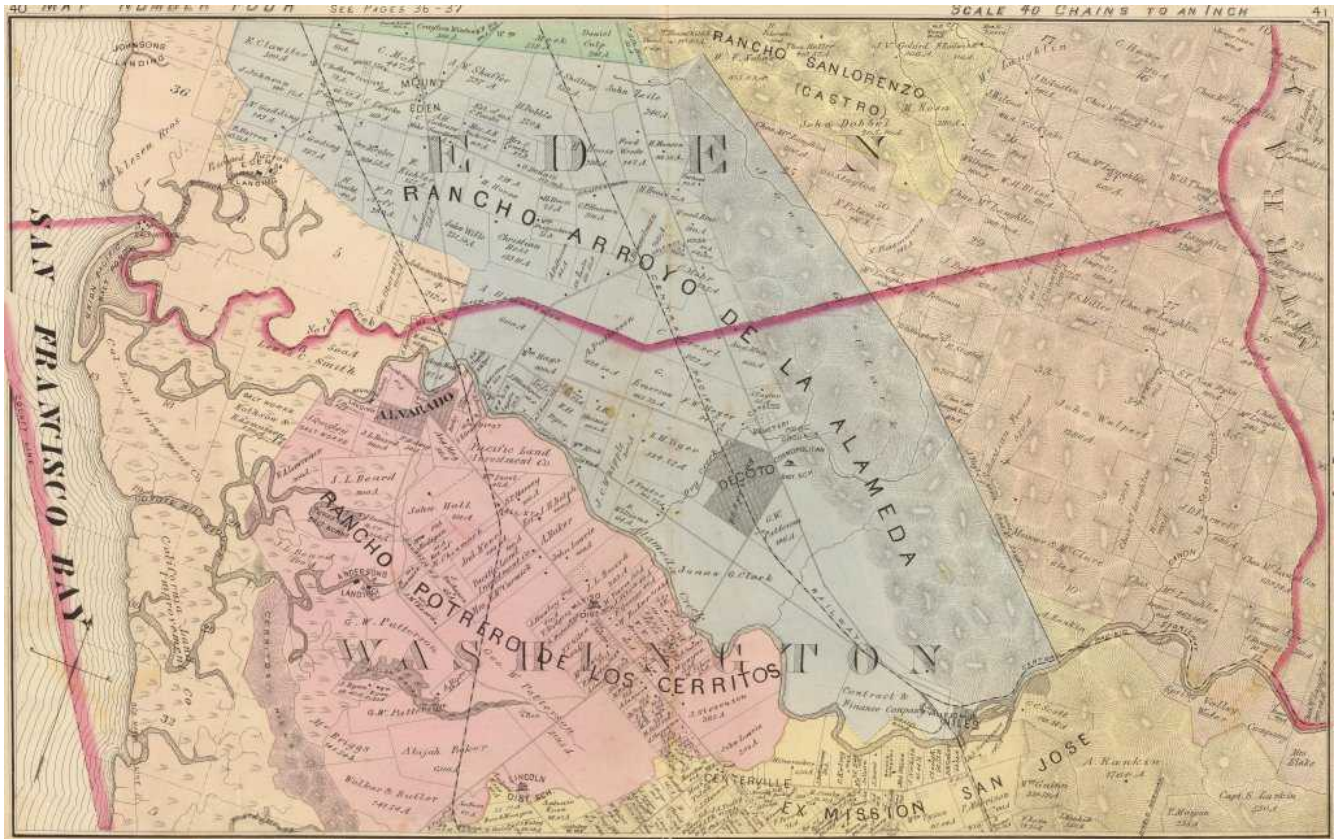
Chapter 18	The Great Earthquake of 1906	.....	61
Chapter 19	A Chamber of Commerce View	.....	62
Chapter 20	Ethnic Beginnings in Decoto	.....	63
Chapter 21	Alvarado Memories	66
Chapter 22	Growing Toward Incorporation	69

Bibliography	70
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Acknowledgements	71
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Part I

The First People



Map of the Ranchos that covered Union City

Chapter 1 - The Costanoans

The sounds of a language and music they'd never heard, and the sight of people in strange costumes living in tule huts greeted the Spaniards who crossed the Union City plain in 1775. Indian villages ranged along Dry Creek above where it joins Alameda Creek. Explorers and missionaries called the Indians Costanoans, meaning the Coastal people. There were about 8,000 of the Coastal people, according to Professor A. L. Kroeber, who wrote "Handbook of the Indians of California. "

The Spaniards came to know the Costanoan Indians and to like them. But those first impressions must have been startling. The Indians in one gathering were "passing the pipe around. Each one blew out mouthfuls of smoke toward the sky, preferring some words of which I understood only one, 'esman', which means sun," wrote Father Francisco Palou in his diary in 1774, when he accompanied Juan Baptista de Anza in his explorations.

Explorers such as de Anza found a people who lived a very different life than the one they knew. Some Indians spent the day in their balsa boats, snaring sea fowl, gathering eggs, shellfish, and abalone. They built their boats of rushes and dried grasses and used double paddles to propel the boats, sometimes even crossing the south part of the Bay in search for seafood. They gathered salt crystals from the marsh grass-stalks or driftwood.

Nets were the main method for catching fish, according to Father Font, who noted in his diary an incident when he gave the Indians two fish hooks and asked them to get him some fish.

"They apparently understood us clearly, but they brought us nothing. . . because their method of fishing is with nets. As soon as they felt from the pull made by the fish that it was in the net, which was tied to two poles, they began gradually to raise one of the poles, and as soon as the fish and net came into sight, without taking it from the water, they gave the fish many blows on the head," he wrote.

The seafood diet has been confirmed by mounds of shells found along the sloughs and tributaries of the creek near the Holly Sugar Mill, according to notes in the old Alvarado Pioneer Newspaper and other Washington Township newspapers of the past. Some of the mounds also contained burial sites.

"Evidences of residence by the Indians have been found on the farms (around the Bell Ranch) by J. C. Whipple. Some were also recorded on the I. B. Haines Estate. Mortars and human bones have been exhumed in several places on these lands," related the authors of the History of the Washington Township.

The Indians also hunted for rabbits, deer, and from the shores, sea otter. An apparently highly successful method of hunting deer devised by the Indians was that of using a decoy head. A report of this method was given by F. W. Beechey. "The head of a deer was placed on the shoulders of a man, and his body was painted the color of the deer. He then imitates the actions and voice of the deer and conceals his body in tall grass. This entices several of the herd within reach of his arrows and the animal falls without warning the herd, an arrow in his heart." (The Costanoan Indians).

The Costanoans' diet included a staple fare made from long onion-like bulbs which were roasted and eaten like radishes. This was called "amole." They made wild plants, acorn, grain and seeds into a

mush-like substance called “atole”, which was a cake about the size of a hand. And they ate rats, insects, grasshoppers, snails, and snakes.

They dressed for warmth, wearing capes of otter, and rabbit and deer skins. They made headdresses with hundreds of tail and wing feathers of bright hues, and belts of leather and fur hides. The Indians painted their bodies with bright clay and plant dyes, using the red cinnabar pigment found near the mercury deposits at New Almaden, near Los Gatos. The women liked to tattoo their faces and breasts and they wore bead necklaces. The Costanoan men danced for the Spaniards, keeping time with a split stick rattle that gave off a clacking sound. They often danced 6 to 8 men to a group, brandishing short spears.

Words of some Costanoan songs are a part of Kroeber's book on the Indians. "A song said to have been first sung by the wood rat in mythical times when animals used human speech:

'I dream of you
I dream of you jumping,
rabbit, jack rabbit and quail.'

They lived in huts, "large dwellings made of tule mats with a framework of slender poles inside covered with bulrushes," according to diarist Padre Pedro Font, who traveled with explorer Pedro Fages to the area.

The Costanoans made fine rush baskets with intricately woven patterns. They used red feathers for decoration and beads and mother of pearl from abalone shells for designs in their basketry and in their clothing.

DeAnza mentioned in his field notes that there were about 10 villages in the East Bay, some with as many as 20 huts or more, but there may have been no more than 200 living in the Union City area when the first explorers arrived.

These were the Indians as you would have known them then. Soon the arrival of the Spanish changed their way of life, and their number began to dwindle.

Chapter 2 - The Spaniards Explore

The sight from King's Mountain near San Mateo must have staggered the Spanish exploring party as they reached the top.

There before them was a body of water, shimmering in the winter sun, and stretching as far as the eye could see. Sergeant Jose Francisco Ortega and his army scouts could see the great flowing Alameda Creek, bisecting the area of present-day Union City. What a vantage point!

Ortega's was one of a half-dozen exploring parties crossing the Union City plain between 1769 and 1797.

Their discoveries were chronicled, as in the case of Don Gaspar Portola's expedition north from Monterey in 1769. The discovery of what is today San Francisco Bay was described by Father Juan Crespi in his journal: "We all hold the opinion, without any doubt, that this is a very great and magnificent port-this large, this most noble harbor, surrounded by high mountains throughout its entire extent, so that it becomes a lake, as it were, protected from all winds. In a word, it is a very vast and magnificent harbor, such that not only all the navy of our most Catholic Majesty, but those of all Europe, could take shelter in it."

To this whole South County shore, Portola gave the designation of Contra Costa, the opposite shore.

He sent Ortega and his men to find Point Reyes by an inland route. Ortega took two days to get through the marshes around Alviso and Newark and then to cross Alameda Creek at the edge of the foothills of present-day Union City.

Lieutenant Pedro Fages, of the volunteers of Catalonia, also tried for Point Reyes in 1770. Coming up from Monterey, he crossed Alameda Creek near what is now Union City and proceeded 20 miles further into the area now known as Berkeley. For the first time, he saw the Golden Gate. Later, as a captain, he took Father Crespi with his company to find Point Reyes again. They left Monterey on March 20, 1772. Fages and Crespi traveled as far as San Pablo Bay and Mount Diablo.

The Spanish decided to locate a mission on the peninsula and sent Colonel DeAnza with a historic expedition from Tubac, Sonora, Mexico, across the deserts to Monterey and to San Francisco Bay. They left Tubac, October 23, 1775 and reached Monterey March 10, 1776. Father Font was chaplain and diarist for the journey. Those who took their families on that journey included Ensign Joseph Joaquin Moraga, Corporal Domingo Alviso, Corporal Gabriel Peralta, Recruit Juan Saivio Pacheco, Ignacio de Soto, Joaquin Isidro de Castro, Juan Francisco Bernal, Nicholas Galindo and Nicholas Antonio Berryesa.

After Monterey was reached, DeAnza, Font and some soldiers headed out to explore the San Francisco Bay region and lay out a fort-presidio-mission on the peninsula near the Golden Gate.

The smaller party crossed Alameda Creek within the limits of today's Union City. (The trek north to and through Union City was reenacted in March, 1976, during the Nation's Bicentennial.)

"On a frosty Sunday morning of March 31, 1777, after Father Font had said Mass, the travelers left their camp on the Guadalupe and, meeting with a network of sloughs and marshes along Coyote Creek, where it runs west, were forced to twist their way about for three leagues until they emerged on higher ground at the foot of the hills. From this point forward, the line of march followed 'far away from the water ... through very level country, green and flower-covered all the way to the estuary, but with no oak, other than timber or firewood that afforded by the trees in the arroyos which we encountered, which were five,' " wrote Font, according to Historic Spots in California by Hoover and Rensch.

Lieutenant Jose Moraga led the fifth and sixth exploring parties to cross the Union City plain in 1776. The first was a survey trip. The second was a trip to the banks of the Sacramento River.

It was almost 20 years before the Spanish explorers and settlers once again set foot in Southern Alameda County. In 1797, they founded the Mission San Jose.

Chapter 3 - A New Mission

New missions should be founded in the inland areas, near the Indian tribes. That decision was made in 1795 by Father Fermin Lasuen. After Father Junipero Serra had died, Father Lasuen succeeded him as President of the California Missions.

On November 22, 1796, Lt. Hermengildo Sal, accompanied by Sergeant Raimundo Carillo, Padre Antonio Danti, and a squad of soldiers, left the Mission of Santa Clara and marched west to the base of a tall peak, to an Indian village called Oroysom. There they found a proper place for a mission.

The site was on high ground sloping toward the bay. They found three creeks, one which had steady flowing water suitable for a millrace and to irrigate gardens (Mission Creek). The land was fertile, free from large stones and easy to cultivate. Behind the hills were stones large enough for building blocks. Nearby the lime deposit could provide material for mortar and the adobe mud could be used to produce bricks.

The next morning the party went out to find a source of lumber to make beams for the mission buildings. The Spaniards arrived at Alameda Creek and rode up the watercourse four miles until they came to Fernbrook Creek; then they retraced their steps to the mouth of the Niles Canyon.

They followed Alameda Creek through Union City to its mouth at the Bay and returned to a trail leading close to the hills. They made their way to where they could see the walls of Mission Delores across the bay. The next day the party returned to the banks of Alameda Creek and here came upon a "lagoon of salt water which some Indian guides explained was the only source of rock salt for the entire district," according to Lt. Sal's notes. Thus, they saw the salt ponds in the Union City district and climbed the "Los Cerritos" (Little Hills), which is present-day Coyote Hills, before returning to their Union City campsite.

Five days after the dedication of the Mission site, Sergeant Pedro Amador returned with his contingent of soldiers and christianized Indians from Loreto, bringing tools and equipment to construct the mission compound. He went to the mouth of the Alameda Creek and felled trees for timbers and gathered thatching tules from the marshes of Union City. He staked out the proposed sites for the chapel, guardhouse and other mission workshops. He built an "enclosure of the rectory with a fence of wooden stakes of considerable thickness, one hundred feet long on each side and five and one-half feet in height, as a measure of protection for the priests and neophytes in the event of an Indian attack.

"My last stint," Amador wrote in his diary, "was to divert water so that it would flow through the middle of the enclosure."

On June 28, 1797, Father Isidro Barcenilla and Father Agustin Merino arrived at the mission compound after a long trip by sea and across deserts from Loreto and via Monterey, to become the first dual administrators of Mission San Jose. The cattle were sent out to the Union City range area and the sheep were sent to graze under Christianized Indian herders in the Valley de San Jose (Sunol).

From 1797 to about 1836, the young people among the Costanoan tribe were proselytized by the Franciscan padres and lived at the Mission in San Jose, doing most of the daily work there.

The older Indians stayed in their villages, which the Spaniards called rancherias. They were too old to be completely Christianized. They often visited the Mission on days of fiesta but were thought of as gentiles or outsiders.

For the young Indians, however, life at the Mission was a new way of life, and the days were long and hard.

The day began for the neophytes in the barracks with the ringing of the matin or bell. As many as 700 would awaken to start the routine.

Outside their huts the Indians bathed their faces in the central fountain basins and straightened their hair with bone combs.

All Indians at the Mission compound who were 9 or older had to go to church for morning devotions. There were a few crude benches in the front of the chapel for gente de razon, or people of reason, and the families of the escolta or guard.

The Indians stood or knelt in silence while the fathers led the congregation in morning prayers.

After the church services the Indians gathered around the community kitchen fires to eat warm gruel or atole. Each adult received a quart of the porridge.

The herders put on their riding leggings of leather and their coarse woven ponchos and rode out to check the horse corral, the cattle herds and the sheep flocks. The women weavers prepared their crude looms to make cloth.

The gardeners shouldered their hoes and mattocks and tended to the weeding, irrigating and harvesting of melon patches, corn fields, vineyards and fruit orchards.

Young girls went to the poultry houses and barns to gather eggs and select chickens to be killed and dressed. Butchers slaughtered the young beef from the ranges and cut up the quarters for immediate cooking (the remainder was made into corned beef, pickled or dried in great strips of jerky).

Fishermen went to the bay sloughs near Los Cerritos to collect seafood and to set nets for sea salmon or spawning steelhead. Others fished Alameda Creek and its tributaries for trout, perch, and bass.

After the young men and women completed their religious training they were taught a specialized trade by the Padres at each mission. The Indians were loaned out to other missions to pass on their skills to others.

Each working day young blacksmiths worked at their forges, soap makers fired their vats, stone cutters went to the canyon quarries to extract building blocks, and the adobe-makers started kneading their clay and mortar and straw binding.

Candlemakers rendered tallow from the fat haunches of beef and swine. Foresters set up camp in the redwood groves to fell trees for beams and sidings.

Inside the cook lean-to's, women started preparing the noon day stew while others baked bread in the round-domed stove ovens. Other women ground corn and wheat into meal at their "metates" or stone grinding wheels. Sixteen pounds of flour was the minimum any woman was permitted to grind in a day. The basket-women worked with their willow branches, long tules, wiry grasses and earthen pigments.

The Indians' daily menu consisted of a meat stew-lamb, beef, venison, or pork which was mixed with beans, lentils, peas, or peppers. A quart and a half of this "pozole" was an adult's portion.

At dinnertime the Indians came in from the pastures, fields, and workshops, to bathe in the stream, ditches, or in water drawn from the fountains. Next, they went to chapel to recite the catechism or for special religious instruction and a short sermon from the padres.

There was another community supper, stew or atole. Some of the families stayed in their huts to have tortillas, fried fish, or broiled meat from their meat rations.

Music was played on guitars and violins by the church musicians and there were games for the children, dancing for the young men and women, gossiping for the older householders.

The Indian families retired at the Poor Soul's bell, which sounded from the church campanile to pronounce a benediction.

"Unfortunately, becoming Christian did not simply involve a change in the Indians' religious life," wrote Robert F. Heizer in his study of the Costanoans. "The bewildered native was not only punished and cajoled into accepting a belief which was supposed to give his life a new 'purpose' which was neither comprehensible or necessary to him, but also his whole way of life, materially and socially, was drastically altered. Housing in the mission was quite different ... the priests occasionally allowed families to live together in separate houses ... but unmarried men and women stayed in separate barracks. - . the young girls and women were carefully guarded and kept under lock and key at night.

"Work was necessary (the priests felt) to keep the Indians busy and teach them to be civilized - and so women were required to clean and comb wool, grind corn, cook, spin and weave; while men worked in the fields, plowing and planting corn, while acorns, every bit as nourishing and easier to harvest, lay wasted on the ground." The Indian population dwindled during these years.

Chapter 4 - Life on the Ranchos

Cattle and sheep were the center of life on the ranchos in the mid-1800's. Preparing hides and tallow to sell or to trade for goods brought by foreign trading brigs to the San Francisco Bay, was a dawn-to-dusk job on the two Mexican land grants which encompassed what is now Union City.

The rodeo or matanza (slaughtering) time on the ranchos was the culmination of this work. A good harvest of hides and tallow meant more money to make ranch life more livable, to buy hardware, tools, furniture, cloth, and shoes.

The vaqueros began by rounding up the stock from the arroyos or canyons, the flat plains filled with mustard weed, and the willow thickets.

Large herds were kept near a butchering field or crude corral. A skilled group of slaughterers-spear men, throat cutters, skinners, hide-salters, tallow-renderers, hide strippers and jerky makers gathered here. The ranch mayordomos would select the prime animals to be slaughtered. The vaqueros would cut those steers from the edge of the herd, hazing each in turn toward the slaughtering circle. There, a spear-man would ride alongside and pierce the steers jugular vein with a short lance. An Indian would finish off the kill by cutting the animal's throat. The skinning crew would remove the hide, saving the best parts of the meat to be dried in strips of jerky. Indian women cured the hides with natural salt, stretched them on the ground, and dried them by pegging them between stakes driven into the earth. The dried hides waited at the embarcadero for trading or sale.

The hides were called California bank notes and were worth from \$1.50 to \$2.50.

The average steer produced about 50 lbs. of jerky, which augmented a diet of fresh beef and was also exported to other countries. The foreign brigs sent 12-man longboats to sloughs like the Alameda Creek embarcadero to pick up the hides and jerky. The average rancho would see the slaughter of about five steers a week for daily meals.

The two Mexican land grants in the area were the Potrero de los Cerritos (pasture of the little hills), which included the Alvarado section south of Alameda Creek, granted to Tomas Pacheco and Augustin Alviso on March 21, 1844, by Governor Manuel Micheltorena; and the Rancho Arroyo de Alameda, Jose de Jesus Vallejo's grant, which included the Decoto area. Governor Juan Alvarado granted his cousin, Vallejo, his land in August, 1842. The land was one of the choicest areas in the Contra Costa area, totaling 17,705 acres.

Vallejo was born in the Pueblo de San Jose in 1798. His father was the Commandante of the Presidios at Monterey and San Francisco, and had come to Alta California with the Captain Rivera party in 1769 from the State of Guadalajara.

He was the elder brother of the politically prominent General Mariano de Guadalupe Vallejo, known as the Lord of Sonoma. He joined the Monterey presidial company as an artilleryman, and commanded a battery in the Bouchard pirate raid on Monterey in 1818. He was captain of artillery under Governor Alvarado in 1836-1838. In 1836 he was appointed commissioner and administrator of the Mission San

Jose when it was first secularized. He was also elected a delegate to the Monterey Provincial Governing Council in 1846.

Vallejo built his home across the street from the San Jose Mission Chapel and lived there until his death in 1882. The adobe was modernized in 1850. Vallejo built his grist mill on Alameda Creek in 1840. It is at the corner of Mission Boulevard and Niles Boulevard. The first post office in Alameda County in the old Mission store pre-dated statehood and Vallejo was the postmaster.

In 1865 he dictated his memoirs to Hubert Howe Bancroft historian. They are in the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley. He died at the age of 84. Vallejo was survived by his wife, Soledad Sanchez, and two daughters, Teresa and Guadalupe.

The second rancho grantees were Tomas Pacheco and Augustin Alviso. Alviso was a native of Alta California. He was born at the Presidio of San Francisco in 1809. He lived with his family at Mission Santa Clara and was a farmer and rancher. He built an adobe home on the large ditch of the willows near the Coyote Hills, in the Alvarado area, and was granted the Rancho Potrero de Los Cerritos, in partnership with his brother-in-law, Pacheco. Pacheco's adobe was on the south bank of the Creek, a half mile west of Cary's Dam across the Creek, in the Decoto area. These locations are pinpointed on a map attached to the U. S. Patent issued February 26, 1866.

Alviso was a successful ranchero. He sold 60,000 pounds of wheat, 25,000 pounds of beans and about 12 tons of corn to the Russian settlements at Fort Ross and Bodega Bay.

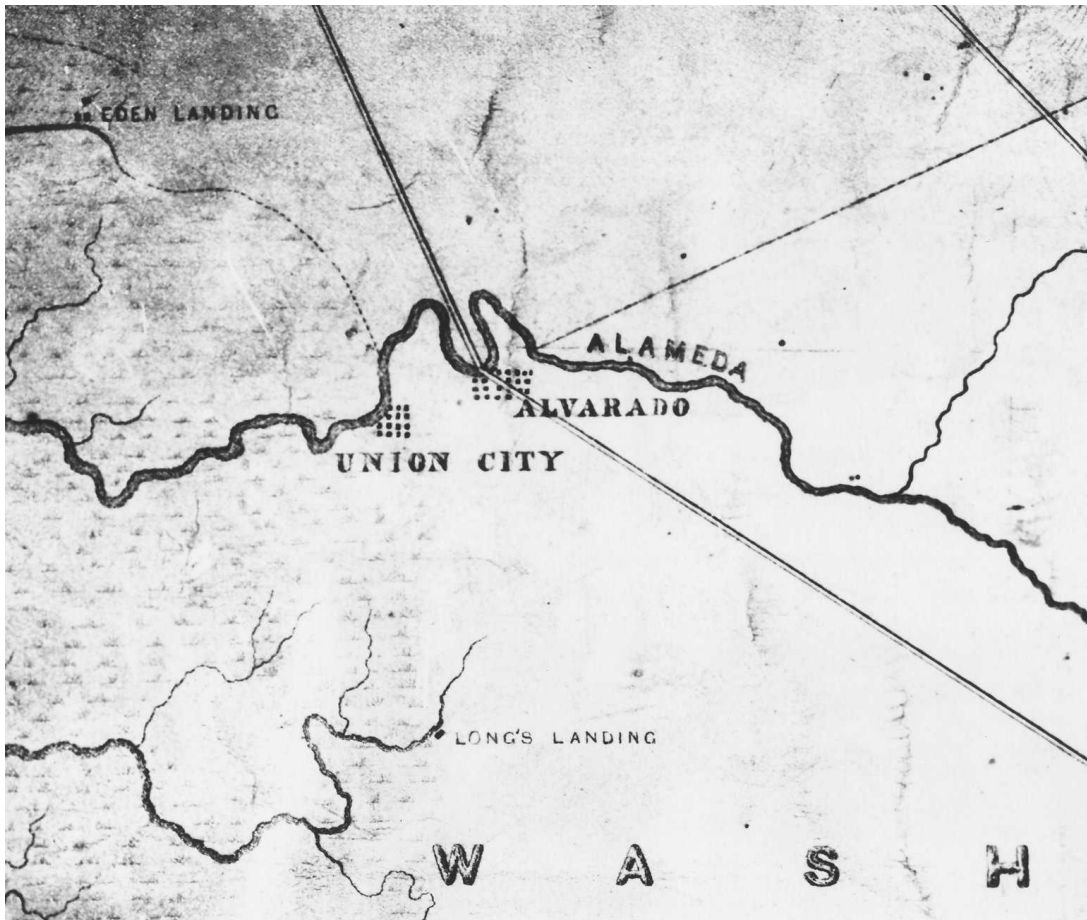
"Many of the immigrants and early settlers of the valley of the Alameda will remember his (Alviso's) hospitality and kindness of heart. It is gratifying to the members of his family that during his long life he had never been accused of doing a dishonest act, or breaking a promise when once made. He is a good citizen and a distinguished patriot," wrote William Halley, in The Centennial Yearbook of Alameda County.

Alviso married Maria Antonio Pacheco. They had a girl and four boys. His son, Valentine, became a county supervisor in 1864, and married Robert Livermore's daughter.

Augustin Alviso bought the Santa Rita Rancho at Pleasanton in later years. His adobe still remains there. He died in 1880.

Part II

Early Days



Early map of Alvarado showing Union City to the west.

Chapter 5 - Three Villages

Inflation came in the 1850's. Settlers came to live in the new towns of Union City and New Haven. Both land and cattle went up in price as Mexican vaqueros drifted away from the Alviso and Vallejo ranchos.

Disappointed gold miners returned from the placers in the winter time. They began to rent or buy land on the ranchos for farming and for their winter homes. A rancho that under Mexican rule could be had for the asking, now brought prices of from \$20 to \$75 an acre. And the rancheros sold cattle (which had been worth \$ 1.50 for hides and tallow), and sheep for \$ 75 a head to the drovers from San Francisco and San Jose.

In 1846, a band of Mormon farmers arrived at Yerba Buena on the steamer "Brooklyn." They worked their way down the San Ramon corridor from Martinez and moved into abandoned Mission San Jose barracks, warehouses, and half-ruined adobes.

The families included John Horner, Origin Mowry, James Marshall, Simon Stiver, and Joseph Nichols.

The Oakland Tribune, March 30, 1953, Centennial Edition included these notes:

"Horner (at the age of 25) foresaw opportunity in the rich lands around Mission San Jose. He traded the Colt pistol he had brought with him for protection from bandits and hostile Indians for a yoke of oxen, and with \$5 worth of seed potatoes brought from New Jersey, started farming.

"His 1846 crop was destroyed by grasshoppers but he was still undaunted. In 1848 he bought a small section of (Vallejo's) land, fenced it with redwood poles cut from the forest on the slopes above what is now Oakland and planted a seed crop." (He caught gold fever, and rushed off to the mines while his crop died for lack of care. Back to Mission San Jose he went to raise potatoes and vegetables, and he had his first successful crop.) "Within four years Horner was a millionaire."

In an autobiography published in 1898, John Horner wrote:

"Industry, honesty and good judgment were to be my guiding star for success." Of the Gold Rush he said, "We did not get much gold, but we got the ague without much exertion and did considerable shaking. The gold fever having left us entirely, we returned home in the fall. . ."

Horner started a general store in the abandoned buildings at Mission San Jose, with Henry and Napoleon Smith. Next, he chose the high tide location on Alameda Creek to build wharves and warehouses. This meant quick, cheap transportation for his produce to San Francisco markets and to Benecia, the port of ships of the Pacific Mail Steamship line. He located his warehouses at the great elbow of the Creek. He netted \$8,000 from 16 acres of crops in 1849. The next year he leased more land along the creek, which he irrigated by a system of small earth dams and ditches running on either side of the overflow plain.

In 1850, Horner shipped crops netting almost \$100,000. He and his brother, William, expanded and laid out a town eight blocks square in 1851. He located the streets on the south side of the Creek. He

purchased a small Sacramento River Steamer called "The Union" and named his settlement Union City. The Union was captained first by Captain Marsten. The Union made the round trip to San Francisco once a day with produce, bringing back passengers, mail, hardware, tools, and merchandise. By 1852, the Horner brothers grossed \$270,000 from their crops. Access to the Bay dried up many years later, after the Pacific Land Company, formed by Patterson and Senator Jim Fair constructed dikes to make farming possible on the land. The result of this work and that of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project after World War II dried up sloughs to the Bay. The Creek was reconstructed to essentially its present shape.

All this success attracted other farmers and businessmen to the area. E. L. Beard came to the Mission from Indiana, bought some Vallejo and Alvso land and built a landing at the old Mission Landing near Coyote Hills.

Horner continued to expand and to succeed. He built a flouring mill (it cost \$85,000). His prime quality Gold Medal Hour won a first medal cup at the Agricultural Fair in 1854. (Horner gave one of his lots of land to the daughter of Edwin Clawiter. She was the first child to be born in the little town of Union City and was appropriately named Union. Unfortunately, her lot on the bank of the creek was washed away later by a winter flood which changed the direction of the creek.)

"The Horner Brothers," (wrote a nephew Charles F. Horner in a 1910 autobiography) "bought in 1851 a tract of 30,000 acres running from Alvarado to Warm Springs. On account of a defect in title they were obligated to buy off five different claimants, in prices ranging from \$700 to \$40,000. They also paid \$57,000 for 1,950 acres on the northeast boundary of Mission San Jose tract. In the same year such were their profits from vegetable growing that with a few other investors they purchased the Potrero Nuevo Tract, which has since been known as Homers Addition to San Francisco. The tract included 2,100 acres and thousands of homes now stand upon lots subdivided from their original acreage.

"However, misfortunes came to interfere with their success. They were obliged to pay a security debt of \$100,000 for a friend, and when the hard times came they lost their San Francisco property which is now worth several millions of dollars. Had it not been for the reason of depression they would have retained a vast fortune. But they were forced to sacrifice their holdings at a time when prices were low.

In 1870 they disposed of the balance of their property in California and went on to the Hawaiian Islands under a contract to manage a sugar plantation for Spreckels. John M. Horner became a member of the Hawaiian Legislature and lived to be 75."

Nephew Charles was elected to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in 1900 and served until 1908. He was elected County Assessor in 1911.

"In 1851 there were three families living in Union City: Dr. Buckland, who had charge of a warehouse belonging to John M. Horner. Captain Richardson and Captain Newell, who commanded a couple of small craft plying on the bay and had their residence there. Besides that there was a man named John Wilson, who lived on Alameda Creek not far from the town," wrote M. W. Wood in his History of Alameda County, 1883.

The first retail general store in old Union City was in a tent. It was run by Captain William Bulmer. He also built the first residence in the town. This dwelling stood for many years. Its successive occupants were Joseph Ralph and family; Captain Marsten; A. E. Crane; Ashley Cameron; John Miller, G. Platt; John Quigley; Captain C. C. Scott; and Dennis Harrington. During its 50 years of existence this building was a residence, then a saloon, a gambling house, a men's furnishing store, a boardinghouse, a tavern, and finally a residence once again.

The first hotel in town was occupied by A. M. Veasy, who became a county clerk of Alameda County. The second hotel was opened by Andrew Forbes, who sold it to Joseph Ralph. One of the early hotels was Brooklyn House, built by Horner and named after the Mormon immigrant ship.

An iron foundry was established in 1870 in the old John Horner flour milling building, which was enlarged. The foundry was started by George Tay and Company with an investment of \$75,000. Business manager and superintendent was Charles R. Nauert, who remained with the company for 36 years as director of the enterprise. The Tay Foundry was operated with 35 men, and had a payroll of \$50,000 per year. It was later moved and became Graham's factory in Newark. It supplied parts of narrow gauge railroad cars. Another industry started in Union City was a soap factory run by the Lanz brothers. This was one of the first soap factories in the county which made soap that floated.

Still another industry was a glue factory started in 1873 by Frank Femholtz. It failed due to the high humidity of the waterfront location, which was unsuitable to making the product. The residents of the town were glad to see the glue factory close down, as it created an obnoxious smell.

Henry Smith, storekeeper and American Alcalde in Mission San Jose (replacing the old Mission administrator) sold the store and moved up next to John Horner, Smith built two warehouses at the wharf in Union City. (William Liston was in charge of them.) He started a settlement he called New Haven, named for his hometown in Connecticut. It was north and east of the great elbow of the creek. Hotels and eating places sprang up along with saloons and gaming rooms. A. M. Church joined Smith in his general store business. Other residents in New Haven were Edward Cheney, William Hayes, and Willian Param.

All this activity also brought to New Haven a few bad elements as well as the good. And so, "In the main thoroughfare of the village the Creek was spanned by a 'Jack-knife' lift bridge whose hoisting mechanism served as a convenient tool for meting out swift justice to bold criminals under the administration of the vigilantes. They simply rowed under the bridge with the criminal, affixed the noose to the bridge structure and turned the crank of the hoisting mechanism. Furthermore, the conspicuous location gave publicity to the wages of sin," according to E. H. Dyer in his history of the Holly Sugar Company.

A nearby settlement grew up at this time. "Because of the success of Union City and New Haven, land was bought by San Francisco promoters Strode and Jones, from A. Alviso on September 30, 1852, and a new town was planned that winter," (according to Historic Spots in California) "being adjacent to the two older ones to the south and west. The new town was named for the former Mexican Governor, Juan Bautista Alvarado."

Local agriculture gained some fame for the new town of Alvarado with the Alvarado potato, a popular produce described as a thick-skinned, white, mild-flavored species developed, some said, by Luther Burbank. Sweet Alameda County corn was also grown there and commanded a high price in the San Francisco produce markets. There was success for Alvarado, but there were also setbacks.

"The earthquake of '68 did much damage, knocking down the large brick building and all of the chimneys, wrecking Stokes' store and crushing the bridge together so that it was impassable. The chasm was rent eight feet across near Mr. Dyers place. Fortunately, no lives were lost," according to the Washington Township History.

This was but a temporary setback, however. The little towns of Union City, New Haven and Alvarado continued to grow.

Juan Bautista Alvarado

The town was named after Juan Alvarado, the Mexican Governor of Alta California from 1836 to 1842.

Juan Alvarado was born in 1809 in Monterey, California. At this time Mexico had not separated from Spain, so he was considered a Spanish citizen. Later, he would be considered a Mexican citizen after Mexico gained its independence. Be he Spanish or Mexican, he was really a Californio, a native Californian of Hispanic heritage.

Alta California was ruled by a Governor with a "Diputacion" or provincial legislature. The seat of government was in Monterey.

As Mexico gained independence from Spain, its interest in Alta California waned. It got to the point where the Californios were dissatisfied. In a 5-year period (1831 - 1836), eleven different governors were appointed for Alta California, not including three appointments that the Californios did not permit to take office.

In 1835, Governor Figueuroa died, and Governor Chico was appointed to replace him. He was considered a very obnoxious person to the Californios and was forced to retire. Juan Alvarado, President of the Diputacion, in November 1836, sent Chico's Deputy and a number of Mexican officials packing back to Mexico. The Diputacion then elected Alvarado as governor ad interim. Alvarado soon declared Alta California as "a free and sovereign State."

Southern Alta California remained loyal to the officials back in Mexico. Through diplomacy and a show of force, Alvarado was able to win over Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. In January 1837, he announced that Alta California was free and united.

One of the major players campaigning against Alvarado was Pio Pico, who would become the last Mexican governor of Alta California. Pico and Alvarado would clash so much that Pico, more than once, would be imprisoned by Alvarado. Pico and Alvarado were related by marriage, since Pico married Alvarado's sister, Maria Ignacia. Pico's sister, Tomasa, would also marry into the Alvarado family.

In June 1837, a Mexican Commissioner was sent to talk with Alvarado and get him to step down. Alvarado was able to convince the Commissioner of the cause of Alta California. The Commissioner went back to the Mexican authorities to plead Alvarado's case.

Meanwhile, the Mexican authorities appointed their own Governor for Alta California. The new governor rallied some troops and set off to take Alta California back by force. A small battle or skirmish took place at San Buena-Ventura, with the result being a total victory for Alvarado. There was only one death during the entire "battle."

In 1838, the Mexican authorities then offered Alvarado the official governorship of Alta California, which he readily accepted. Alta California would now become known as the "Department of California."

Alvarado was governor until 1842, when the Mexican authorities decided to remove him. After he was governor, Alvarado was granted a Rancho called "Rancho Las Mariposa" by Governor Micheltorena, Alvarado's replacement. It was located at the southern most end of the Sierra Nevada. He would later sell it to Thomas O. Larkin during the gold rush. Larkin was acting as an agent for John C. Fremont.

In 1844, Pio Pico and Juan Alvarado tried their hand at rebellion again. Pico and Alvarado raised a force from San Diego and Los Angeles. At Cahuenga Pass, Pico and Alvarado met the forces of Micheltorena. The only casualties in the skirmish were the death of two horses and one mule in an artillery duel. Micheltorena eventually capitulated and left California. Pio Pico took over as Governor of California.

In 1846, John C. Fremont entered California on a geographic survey team. Fremont built a temporary fort on "Hawks Ridge" and ran up the American flag. The local Mexican authorities were not at all happy and gathered some troops to make them leave. Jose Castro and Juan Alvarado were in charge of the gathering of troops. Once the troops had gathered close to Hawks Ridge, news arrived saying that Fremont and his men had left. Castro decided not to pursue the Americans.

Alvarado would eventually settle on a rancho in San Pablo in the East Bay. In 1882, Juan Bautista Alvarado passed away.

Chapter 6 - Moments of Fame

Perseverance and politics brought New Haven into the limelight in 1853.

What we know today as Southern Alameda County was part of two different California counties. Washington Township, south and east of Alameda Creek, was in Santa Clara County, with the county seat at San Jose. Eden and Murray Townships were attached to Contra Costa County, with the county seat at Martinez.

The largest 27 counties were divided at the first session of the California legislature at San Jose Pueblo in 1849 or 1850. Chairman of the committee to choose county names was Don Pablo de la Guerra, of the Santa Barbara district, who proposed that the East Bay be all one county, called Mount Diablo.

"We had a narrow escape from the devil," wrote Halley. "The measure was amended on the protest of the member of the district and changed to Contra Costa County."

Halley related: "In the spring of 1848 the treaty of peace was signed by which California was annexed to the United States. On the first of September, 1848, the Constitutional Convention was opened in Monterey. In November, the State Constitution was adopted and congressmen were tentatively chosen. September 9, 1850 the Congress admitted California into the Union as a free State."

The winter season, with overflowed mud flats in Centerville and Alviso, made it almost impossible for Washington Township settlers to get to the San Jose county seat. Dissident citizens from both of these counties talked H. C. Smith, then State Assemblyman from Mission San Jose, into petitioning the 1853 Legislature to form a new Alameda County. Various committees of the Assembly debated the proposed bill, especially the section that put the county seat at New Haven-Union City.

Horace Carpentier tried to get the county seat in Oakland, but after a few days of politicking, the measure passed, favoring New Haven. It squeaked by, 19 to 17.

Alameda County was born March 25, 1853.

In the Legislature Act itself, Section 11 states, "The said Commissioners (of the Court of Sessions) shall meet in the town of Alvarado on the first Monday of July, A.D., One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Three, which shall be known as the seat of Justice, Alameda County."

Two paragraphs later, Section 13 states, "The County seat of Alameda County shall be known as the town of New Haven." At this early time the two competing towns at the elbow of Alameda Creek were beginning to compromise and use Alvarado as the name of their combined communities.

Of the strange situation whereby the city changed its name, John Horner, in his autobiography, wrote that New Haven took the name of Alvarado from a nearby settlement, "leaving that town nameless. Whereupon the owner of Alvarado sold the 50 acres of the town and by popular consent its site became a part of Union City."

"The division gave dissatisfaction to the inhabitants of both Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties, as was expected," wrote Halley, "and some of the people of Santa Clara yet feel a little sore over the same, as it took from them one of the most valuable portions of their territory, which included the old historic Mission (San Jose). The Alameda was the principal stream of the new county; the name sounded nice, and was accepted generally."

Halley tells also of the first election for the new Alameda County. "The first election of county officers took place in May, 1853. Although parties were organized throughout the state as Whigs and Democrats, politics did not enter into the contest, and any man who considered himself qualified to run, entered the lists for office.

"There were from three to six candidates for each position, and the election was spoken of for years afterwards as the 'steeple chase.' So little regard had previously been paid to the proper names of persons that, until the election, some were known only by nicknames. Thus, the gentleman who had conferred upon him the unelegant alias of 'Tom Snook' emerged from the contest as A. H. Broder, Esq., Sheriff of Alameda County."

The New Haven-Union City Area did well. Church was elected County Clerk. A. M. Crane of New Haven was elected County Judge, the Reverend W. W. Brier, the local minister, was elected Superintendent of Schools, and William Chamberlain, storekeeper, was elected Coroner.

Union City was placed in Alameda County Road District No. 1 and William Blackwood of Hayward was named as Supervisor of Roads, at \$12 per day salary, to maintain the old Mission Road from San Leandro creek to the Mission; the county road from San Leandro through Mt. Eden, to Union City; the county road from Vallejo Mills to Union City; and the county road south from New Haven to Alviso.

Henry Smith was allowed \$200 a year for the rent of the County Court Room (State Registered Landmark #503) which was over his store in New Haven.

The two years of 1854-56 when New Haven was the county seat of infant Alameda County brought the town several hotels, boarding houses, law offices, stores and shipping wharves. A blacksmith shop, livery stable, gambling saloon and a men's furnishing store occupied the downtown section.

In the History of Washington Township, the authors wrote: "In 1851 when Union City first sprang into existence, Mr. J. M. Horner developed a plan for cutting a canal across the marshes (from the Great Elbow), to connect the Bay, which would be a continuation of Crandall Slough." By this canal the flood waters of Alameda Creek would be carried to the bay and Union City would now have been in direct communication by water with San Francisco. In addition, hundreds of acres of marsh land could have been reclaimed.

"Unfortunately, Mr. Horners canal scheme never existed beyond his own ideas, and the result was that the Devil's Elbow, where the water later dammed and overflowed, eventually filled." It is said that in 1846 the Alameda Creek was navigable for light vessels up as far as Bell Ranch Bridge.

One of the first acts of the Alameda Court of Sessions was that the County Surveyor be directed to estimate the cost of a single track bridge across San Lorenzo Creek at the Oakland-San Jose Road

(now Mission Boulevard). In 1854, two bridges were completed across both San Lorenzo and San Leandro Creeks by A. E. Crane at a cost of \$3,071.94. But the roads and the bridges did not live up to expectations.

Chapter 7 - Fame, Short-lived

Imagine trekking to the county seat to do business on the muddy roads of winter and you've an idea of one reason why Union City lost its county seat. Sometimes the roads were closed completely when the Creek overflowed in springtime.

The Alvaradoans did their best. The first bridge across the creek was built and paid for by the Horner Brothers. It was located at the present Smith Street bridge near the sugar refinery, and cost \$1,100. They also built a bridge in Alvarado on Mt. Eden Road, paid for by the county.

The growth of population in North County, particularly at Horace Carpentier's new town of Oakland along the estuary at Broadway, was another factor in moving the county seat. The situation in 1853 was this:

Alameda County officers met in a courtroom over Smith's general store at New Haven. The monthly rent of the top floor of the two-story building was \$200 a month. As Halley, writing in 1876 said, "the location of the county seat was not at first well chosen, although it then best accommodated the largest number of people. The ground was too swampy, the roads leading to it were not good and in winter time access was difficult. The hotel accommodations were poor and there was not a safe place to store funds or records. An agitation for removal, therefore, soon followed."

New Haven-Union City was isolated, and bandits could terrorize the town and escape before the law could get there. There were several lynchings, even though Sheriff Broder was headquartered there. "To save trouble, sometimes the Sheriff would be relieved of his charge and the prisoners taken out in the salt marsh and lynched," Halley wrote. Prisoners were taken to the Oakland lock-up or guarded in a room of the local hotel (Brooklyn Hotel) or boarding house. There were several escapes. Between 1853 and 1856 came the crowning blow: the county treasurer was robbed of \$7,156.44 when he left the tax collections in the county office over Smith's store.

"A bill had been introduced into the legislature then in session for the relief of Jonathan S. Marston, late County Treasurer, who had been robbed as already mentioned; but the Board not only refused to release him from the amount missing, as empowered by the Act referred to, but employed counsel to aid the District Attorney in his prosecution. The amount lost to the county was \$7,000 and to the State \$1,300," according to Halley.

The county settled its claim against Marston for \$1,156.40 and acquitted him of any wrong doing in 1857. The money was paid by Marston's personal bondsman, one of whom was John Horner. The State excused Marston from paying the \$1,395.40 it lost in the theft. It was rumored that a county official looking under the courthouse rear foundations discovered some of the money stuffed in an old boot, which had been washed clear by the waters of the creek rushing in the channel back of the premises.

New Haven-Union City lost its county seat in the county-wide election on December 30, 1854.

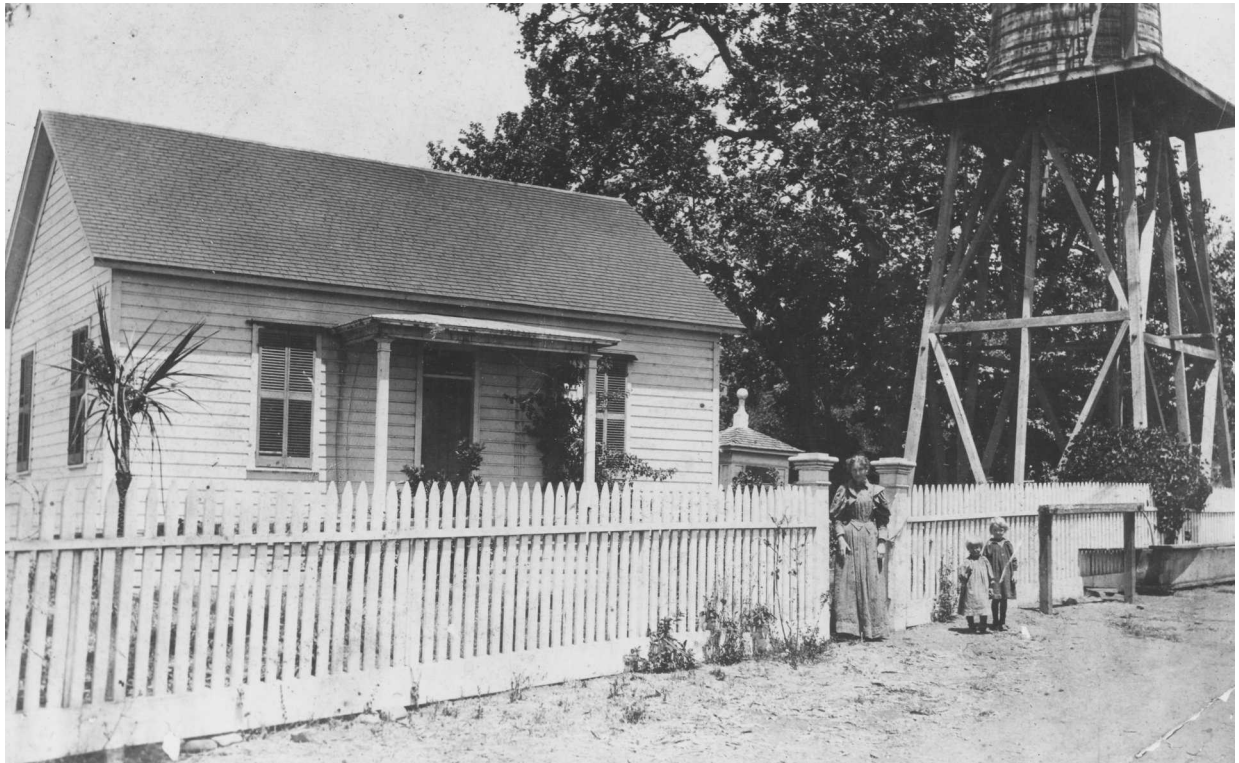
"San Leandro, then with only a few scattered houses around the Estudillo homestead, was pitched upon as the place to be substituted for Alvarado," according to Halley. The vote was 1,301 votes for San Leandro, and 1,067 for New Haven.

The new Board of Supervisors met April 2, 1855 in a rented room in San Leandro at the new courthouse. After making plans for construction of a county office building, they discovered that "the county seat had been illegally removed from Alvarado," Halley wrote. Back the supervisors had to trot over to the Salt Marsh Road (Hesperian) to the triple-named city of New Haven, Alvarado, and Union, there to remain until such time as they could be released by the (California) Legislature. Accordingly, on the 16th of August (1855) the Board met again at Alvarado, the 'ancient capital.'

The next spring the supervisors moved their desks and chairs back to San Leandro after passage of a special Legislative Act.

Part III

Early Families



May house on May Road with Clara Whipple May and daughters Gertrude (right) and Marjorie.

Chapter 8 - The Clawiters, Mays, Hawleys, and Wiegman

When the shock of losing the county seat wore off, New Haven residents reconciled themselves to their loss of prestige. Many attorneys, tradesmen, hotel keepers and clerks, all dependent upon political business, moved away, mostly to San Leandro. The more farsighted remained to become the founders of the future Union City's farms and industries. Some of their stories follow.

The Clawiters

Edwin Clawiter, a young German from Alsace-Lorraine who went to sea at an early age, came early to Union City. When his ship arrived at the infant town of Yerba Buena in 1849, Clawiter learned of the gold discovery on the American River six months before. Clawiter was successful in the Sonora mines. With his stake in gold he established a general merchandise store in 1850 in Union City when it was the shipping point for John Horner's potatoes.

On a trip to Germany he had married Mary Gading, a native of Bremen, and had brought his bride back to California. The Clawiters' first daughter, Union, was born in 1852. She grew to be a cultured woman, was educated in S. S. Harmon Pacific College of Oakland and later lived with her family in the Mt. Eden area.

Clawiter raised cattle for butchering at Alvarado in the 60's. He sold the fresh beef to the restaurants and hotels in San Francisco, sending the meat to market in long boats which were rowed to Butchertown in the Potrero District by Mexican vaquero boatmen.

The Mays

August May's descendants still live in Union City. May was born in Hesse, Prussia, but at the age of 18 moved to Bremen and from there migrated to New York where he worked as a butcher in Brooklyn.

In 1852, August May took the long voyage around the horn to San Francisco on the ship "North American." For two years he worked in the meat business in San Francisco and then came to Union City where he started a business partnership with A. Main. The association lasted until 1874.

May bought land in Decoto and Alvarado. In 1876 he visited the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia with his wife, the former Sophie Platte. He had four children: George, August, Jr., Bertha and Henry.

August May, Jr., is best known as the Alvarado banker. In 1902 he became cashier of the township's first bank, the Alvarado Bank (now the Copacabana on Union City Boulevard at Smith Street), when it was organized under the presidency of I. V. Ralph, with F. B. Granger as Vice President and F. P. Hellwig as Treasurer. He became president of the bank, which had branches in Irvington and Niles. In 1910 the name of the institution was changed to Bank of Alameda County, and in 1930 it was sold to the Central Bank of Oakland.

August May, Jr., lived until 1939. His widow, Jenny Decoto May, survived him and lived for years in the home mansion with her brother, Peter Decoto. Their son, Henry May, was Clerk of the Cosmopolitan School District for several months. Henry Jr., lives in Union City in the old family home on May Road.

The Hawleys

In the Decoto District, possibly the earliest settler was James Hawley, an Englishman from Birmingham, who migrated to Brooklyn with his family in 1825 when he was only 3 years old. He built the first frame house in Mission San Jose and later the Red Hotel, which he built from lumber brought around the Horn.

Hawley and his wife, Betty, ran the Red Hotel until 1853 when he bought a farm by Alameda Creek in the Decoto District. He continued to build homes and commercial buildings in South County as well as to raise crops on his land. The Washington Township History relates that "During the years 1851-53 about 30 acres of land on the Alameda Creek was farmed by J. J. Vallejo and James Hawley (on shares). This tract was called the Bell Ranch from the fact that a large bell given by J. J. Vallejo (and supposedly taken from the Mission San Jose campanile) was hung by Mrs. Hawley in 1852 in a sycamore tree which stood on the banks of the creek. The original tree was washed away by the floods but another has grown in the same place.

"Later the bell was hung on a frame nearer the Hawley House. It was used as a signal for calling the laborers to and from their work. It is reported on pretty good authority that the bell was one of the five Mission church bells and that some time in the late 60's it was returned to its place in the old (Mission) church. The many times rebuilt bridge which now spans the Alameda Creek marks the site of the old Bell Ranch Bridge. . . "

James Hawley was the father of six children. He not only built the first school in the New Haven District, but served on its board of trustees for many terms.

The Wiegman

Frederick D. Wiegman came to California at the age of 17. He was a native of Hanover, Germany. When he was 10, his father died, and he was bound out to live with a country doctor for whom he did farm chores. Wiegman was 14 when he jumped his apprenticeship and sailed on an immigrant ship bound for Ellis Island. He worked for his uncle in Maryland and later was apprenticed to a butcher for three years. In 1869 he came to Alvarado to work for August May in his market.

In a few years, Wiegman and William Jung bought out May's meat business and later consolidated it with Phillip Hellwig's Company. In 1890 Wiegman sold his interest in Hellwig Meat and turned his attention to raising cattle. He released some of the Alvarado sugar mill property and began feeding cattle from beet tops to prepare them for slaughtering.

Next he started a dairy. When his close friend, George Patterson, died in 1899, Frederick Wiegman became the manager of the large Patterson Estate. He married Catherine Mohr, a native of Schleswig-Holstein, who came to America when she was 14. Their only child was Fred Henry Wiegman, who was born in Alvarado in 1893.

The elder Weigman served on the Alvarado School Board and was an organizer, director, and stockholder of the Bank of Alvarado. His son, Frederick, was a member of the Alvarado Fire Department.

Chapter 9 - The Dyers, Whipples, Meyers, and Barrons

The youngest of the Dyer brothers, Ephraim, came to California during the Gold Rush year of 1850. He was born in Sullivan, Hancock County, Maine 22 years before. When the announcement of the discovery of gold reached New England, Dyer assembled enough cash to buy a steerage ticket to San Francisco.

In a letter to his oldest brother, Ebenezer, back home when he reached Panama, (dated June 22, 1850,) Ephraim wrote: "I arrived at Panama last Wednesday, twenty-one days from New York ... We had a pleasant voyage as far as the weather was concerned but our fare was one of the very worst description. Our food was fresh beef, tea, coffee and hard bread, but served up in such shape that it was almost impossible for even a well man to eat it . . . " (The letter was published in 1927 in the Society of Engineers Yearbook.)

He arrived in San Francisco Bay on the English brig, Guinare, on September 17, 1850. He spent two months in the city working on construction jobs at \$12.00 per day. Good board at the time was \$10 a week with a barracks sleeping room thrown in.

Ephraim Dyer took passage on a sloop for Union City, "which was the embarcadero from whence nearly all the vegetables raised then in California were shipped. His object in going there was to get a chance, if possible, to engage in farming operations on his own account," wrote Historian Wood.

"In two days the passage was effected. This was his first arrival in Alameda County. He found that nearly all produce shipped here was raised by John M. Horner, there being, however, a few others who were small producers," according to Wood.

"He took conveyance on a lumber wagon to Mission San Jose, ten miles distant from Union City. This he found to be a most lively place. E. L. Beard lived there, who together with John Horner and Andreas Pico, laid claim by purchase to the whole tract of ex-Mission San Jose.

"Mr. Beard was carrying on farming operations to some extent and to him Mr. Dyer applied for land to farm but without success. The whole country presented the appearance of a barren waste, dry and verdureless, from the pueblo of San Jose to the town where Oakland now stands. No trees, except a few scattering ones on the creeks, which had been left to browsing cattle, and it was a deep mystery to him upon what they subsisted, as, according to his east coast experience, the dried-up grass strewn in every direction, was worthless.

"On his way back to San Francisco he made a detour, passing through the Horner Ranch where he found them digging potatoes and shipping them and other farm products to market. Farmhands, potato diggers, here were paid \$50 per month.

"When he reached Union City he found the opportunity which he now so much coveted. A Mr. Cheney living near Horner's Ranch offered him his board, land, seed, feed, and team to carry on farming operations, charging a rental of one-half the production for their use. He accepted this offer.

Later Dyer engaged himself to J. M. Horner to work on his ranch for one year in hopes that he might get another chance to farm on shares."

1852 was a poor year for prices on potatoes. There was an unexpected glut on the market. "The local farmers exhausted the profits of the year before, and all the loans they could obtain on credit to put in their crops. Many Union City farmers could have sold their crops in the field at good prices but they were looking for a bonanza. There was a perfect mania on the potato question. By summer most of the crop of Washington Township was piled up in cribs on the banks of Alameda Creek at Union City. That fall most of these potatoes rotted on the banks of the creek, a total loss to their owners. The whole farming community of Alameda County was involved in inextricable financial ruin," Historian Wood wrote.

Ephraim Dyer spent four years in Los Angeles County as a packer and shipper of Los Angeles grapes to the San Francisco produce markets. He returned to Union City in about 1855 and bought land at depressed prices. In 1858, Dyer decided to go East and explore a route for driving cattle from the Midwest to California. He took passage in August via the new Overland Stagecoach Mail Line from Placerville to St. Joseph, Missouri, to become the first through-passenger across the continent. It took 40 days. While in Illinois he married Ellen F. Ingalls, a former resident of his home town in Maine.

Dyer and his wife returned to Alvarado by steamer. "In 1861 after the election of President Lincoln, he was appointed by Lt. Beale, the U.S. Surveyor General, as his Assistant and Deputy Surveyor of California, Oregon, and Nevada governmental surveys," Wood concluded.

The Whipples

Whipple Road is named for two brothers, John Cleveland Whipple and Edwin Whipple.

John Cleveland was born in New York State in 1820. As a boy he helped his father cut timber and clear land for crops, and attended frontier school. He became apprenticed to a carpenter and finally became an independent builder of commercial buildings around Rochester.

In 1852 he came to California to cash in on the opportunities of the Gold Rush. He and his brother, William, came via the Panama route. They were forced to walk for half the distance over the Panamanian mountains. They boarded a steamer on the Pacific side and arrived in San Francisco in the Spring of 1853.

The Whipple brothers moved across the bay to Oakland, which was then just a village, and rented land. They started farming on the San Pablo grant at Point Richmond. John raised enough money to take a trip with his brother to visit his family in New York. He returned to Alameda County in 1863 and bought land near present-day Decoto on Whipple Road for orchards and farming.

Another of John Whipple's brothers, Edwin, was 24 years younger. In 1878 Edwin Whipple sold his interest in Michigan and joined with John to buy 700 acres of land. They finally divided it into two fine country estates. Edwin married Miss Emily C. Fisher. They had eight children, Sadie, Isabella, Doris, Annis, Edwin, Arthur, Theodore, and Horner. Edwin became prominent in Masonic affairs and

served as a trustee of the Masonic Home when it was built in Decoto. He served on the Decoto School board of trustees for many terms.

The Meyers

Another early Decoto district family was that of Captain Fredelich William Meyer. Captain Meyer came to California in 1849 as master of a sailing vessel. He turned the care of his ship over to another master and went to the gold fields.

In 1851 Meyer came to Southern Alameda County to start a general store in Union City. Gradually, he began dealing in grain and the warehousing of crops. He bought 250 acres on Dry Creek in Decoto and 240 acres in Niles, which he prepared as the home for his mother.

The Meyer children included daughter Alvena, who married Carlton Crane, the proprietor of a San Jose hotel; Amala, another daughter, who became a talented artist, and two sons, Frederich William and Alfred, who managed the Meyer ranches near Decoto. As the general store business began to prosper, Meyer started the first automobile establishment in Mt. Eden, where he lived and was Justice of the Peace. He was a staunch Lutheran.

His descendants, Mildred and Jeanette, still live on the Meyer Ranch in the Dry Creek area (near Mission Boulevard). For years the Ranch was the site of the picnic grounds and recreational activities. (The third daughter, Dr. Edith Meyer is deceased.)

"The Dry Creek picnic grounds so well known to all old residents of the township ... were first used as a pleasure resort in 1854 or 1855. The season usually opened on the 26th of April, the ODD Fellows having charge of the festivities. May Day was considered the great holiday ... elaborate preparations were made in the way of dress and entertainment." (The History of the Washington Township)

The Barrons

In 1857 Captain Richard Barron bought the old John Horner wharves from Captain Richard Bensen. Captain Barron was born in County Tipperary, Ireland in 1824. He immigrated to the United States during the potato famine of 1834 and made his way, with his parents, to Cleveland's lakefront. Barron was in the drayage and transportation business in Cleveland until 1850, when he came West during the Gold Rush. He was in poor health. He came across the plains from St. Joseph, Missouri, arriving in Hangtown 90 days later. He tried dry-gulch mining in Hangtown Canyon, but he was ill and the hard work of sinking a shaft to the river gravel was more than his age-weakened body could stand. He sold his claim after a week, and went to San Francisco to start a dockside drayage business.

Barron's next move was to Union City. He acquired 75 acres of solid farming land and 1,500 acres of marsh along Alameda Creek. There he built Barron's Landing at the old embarcadero-wharves, grain warehouses and hay docks. On the marsh land he developed salt manufacturing facilities. The farm land had been developed around an eight-inch flow artesian well which was found on Henry Smith's land, and the natural depression around it had been developed into a fresh water lake with an artificial island. Benson had built an arbor and picnic area on the island and provided boats so visitors could row out to the isle.

Barron's Lake (formerly Benson's) was well known to summer visitors to the Washington Township. His estate in the 1860's was one of the show places of the Alvarado area. Captain Barron married Mary Foley, an Irish immigrant in 1852. Their children were Ellen, Katie, Emma, Richard, and James. In 1896, after he died, his heirs sold the estate and land to W. H. Dingee, from Oakland and Berkeley. Dingee sank 35 wells from 62 feet to 500 feet in depth, with pipes to the surface from 8 to 14 inches in diameter. The clean, pure water became the main supply of the Dingee Water Company, which carried the daily flow along present-day Hesperian Boulevard to San Leandro and the Oakland Water Company reservoirs. The water was distributed to new inhabitants in east and downtown Oakland. Dingee later sold out to the Contra Costa Water Company, a forerunner of the East Bay Utility District.

Part IV

The Early Industries



Boiler explosion at Dyer Sugar Beet factory in 1888.

Chapter 10 - Salt and Agriculture on a Fertile Land

Many of the settlers of Southern Alameda County were drawn here by the fertile land, abundant water, and the sloughs of the bay.

Squatters and farming pioneers from the Midwest settled on about 160 acres along the Alameda, San Lorenzo, and San Leandro creeks.

Many who came by sea found locations along the sloughs and set up passenger transportation and freight hauling on San Francisco Bay. The business at the landings attracted mariners.

One of these seafarers was John Johnson, a native of Hamburg, Germany. He settled on an inlet from the bay at Mt. Eden (north of the Hayward-San Mateo Bridge approach) in 1852. He built a wharf and warehouse and called the area Johnson Landing.

In the ponds and sloughs around the landing Johnson found a natural resource, salt, trapped behind natural dikes and high tide barriers. He set up a small salt processing enterprise by putting up dikes, levees, and windmill pumps to move the brine from settling basins to more concentrated evaporation areas.

Salt gathering continued as a small industry until John Quigley began commercial salt manufacture on a large scale at Union City in 1862. His ponds were a quarter-mile west of Union City, below the elbow on Alameda Creek.

In 1868, J. A. Plummer and his sons, J. A., Jr. and C. A., purchased a large piece of land east of Alvarado from Lyman Beard. There they set up the Turk Island Salt Works. (It was Plummer's second effort. The first was the Crystal Salt Works near Coyote Hills. The two companies were the foundation of the Morton Salt Company.) Christian Borthson also had a salt works on the banks of the creek.

The most extensive salt making operation in Southern Alameda County was the Union Pacific Salt Company, incorporated by John Wharton, of San Francisco, in March 1868, according to Wood.

By the end of the century there were 28 local salt companies from San Lorenzo to Newark.

Agriculture was also important to the area. The Union City flood plain was considered by many to be the most fertile agricultural land in California.

A reporter for the Alameda County Independent described an early Alvarado farm:

"The ground in that district is subject to overflow every winter, the effect of which is greatly to enrich the soil and preserve its fruitfulness. Land that has been tilled each year for 20 years is just as productive now as it was two decades since.

"This is the case with this farm. Last year 15,000 bushels of onions and 3,000 sacks of beans were raised on it, the sacks averaging about 65 pounds each, while the onions were so prolific that one single

acre produced 600 bushels. Carrots to the amount of nearly 600 tons, 800 sacks of barley, 250 sacks of potatoes, about 50 tons of squashes and 50 sacks of corn were also produced.

"The livestock keep pace with the other produces in quality if not in quantity. There are nine families of tenants on the place and 60 to 70 workmen employed. The lessees get 2/3 of the produce of the land, giving 1/3 for its use to the owner-each party furnishing his own sacks."

The early farmers used their grazing hill pastures to mature be to be shipped to San Francisco butchers. Drivers regularly came through South County to buy beef on the hoof and drive the herds to the mining camps and other areas.

"Mr. B. Benedict and J. B. Shirk commenced the cultivation of hops near Alvarado and up to the present, have prosecuted the industry with marked success," reported the Independent. "Mrs. Blacow produces wool from a fine flock of Merino sheep which graze the bottoms of Alameda Creek."

In 1879 the firm known as Wiggins and Taylor, Piscatorial Propagators, experimented with trout culture on a piece of land in Alvarado on which an artesian well was located. "Hatching houses were constructed, the ponds were ditched and diked but the experiment does not appear to be a success," the historian-author Halley said.

In 1874 the historic firm of Miller and Lux came to the Alvarado district and built large cattle sheds where they fed up to 400 steers on the sugar beet pulp discarded by the sugar mill.

An idea of the worth of the land was provided in an 1859 County Assessor's Report, showing that the land in Washington Township was valued at an average of about \$ 10 an acre. The value in Eden was \$11.44. In Murray Township (Livermore) it was only about \$ 1.10 per acre. The leading property owners of the day were listed as J. J. Vallejo, assessed at \$190,000; George Patterson \$17,320; E. S. Eigenbrodt at \$11,450; Augustine Alvarado at \$45,900; and William Gaskin at \$12,000.

Chapter 11 - Beef and Beer in Alvarado

Raising and slaughtering cattle became a big business in Alvarado. Phillip Hellwig came to California in 1856 via Germany and England, with training as a baker, but ended up in the wholesale butcher business.

He tried mining in the Mother Lode country but just barely managed to earn his wages, so he joined a cousin in Alvarado who had a retail meat market. In 1864 he bought out his cousin.

In 1864 there were possibilities of expanding into other retail areas and starting a wholesale butcher and slaughtering business so he formed P. J. Hellwig and Company, with partners F. D. Wiegman and William Jung. By 1903 the firm had retail markets in Pleasanton and Hayward. The Hellwig Meat Company built a brick building over an Alameda Creek slough for the slaughtering operations.

Hellwig married Elizabeth Schweitzer in 1865. She was a native of the same Rhineland duchy as he. She had immigrated to San Francisco after the Civil War. Two of their four sons survived them. Frederick P. Hellwig was president and general manager of the meat company. Phillip Hellwig died in 1901. George Hellwig, the second son, born in Alvarado, took a commercial course at the Pacific Business College in San Francisco and became secretary and treasurer of the Hellwig Meat Company. After the death of his father and older brother, George continued to operate the Hellwig Meat Company. He married Miss Willa Cecil, a native of Virginia. George was a prominent community financial leader and a long time Alameda County Supervisor. The Phillip and George Hellwig homes still stand at the corner of Bulmer Street and Marsten Avenue in Alvarado (1976).

Another early Alvarado businessman was Charles W. Heyer, known for his beer and his politics. He was born in Alvarado in 1866. His parents were Julius and Caroline (Ubhoff) Heyer. Julius Heyer came to California in 1857 in search of gold, via the Isthmus of Panama. He moved down to Hayward to try the brewery business. He had three sons: William, Charles W. and Julius Heyer. The children were very young when Julius Heyer died. His wife later married Leo Palmtag. In 1905, Heyer and several large Oakland breweries merged to form the Golden West Brewing Company.

Charles Heyer was active in politics in Hayward and in Alameda County. He served for 16 years as trustee of the City of Hayward, much of the time as Mayor. He was a lifelong Republican.

In 1914 he was elected to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors from Eden Township and served for 20 years.

Dahlia fanciers will recognize Heyers name as inspiring a variety of dahlia developed at the San Leandro nursery of Dr. Luther Michael. In the Hayward Plaza, by the Hayward Public Library, there is a memorial foundation dedicated by his friends and fellow townspeople to Heyer.

The Grangers were farmers and dairymen in Alvarado and Union City. Farley Benjamin Granger moved from New York where he worked on his father's farm, to the Michigan Peninsula as a shinglemaker. Later he was a storekeeper in Chicago. He joined the Church of the Latter Day Saints and moved to the Mormon Settlement at Nauvoo, Illinois.

In 1844, he came west with a Mormon immigrant company help found the city of Salt Lake, under the direction of Elder Brigham Young. In 1851 he packed freight to San Bernardino and later to gold mines near Sacramento.

Granger bought land in Alvarado in 1861. His 45 acres were later part of the site of a Central Pacific Railroad station. Granger turned to farming, rising chicory on 100 acres he bought across Alameda Creek. Later he sold out to the Alameda Sugar Mill. He bought the old Union City Landing Wharves and land, where he developed an artesian water company. He sold that to the Oakland Water Company, of which he was an original promoter. Later, he bought a 35-acre fruit ranch near Decoto.

E. H. Dyer, III, in his chronicle of events at that time, wrote: "Farley B. Granger, father of the famous sugar craftsman, Clarence A. Granger, (pioneer and 1903 manager of Great Western's factories in Colorado) crossed the desert in Brigham Young's caravan. After lingering a while in Salt Lake City, he proceeded with a colony to San Bernardino in Southern California and thence moved to Alvarado across the Bay from San Francisco

"Here he established the 'Riverside Hotel' and laid the backlog of the family-landed estate. The hotel tavern provided refreshment, physical and spiritual, and with a generous remuneration for the house.

"Where the trees once stood ... the villagers made holiday come Saturday night. There (still) remains the tradition of the famous white gander who waddled at Farley's heels wherever he went and especially when he met the narrow gauge combination at the station 200 feet distant. The knights of the road, disparaging the lazy old bird, were drawn into a wager that he could beat them to the hotel. When the money was safely in escrow, Farley signaled and the gander took off like a stratoliner, freezing the bold gambler to his spot." Granger married Miss Annie Robbins in Salt Lake City. They reared Farley B. Granger, Jr., Clarence Granger, and Edith Anna. Granger, Sr., died in 1899.

Farley, Jr., went to the California Military Academy in Oakland and then operated the family ranch. He organized one of the largest dairies in the South County area at the time, the Jackson-Granger Dairy Company, with 300 cows. The old Jackson-Granger Dairy near Decoto was discontinued in 1916. At that time the Louis Zwissig family operated a large dairy at Decoto to carry on the tradition. He helped organize and was vice president of the Bank of Alvarado. Zwissig and his wife, the former Sue Harvey of Alvarado, had a son and a daughter.

Farley Sr.'s second son became a beet sugar executive. Edith Anna Granger married Elmer E. Chase of San Jose.

Chapter 12 - The Sugar Mill Opens

"Coming here in the infancy of the county, E. H. Dyer was quick to see her necessities and her possibilities, and with the push, energy, and determination of purpose that have always characterized him, he has stood in the face of, to ordinary men, insurmountable difficulties, and has succeeded in raising his own limited fortune to ample proportions and in establishing an industry in our midst the possibilities of which, not only to our country, but to the whole coast, no human foresight can today set the bound," wrote M. W. Wood in his History of Alameda County.

Ebenezer (E. H.) Dyer came to California at his brother, Ephraim Dyers, urging, to help him manage his farm business. He was manager of the farms and Ephraim Dyer was to prepare leases of acreage. E. H. was elected surveyor of Alameda County. The County Surveyor's job was to establish township maps and check out boundaries for title claims. In 1861 he was also appointed U.S. Deputy Surveyor for the State. His brother got a similar appointment covering the boundary from Lake Tahoe to the Oregon line. A History by E. H. Dyer, grandson of the founder, gives us this story:

"About this time the agricultural press was featuring sugar beet culture to reduce the heavy importation of sugar from Germany and the Tropics. Only 25,000 tons of America's 450,000 ton consumption was produced at home in 1867. Every effort in America . . . had been a failure. As E. H. studied the subject he observed that every venture had been deficient in one or more of the essentials of beets, machinery, men, and money."

So E. H. sent for beet seed from Germany and started some test plots, expanding these to 150 acres of his Alvarado farm. He found that his stock thrived on the beets.

"it happened that in 1858 a small beet sugar factory was built in Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin ... two men had left their sugar house employment in Germany and came to America in 1867," wrote Dyer. The purpose was to build a pilot beet sugar factory.

A. D. Bonesteel, instigator of the project, knew about the Alvarado experiments and decided to try California for his health and for the development of a "beet sugar estate."

The net result was that Bonesteel and his experts came to Alvarado. The Dyer brothers and their neighbors, General Hutchinson, B. P. Flint, W. B. Carr, J. N. Risdon, W. T. Garret, E. G. Rollins, and E. R. Carpentier (and others) formed the California Beet Sugar Company.

"The first spadeful of earth was turned on May 9, 1870" on Dyers farm. The first ton of sugar was delivered to the market in November, 1870. "Glamorous barrels of polished black walnut staves bounded by resplendent brass hoops were filled with specially refined coarse grain sugar and dispatched to Washington for President Grant."

The method for refining sugar was to process 50 tons of beets daily, which resulted in 4 tons of sugar. The beets were mashed, rasped to mush and separated into pulp and juice. The juice was filtered several times and concentrated and filtered again, and finally boiled to crystals in a vacuum pan. The fill mass from the pan was centrifuged and the sugar was washed with steam and spread on the floor to dry. When it was dry enough it was put into barrels.

"Alameda Creek, 100 feet wide and 5 to 6 feet deep at the factory, provided the only means of transportation available to compete with horsedrawn trucks and dusty roads. The creek reached salt water four miles below the factory at Union City. E. H., the seafarer, built a small side wheel steamer christened 'The Rosa,' having five-foot beam and thirty length," Dyer wrote.

Due to a falling out among the Dyers and the German technologists at the factory, the Germans moved on to Soquel to produce sugar at a new site. E. H. Dyer salvaged the Alvarado buildings and "determined to abide his time til the clan of Dyer boys could achieve stature and wisdom." "(The) career sugar craftsmen included three sons of E. H., three of Ephraim, one of B. F. Ingalls (brother of the wives of E. H. and Ephraim), and certain eager members of the boy's 'gang.'" Ephraim's sons were Henry S., Hubert, and Harold. Ingall's son was Merrel. E. H.'s sons were Edward Franklin, and twins Hugh Thomas and Guy Sawyer. In 1879, with the help of outside stockholders, E. H. Dyer incorporated the Standard Sugar Manufacturing Company. "This company made a success of the business from the start," according to Historian Wood.

The following years brought success, followed by problems caused by a sugar war with San Francisco refiners. The price was low, but the factory continued to operate (1886-1887). A pair of boilers blew up, causing the death of a fireman. The works shut down. E. H. liquidated the warehouse stock. E. H., E. F. and H. P., as Dyer called them, began reconstruction plans.

The Pacific Coast Sugar Company was organized in February, 1886, with new equipment on a new site across the road (State Historical Landmark#768).

The year 1888 brought enough results "to attract attention," Dyer wrote. Claus Spreckels and others came to see the plant.

Later, E. H. Dyer & Company built the pioneer Utah factory at Lehi, Utah. Part of Dyers stock was sold to E. C. Burr and John L. Howard, who organized the Alameda Sugar Company. "E. F. Dyer was under contract to direct operations for the 1889-90 campaign.

"The free sugar act brought discouragement to the domestic sugar producers. The Alvarado plant shut down in 1914.

"When the war came Congress not only repealed the free sugar bill but urged and assisted the home industry to expand and produce. Alvarado's plant had been closed for a year and had lost its operating staff."

J. McCoy Williams, pioneer of an operation in Oxnard, was commissioned to reopen the factory. "He brought with him Charley Fleener as superintendent and W. E. Loranger as plant engineer. The old Factory at Alvarado satisfied war demand for sugar but the cost was high. Through J. McCoy's recommendation the chronicler (Dyer) was selected to serve in the place of the Consulting Engineer who had died. (To get the plant going, the crew dug into the 'graveyard' of parts from 1887 and had those rebuilt.)

"Williams revived the old custom under which the superintendent's house on the factory grounds was a center of social activities. The ceremony of lighting the kiln a few days before beet slicing began was conducted by Mrs. Williams in the presence of the factory staff. Some little girl of the neighborhood was usually selected to apply the match. The formal opening of the factory was accompanied by a half holiday of the public schools."

In 1925 the leaf hopper destroyed much of Alvarado's beet crop. The plant was "now finally doomed," people said. But they were wrong. "Holly Sugar Corporation (Colorado Springs, Colorado) purchased the two factories (Tracy and Alvarado)." (Holly Sugar already had stock in the Alameda Sugar Company.)

The Alvarado plant was started up again in 1927. Water Zeigler was named superintendent in 1928.

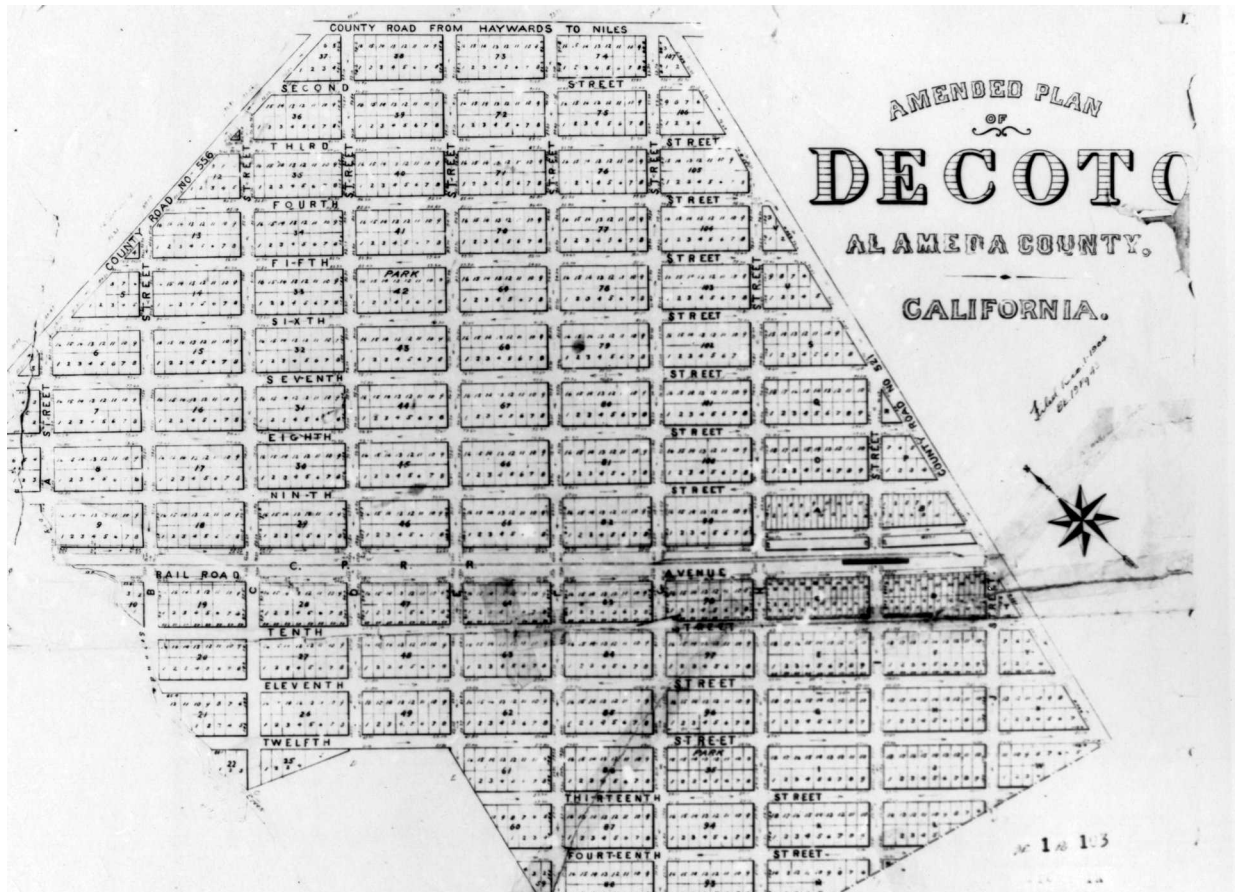
The old plant was reconstructed in the late 1930's. Dyer wrote: "Some of the old timbers in the factory, harking back to 1870, carried their load year after year by the grace of Providence, and 80 years later were still stored in the 'graveyard' behind the beet sheds, outwardly sound but mealy within. At every reconstruction of the plant there was always 'something new and something old;' but always the same old plant-as grandfathers knife, fitted from time to time with new blades and new handles, always remained grand-father's knife. The final achievement in 1937 was a modern 1800-ton factory of beauty and efficiency - a credit to the Holly staff and a monument to the redoubtable E. H. Dyer."

The company operated until 1969 under the direction of Clarence V. Lesser, field engineer,

E. H. Dyer retired in the 1890's and lived until 1906.

Part V

Decoto Beginnings



Early map of the layout of Decoto

Chapter 13 - The Decoto Family

A French-Canadian who started out as an Alameda truck farmer in 1854 gave his name to Decoto. Within a few years Ezra Decoto and his family were represented in the school district, Alameda County judicial operations, the fire department, and the Decoto Land Company.

Ezra was attracted by the Gold Rush to California. His parents, Charles and Mary, were from near Three Rivers, Ontario, in Canada. Their original name was de Coteau. Ezra, born in 1833, was a cooper in Hazardville, Connecticut.

He bought land from the heirs of "Senor" Jose Joaquin Estudillo on Rancho San Leandro and had a prosperous truck farm. During the Civil War in 1862 Decoto sold the farm and bought land near Mt. Eden from Barbara Soto. When they heard a railroad might come through Niles Canyon in 1867, Decoto and his brothers, Adolphus and John, purchased 334 acres on the old Mission Road, three miles north of Vallejo's Mills. After the Central Pacific Railroad right-of-way was determined, some local land promoters formed the Decoto Land Company. They bought 234 of the original 334 acres from the Decoto Brothers (Ezra, Adolphus and John) to lay out the town of Decoto.

In 1860 Ezra married Miss Janet Lowrie, a native of Scotland. Their four daughters were Lizzie, Mary, Janet and Alvina. The three sons were Ezra, Jr., and Lewis, and Peter.

Ezra Sr. served 10 years on the school board of the Cosmopolitan School District, formed in 1867. Valle Vista and Decoto were the two district schools, with about 20 students. The principal was T. J. James.

Ezra, Jr., became a lawyer and was elected Alameda County District Attorney and Superior Court Judge. (Chief Justice Earl Warren was one of his proteges.) He died in 1948.

Janet (Jennie) married August May. Peter Decoto stayed on the farm and was active in the town and the volunteer fire department. He was president of the Decoto Chamber of Commerce. Alvina Decoto was in charge of a Sunday School in the early 1880's. It expanded and grew into the Congregational Church in 1893.

Chapter 14 - A New Town on the Rails

Decoto came into being because of the growth of the railroads.

Only a few farm families lived on the eastern plain between Dry Creek, on the north, and Alameda Creek, on the south.

The "big four" railroad promoters, Governor Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, C. P. Huntington and Hopkins, planned to build the Central Pacific from a junction with the Union Pacific out of Omaha, across the Sierra to the Sacramento River, to connect with Western Pacific. In 1865 the contract was let for the original "Western Pacific" (San Jose branch) from San Jose to Stockton, but it only reached Niles, where its terminus was formed in 1866, and two years later reached the Central Pacific connection at the eastern end of Brighton near Sacramento. It opened from Sacramento to San Jose via Niles on September 6, 1869.

The same year a narrow gauge line was completed from Alameda Point to Haywards. The Alameda and Haywards' railroad was planned to connect with the Western Pacific at Niles and go as far as the Warm Springs health spa.

Over 1,000 feet of heavy bridging was built, some of it 30 feet above water. Cross ties for 20 miles of track were delivered and that 20 miles would be in working order within four months. "Iron for 100 miles, between Vallejo's Mills and Sacramento had been purchased," Halley wrote.

Before the close of 1868, trains were expected to reach Stockton, completing the first link of the Pacific Railroad. But efforts to place Goat Island in the possession of the Railroad Company were defeated in Congress (it was U.S. property). The company had planned to take passengers and freight from Oakland to Goat Island on a trestle and then on to San Francisco starting in 1869.

Western Pacific completed the roadbed from Niles to San Leandro in 1869. On September 6 the first through-train from Sacramento arrived in San Leandro. There was much rejoicing October 29 as the first locomotive, the Reindeer, arrived at Oakland Point from Sacramento, attached to a construction train. On November 8 the first passenger trains came through from Omaha. The transcontinental route was complete.

The Central Pacific Railroad Big Four saw that the Western Pacific Railroad from Sacramento to Oakland and San Jose was a real threat to their domination of the rail traffic. Stanford, Crocker, Huntington and Hopkins began to buy out their weaker competitors.

It was the Central Pacific Railroad, now routed through Decoto, which started the policy of putting rail sidings at about every four miles from the right-of-way through developed areas, to promote freight traffic business.

And Central Pacific created a new railroad town north of the division point at Niles, the town of Decoto.

The Decoto Land Company entered into a contract with S. Nolan, the Oakland horticulturist, to plant 27,000 evergreen and eucalyptus trees upon the subdivided and surveyed streets of the new town at a cost of \$20,352.

The first officers of the Decoto Land Company were I. A. Amerman of San Leandro, President; William Hamey of San Francisco, Treasurer; and H. V. Herbert, Secretary.

Andrew Jackson Hare was the land-sale agent for the Decoto Land Company in 1870. Four years later he was also the Central Pacific Station agent, the first Wells Fargo agent, the postmaster, operator of the first barley and feed grist mill, and manager of the first grain storage warehouse in the town. In 1878 he had opened the first general store. He also operated the Dry Creek picnic grounds until 1882.

Hare was a native of Ohio. He came to California in 1859 via the Panama route on the ship John L. Stephens. He went to the mines in Placerville, then moved to San Francisco and became a bookkeeper for the L. W. Hodgkin Lumber company. The warehouse he managed in Decoto had a capacity of 35,000 sacks of grain. His general store in Decoto he eventually disposed of to the Beckwith Brothers in 1880. From his grist mill he shipped stock and poultry feed to the Oregon and Washington State markets.

As a further business-development venture, the railroad company encouraged the promotion of another big organization, the San Jose Mission Land Company. This was designed to "purchase a certain tract of land, comprising about 5,000 acres of the tract adjacent to Mission San Jose, and to improve and distribute the same among the shareholders; also to raise a fund for the purpose of constructing and endowing two colleges, one for males and the other for females, should the order of Odd Fellows locate the one at Mission San Jose and the other at Decoto, in Alameda. Capital stock, \$1,250,000 in gold coin, divided into 500 shares of \$2,500 each. Among the trustees of the Company were the same gentlemen from the Decoto Land Company, I. A. Amerman, Henry V. Herbert, and E. H. Myer, later owner of Dry Creek Ranch. This incorporation didn't work out," Halley wrote.

Within a decade of the Central Pacific Railroad running its tracks through the Decoto District of present-day Union City, a competitive corporation promoted by the Comstock millionaire, James G. Fair, was organized to tap the western-most area of Union City with a three-foot narrow gauge railroad from Newark and Dumbarton Point to Alameda Wharf.

In May, 1877, Alfred E. "Hog" David, Fair's front man, incorporated the Bay and Coast Railroad, as a subsidiary of the South Pacific Coast Railroad, then completed to the west from Newark to Santa Clara, and to Santa Cruz via Felton.

Fair's Bay Coast Railroad moved north from the Newark depot through the Patterson overflow delta lands to Alvarado where it tapped the cattle slaughtering, agricultural produce and sugar mill beet freight traffic. The line crossed the upper reaches of San Leandro Bay on a mile-long trestle. The distance from Newark to Alameda point was 20 miles and was five miles shorter between Oakland and San Jose than the competing Central Pacific Line.

In March 20, 1878, the line between Alameda and San Jose was opened by an inaugural run, with 300 celebrities aboard. The run became popular. If Jim Fair had not become involved in Nevada politics

and run for U.S. Senator in 1881, this line might well have become the nucleus for a transcontinental line rivaling the Central Pacific.

Dry Creek Picnic Grounds

Where Whipple Ave. meets Mission Blvd. is a small road called May Rd. At the end of May Road is a place called Dry Creek Cottage. The cottage, built in the 1910's, has some history to it, but the land the cottage sits on has a history before the cottage.

From about 10 years, starting in 1873, the area where two small creeks came together was a well known picnic ground. The main holidays celebrated were May Day and the 4th of July, but local organizations also use the picnic grounds for their events.

The picnic grounds sit on what was part of Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda, granted to Jesus Vallejo. Over time Jesus Vallejo would borrow money from Jonas Clark. Jonas Clark would eventually take ownership of a section of land of the Rancho in lieu of payment of the loan. This section included the picnic grounds.

The picnic grounds would be used by different organizations, including the Independent Order of Chosen Friends, the League of Friends, the Scandinavians of Alameda County, the Pioneer Society (later called the Argonaut Club), the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Danish Picnic, the Harvest Picnic, the Odd Fellows, the Good Templars, Washington College (in Irvington), and occasionally the Oakland Guard.

The picnic season would generally start around April 26 and continue to just past the 4th of July. To announce that a picnic was coming up, a flag was flown from on top of a nearby hill, giving it the name "flagpole hill". Advertisements were also run in the local Hayward and Oakland newspapers.

The 4th of July picnic would be the biggest of the season, with patriotic events, like the reading of the Declaration of Independence by a local judge. Fireworks were also used, including firecrackers, pinwheels, snakes, and a "double headed dutchman", what ever that it. There would also be the firing of the anvils. This is where gunpowder is placed in a small groove in the top of the anvil and a second anvil is placed on top of the first. Once the fuse is lit, the gunpowder (under pressure between the anvils), explodes, sending the top anvil hurling up into the air.

For the picnics, benches and tables were setup for eating and a bandstand and dance floor were installed. Across the creek a bar would be put up to satisfy the thirst of the picnic goers.

In 1877 the Pioneer Society put on the 4th of July celebration where a total of 1200 revelers were in attendance. The 1879 picnic was remembered for a target shooting contest between members of the Centerville Rifle Club. The first prize went to Gardner Whipple, second prize to R. E. Smith, third prize to Troy McDavid, fourth prize to Frank Bane, and fifth prize to M. J. Overacker.

From 1880 to 1882, Andrew Jackson Hare operated the picnic grounds. He was the first agent for the Central Pacific Railroad in 1874, the first Wells Fargo agent and Decoto Postmaster in 1875.

On May 20, 1882, the Pioneers of the Southern Part of Alameda County held a picnic where 1000 patrons attended. The Third Grand Annual Picnic of the Scandinavians of Alameda County was held on June 10, 1882, and advertised “free conveyance from and to every train at Decoto.”

The last picnic may have been the Grand Harvest Picnic of August 1883.

Once the land was purchased from Jonas Clark by August May, Sr. it is not documented exactly why the picnic grounds were no longer used.

Part VI

Early Foundations



Alvarado Grammar School built in 1878

Chapter 15 - The Guard - A Grand Bunch of Paraders

One of the most valuable clues to the families living in the Union City-Decoto-New Haven area during the Civil War period is preserved in the original Roll Book Military Company, Light Infantry, organized at Alvarado, Alameda County, August 1863.

This State of California Militia Guard organization was commissioned by Governor Downey to protect the State from potential invasion by forces of the Confederate States of America, or from subversive forces, or to repel attacks from Confederate privateering armed vessels which might be operated and attacking ports along the Pacific Coast.

The first roll call in August of 1863 had 55 names. Some of the names are from families who remained in the Washington Township area for generations.

Some unusual aspects of the Guard's By-Laws:

"Any person over 15 years of age who sustains a good moral character and believes in a Supreme Being who rules our destinies and will support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of California is eligible to become a member."

Fine Schedule: For absence from parade	\$1.00
For absence from Drill	\$.50
Neglect of Duty	\$.50
Absence from Meetings	\$.25

And from the Minutes of Meetings - "Met at Templar Hall, September 25th with Captain F. B. Granger in the chair. Mr. A. L. Fuller elected Secretary and Senior 2nd Lieutenant. On motion a committee of three was appointed to confer with the Odd Fellows to see what can be done about securing a room for an armory and drill room - The company will agree to pay \$35 per month for an Armory at Odd Fellow Hall."

"Lieutenant Johnson reported that O. P. Feasel would put the room over the blacksmith shop in order to receive the guns (armory) and take care of them for \$50 per month and that the exclusive use of Stokes Hall could be had for \$15 per month. November 24, 1863 met at Stokes Hall."

"A formal ballot was taken to elect a permanent Captain of the Corps. Ephraim Dyer was elected with 25 votes to 7 for T. O. Hopkins. A. L. Fuller was elected Senior First Lieutenant, with 21 votes to 12 for John Brizzee. Junior First Lieutenant was declared to be John Brizzee by a vote of 19 to 15 for T. O. Hopkins. The Secretary reported that he had purchased 150 pounds of ammunition in cartridges in San Francisco for the use of the Company. William Scarf was engaged as Armorer at a salary of \$15 per month."

December 29, 1865, "On motion the Chairman of the Armory Committee, Wm. M. Liston was fined 25 cents for scratching matches on walls."

May 25, 1866 - "On motion, W. H. Cockefair, that the Company have a large picture taken at a cost not to exceed \$25."

The last entry in the Old Roll Book is dated Armory Hall, Alvarado, January 4, 1869. The Civil War was over and the Company was soon disbanded.

The Alvarado Homeguard never fired a shot in anger and confined itself to drills, parades, target matches and social balls. Union City had an impressive Civil War record, however.

A local hero was C. S. Eigenbrodt, the son of an early day farmer. Young Eigenbrodt was born in New York and came to California with his parents, who were immigrants from Germany. He graduated from West Point and was on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors from Washington Township. As soon as the Civil War erupted, Eigenbrodt organized a small group of volunteers from Southern Alameda County, took them to San Francisco and enlisted them for immediate action on the Virginia front. The Company of 100 dragoons of which Supervisor Eigenbrodt was part, was soon known as the California Hundred and was adopted with enthusiasm by all of South County as their very own fighting men. It was mustered into the Army on December 10, 1862. The next day the men marched down Market Street in San Francisco to the docks to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company and boarded the 2,600-ton-side wheeler, "The Golden Gate," for the East Coast.

"A real hero, patriot and friend to church and community was Captain C. S. Eigenbrodt, who lived on a farm near Alvarado. (He) was killed in action during the Civil War, in Shenandoah Valley, September 2, 1864. To the town he left a sum of money to be used for the founding of a library. This was the nucleus of the present Odd Fellows' Library," wrote the Washington Township History authors.

The California Hundred was attached to the Second Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment, largely from Boston. The troopers fought through many cavalry engagements including Gettysburg. In 1864 they were attached to Sheridan's cavalry command and fought through battles at Winchester, Hallowtown, and Cedar Creek.

Chapter 16 - The Churches of Union City

Religion was an individual family service in the early settlements. "There were occasional services held in the Brooklyn House at Union City by Mr. Horner, who was a Mormon elder, and now and then a sermon by Rev. W. W. Brier, a Presbyterian clergyman," according to the History of Washington Township.

"It was not until a Sunday morning in 1860 that the first Sabbath school was started (in a school building in Alvarado). This was established by the efforts of two good women, Mrs. Charlotte Cornell and Mrs. Julia Thompson. It was obviously an ecumenical affair, since 'one of these ladies was a Presbyterian, the other a Methodist. ' Both were instrumental in the building of the churches, both completed in 1860.

St. Anne's Church

"St. Anne's was established in 1860 as one of the first Missions which grew out of St. Joseph's Church in Mission San Jose. The first church building was dedicated in 1862 at the present site of Smith and Watkins Street. It was known as the Little Church by the Wayside and the Little Church of Lucky Weddings," according to a program issued when the church celebrated its centenary in 1962. The growth of the little village of Alvarado caused Archbishop Alemany to establish a mission there. As described in the History of the Diocese of Oakland written by Peter T. Conmy (as yet unpublished): "This placed the spiritual jurisdiction under that indefatigable pastor, Father Julian Federy."

The parish built a new church which was dedicated on March 7, 1926. "The new structure was one of the finest examples of rural church architecture to be found in California, in the Spanish Mission style of reinforced concrete at a cost of \$25,000," the Church's Centennial Program reported.

Finally, in 1961 St. Anne's was transferred to the jurisdiction of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, remaining there until April 1, 1973. Father Soto was pastor. Eleven years later, the Bishop of Oakland decreed for this mission the classification of a parish.

"That St. Anne's waited for one hundred eleven years before being made a parish most certainly was due to only one factor, lack of numbers. Most certainly the Catholic people of Alvarado through-out eleven decades constantly evinced loyalty, cooperation and enthusiasm for their church.

"In 1971 the Franciscan Fathers withdrew from Union City and the Bishop (Floyd L. Begin) entrusted the parish to an outstanding young priest, Father George Crespín (at Our Lady of the Rosary). The new parish was erected canonically and Father Eladio Pascual, heretofore Associate Rector of Our Lady of the Rosary, formally installed as first pastor," Peter Conmy wrote.

The Decoto area had been covered by the parish originally served by the Church of the Holy Spirit in Centerville. "Father Dominic Govemo, Pastor of that Church, instituted Mass on Sundays in the Portuguese Hall in Decoto," according to Conmy.

"Father Dominic Govemo was the first Pastor to come to St. Anne's from the Holy Ghost Parish in Fremont around 1886 ... many older residents still remember Father Govemo riding his white horse to church," the Church Centennial Program reported.

Our Lady of the Rosary Church

When the Western Pacific Railroad lines came through town and an influx of people was anticipated, two lots were donated to the Catholic Church. Our Lady of the Rosary Church was built in 1907. The new church was "dedicated by Most Reverend Henry J. DaSilva, titular Bishop of Trajanopolis. It was named Our Lady of the Rosary. "

"In 1914, Corpus Christi Church in Niles, heretofore a mission, was made a parish and Our Lady of the Rosary placed under it. This status remained unchanged until 1951 when because of the postwar increase in population, Archbishop Mitty converted the Decoto Mission into a parish," wrote Peter Conmy.

Father Ralph J. Duggan took over the duties in Decoto until 1956. He was succeeded by Father Thomas C. Rieley. The church was manned again by the secular clergy in 1971 when Father George Crespín was appointed pastor.

Presbyterian Church

Probably the oldest Presbyterian church in the area was located at the corner of V and 18th streets (now Homer and Brooklyn Streets) in Alvarado. Said to have been built in the 1860's, it was replaced in about 1902 by a new structure which still stands at that location.

The present-day Hillview Baptist Church was the City's first Presbyterian Church. (It was purchased in 1952 from the Presbyterians. Reverend Tate was the first pastor.)

"The building dates back to 1885, about 30 years after the Decoto area was settled by traders and farmers. Through files of the Golden Gate Theological Seminary in Mill Valley and through memorabilia found in the foundation, church member Harold Strickland put together bits and pieces of the Church's past," reported the Daily Review in an article on the rededication of the old building.

"Members of Presbyterian congregations in Centerville and Alvarado decided to build another church in 1885, and that was how the Decoto Church came into existence," the Review reported. The church stands at 904 H Street.

Buddhist Church

"The Southern Alameda County area was primarily a farmland when the first Japanese settled around the turn of the century," stated a recent history of the Buddhist Churches. "Although a few worked for the Central Pacific Railroad most of the Issei (born in Japan) did agricultural labor on the farms and nurseries supplying fresh produce and flowers for the nearby markets of San Francisco and Oakland. By 1920 a few Issei owned their own farms, nurseries, or small businesses, and a Japanese community developed in . . . Alvarado."

There were Buddhist churches in Oakland and in Alameda, and services were conducted regularly in homes in South County areas. "Each community had its Japanese Language Schools. When World War II began, the Japanese were sent to Tanforan Assembly Center and then to Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. After the war, the Issei and Nisei began to return. The first were landowners who had a home, farm or business. But most of the pre-war Japanese never returned. Services were again initiated by the ministers of the Buddhist Temple of Alameda at the Warm Springs Grammar School."

The Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church was founded May 26, 1961.

Chapter 17 - Schools Then and Now

The first school classes in the Alvarado area were held in the old home of Captain Marsten, in about 1853. The school opened with five students whose families paid five dollars a month tuition to Mrs. Warren. What was probably the second school house stood at 4167 Homer Street. It was probably used in the 1860's.

Classes later moved to a two-room building, which was built on Water Street, near the community of Alvarado. It was replaced in 1878 by a four-room, two-story structure on the site of the present school.

Enrollment grew until it reached 192. With that many students and five teachers, there just wasn't room in the school building, so the fifth and sixth grades moved into a wood shed, and the manual training classes into a tank house. E. Foster Morrison was the principal then. Teachers included Mary E. Bailey, Charlotte Jung, Alice Doyle, and June Willis.

In 1924, a new school with 13 classrooms was built, and March 20, 1925, at the dedication, a time capsule was sealed in the cornerstone. "Appropriate ceremonies were held," according to information found in the time capsule. That year, T. S. Van Fleet became the new principal.

James Wasley was principal from 1929-1944; Leslie Maffey was appointed principal in 1944. That school was replaced in 1959. The time capsule was moved. It was opened again and resealed in 1976 in observance of the Bicentennial.

Formal education in the Decoto area really began July 2, 1868, when the County Board of Supervisors ordered that a school district 'should be set off with such boundaries as prayed for in said petition (from citizens) and upon the suggestion of F. W. Meyer, was called the Cosmopolitan School District." County Superintendent Fuller appointed G. Emmerson, Ezra Decoto, and Meyer as trustees. Mr. J. G. Clark donated the land for the school site.

A subscription list to raise building funds was circulated among the residents. They pledged \$1,300. The building and outhouses were built at a cost of \$1,100.54 (plus an extra \$75 for outhouse construction). Furniture cost \$170.92. The school was ready in October, and school opened October 28, with 20 students. Thornton Jones taught school at \$60 a month. The building may have been the present home of Henry May on May Road, near Dry Creek.

In 1869 John Whipple was elected trustee for three years; Henry Smith for two years, and Thomas Falvey for one year. Whipple declined the office, and George Emmerson joined with Smith and Falvey as the District's first elected trustees.

By January, the district was in money trouble. The trustees met to raise money by subscription to continue school for the full ten months. (Also on the agenda as another order of business was expelling two boys from school for misdemeanors.)

School trustees considered it useless to "try to raise enough (school funds) by subscription and decided to have an election and to hold the school for ten months and raise the money by a tax," according to the minutes of the Board meeting. The tax election was unsuccessful.

The District tax rate was 22 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

There was \$194,050 in taxable property in the district. \$200 was collected and deposited with the County Treasurer.

On July 1, Smith and Falvey met at the school house to adopt "rules to have the school governed by."

August 1, "J. T. Jones commenced teaching at a salary of \$80 per month if there was public money enough to carry on the school, and if not \$75 per month." September 20, he was paid the rest of the money owed him for the previous school year.

School ran from July 31 to December 15 in the Fall of 1872. Miss Clara Germain reopened school February 19, 1873. She was paid \$64 per month. School closed June 13. It reopened July 22. Miss Germain's salary was increased to \$75 a month.

I. B. Haines was elected trustee, succeeding Emmerson, on April 27, 1873, the minutes show.

January 18, 1873, was tax election time again. The trustees held a general school meeting at the school house for the purpose of "knowing the voice of the district in regarding raising a tax to hold school for ten months." All were in favor and voted to open the school house in February, 1873.

But the April 28, 1873 tax election failed, with five "no" votes to four "yes" votes. C. Gresel was elected trustee for a three-year term and Hines was elected for two years to fill the vacancy he had not properly qualified for on time the year before.

There was no money in the treasury on May 1 for paying the "Hayward Advocate" for publishing the school election notice. There was also no money for wood for the school stove, so the wood was donated by the Clerk of the Board.

May 5th school closed for lack of funds. Miss Germain was still due \$52.50 in salary and the district was in debt \$80. Funds were raised from the community and school resumed. The next year the school board began to meet each month. In 1875, A. J. Hare was appointed trustee, to serve with Whipple and Falvey.

In 1876, J. Browne was hired as a new teacher at \$90 a month. He was described as an "experienced teacher and a thorough scholar Another tax election was defeated, with 8 voting "yes" and 15 voting "no."

Clerk Henry May noted in his minutes in June and July 1897, that the teachers that year were Lizzie Ingalls, teacher of the middle department; Paul Bowman, principal, and Julia Emerson, primary (they were elected by trustees). Miss Francis was the janitress. The "clerk was instructed to have about 4 or 5 cords of wood cut. Also to have fences and sheds repaired. Drew warrant in favor of James Hawley as carpenter to 9 days at \$3 per day for fixing fences and sheds. Drew warrant in favor of John Ennos for 6-1/2 days at \$1.50 for cleaning school yard and assisting carpenter."

The account in the back of the minutes book showed in 1899 that Henry Haines received \$15 for his duties as census marshall. Paul Martin was paid \$42.50 a month for his teaching duties, while May Elzy and Ellen Cockefair each received \$65 a month. The janitress was paid \$13 a month.

By 1903, the district had a four-teacher school and principal. In 1907 there were three regular teachers, plus a music teacher and a physical culture teacher. A one-room annex was added to the school because of growing enrollment.

No board meetings were held between June 10, 1914, and June 15, 1918, during the World War I period. When meetings began again, the Board discussed the smallpox scare and crowded schools. Harry Searles was elected trustee and Henry May was Clerk. Construction of a new school was studied. Henry Meyers, architect for the Masonic Home, was hired at six percent of the cost. Decoto School was built in 1925 and was accepted by the Board in 1926 (the cost was \$50,000). Part of the original school still stands. In 1947 the auditorium was rebuilt, along with another wing of the present school. The school was reconstructed in 1953.

In 1928, in a discussion of the duties of principal, the School Board decided that the principal would be secretary to the School Board meetings. They also decided that the principal should not attend local volunteer fire calls but should remain with the pupils when there was a fire call.

At Decoto School the students, grades 1 through 8, put out their own newspaper, "The Decoto Bee." Thanksgiving issue of 1931 was edited by Melvin Luna; associate editor was Rosallie Harrold; news, Helen Caldeira and John Cortes; girls' sports, Mildred Neves; boys' sports, Joe Vegas - jokes, Anthony Dutra; art, Carmen Lambaren and Joe Guitierrez; business manager Joe Seoane; assistant, Pearl White; and circulation manager, Raymond Corchero. Here is an item in that issue: "Seven percent of last year's graduating class are attending high school. Last year over two hundred pounds of tinfoil was collected by the Decoto School Children. This tinfoil was turned over to the Children's Hospital."

Henry Barnard School was built in 1950 to house students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. Hillview Crest was completed there in 1954 for kindergarten through sixth graders.

About 1955 it became clear that the central section of Decoto would expand closer to Niles-Alvarado Road, so Harry Searles School was completed in 1957. Growth in South Hayward expanded east across Mission Boulevard about 1956. For this reason, El Rancho Verde School was built in this area.

New growth, plus an ever-increasing number of children in both Decoto and Hillview Crest, brought about the construction of the Manuel White School, adjacent to the Barnard Intermediate School, in 1960.

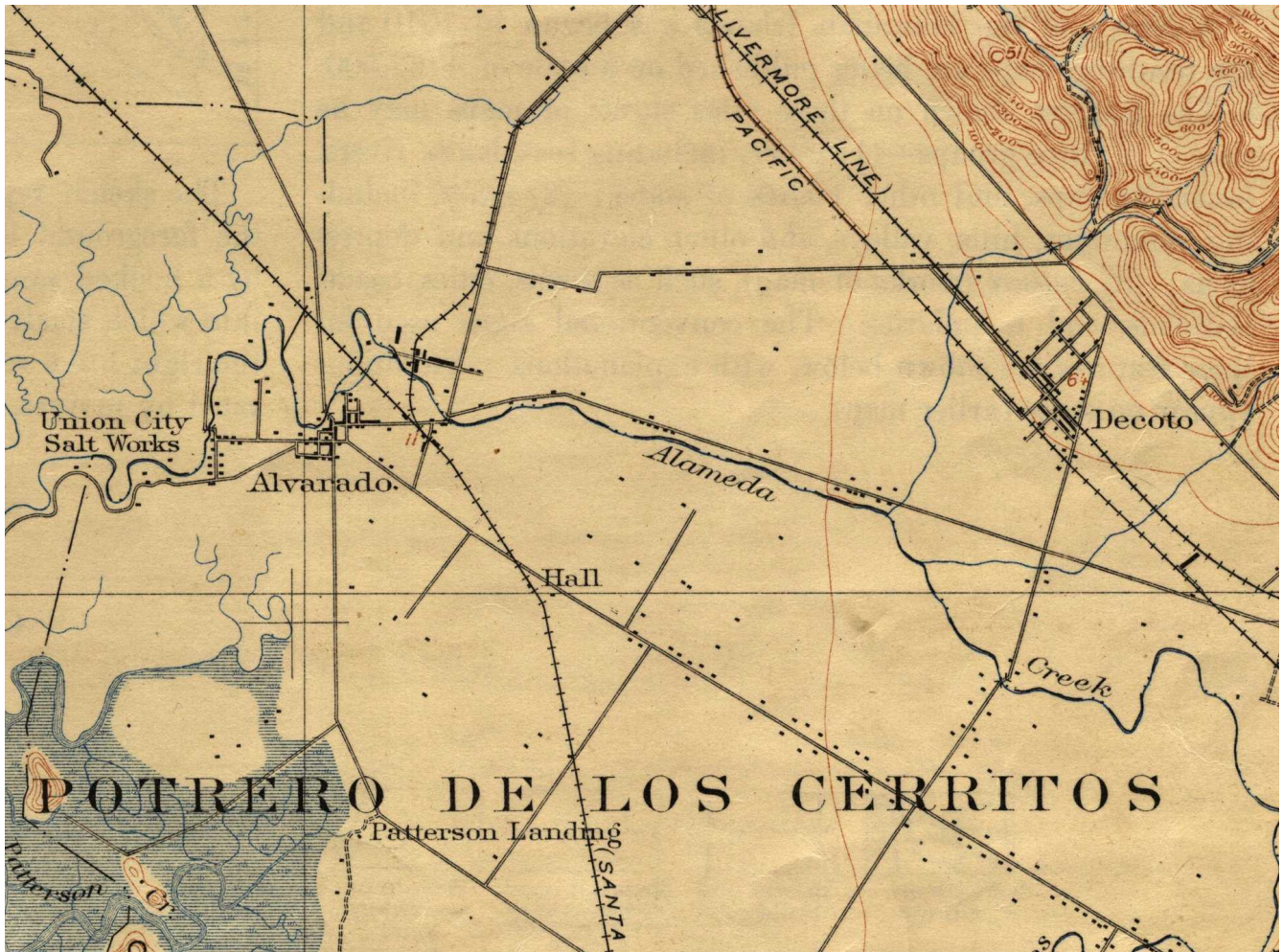
The old Washington Union High School District encompassed the entire Washington Township area. It was served by the Washington High School in Centerville. The first construction in that district was James Logan High School in the newly incorporated area of Union City in 1959.

In 1971, fifty-one portable buildings were purchased to serve as Alvarado Middle School.

Refugio M. Cabello School, on Dyer Street, opened in September, 1975. New Haven Middle School on Hop Ranch Road opened in September, 1977. A major addition was also built at Logan High School in 1977.

Part VII

The 1900's



USGS map of Union City from 1915

Chapter 18 - The Great Earthquake of 1906

Most of present-day Union City was lucky during the 1906 earthquake.

In many parts of California, along the San Andreas rift, there was heavy damage, causing refugees to seek help across the bay in Oakland, Hayward, and other areas. The tremors did little harm in Decoto, but Alvarado's buildings shook, cracked, and some collapsed.

"The Alameda Sugar Company was the chief sufferer (in the Alvarado area). The main buildings of the plant are of wood, substantially constructed, and were not damaged; but the fittings and accessory structures were injured in numerous places," according to the Report of the State Earthquake Investigation Commission, written in 1908. "An old lime-kiln showed diagonal cracks in the brickwork; several of the small arches above the fire holes opened and let bricks fall out. The great platform carrying the molasses tanks, supported by numerous vertical props 10 feet 10 inches high, resting on concrete foundations, fell down together. . . the tanks were all damaged and over 1,000,000 pounds of molasses flowed away. Along the banks of the latter (Alameda Creek) a large number of cracks extend, roughly parallel with the stream. Considerable masses next to the stream-bed slumped toward the same, leaving gaping cracks 1 to 2 feet wide, and carrying with them small outlying buildings, notably the fire engine house, which moved bodily, concrete foundation and all, 2 feet south toward the creek.

"According to the Chinese cook of the Superintendent, the cracks nearest to his dwelling opened and closed several times in succession during the quake; and large volumes of mud-laden water gushed from them splashing up some 10 feet in the air at each closing.

"At the Alvarado Water Works the brick buildings suffered considerable damage, the walls cracking in several places. The frame dwelling of the superintendent was damaged by the collapse of its underpinning. A similar fate befell the Alvarado Hotel. The schoolhouse and water tank fell owing to the collapse of its supports. Nearly all brick chimneys in the village fell, the directions varying."

In Decoto, "no earth movements nor displacements were discovered anywhere along the base of the mountain scarp. The damage to buildings was slight, consisting of broken or twisted chimneys and cracking of plaster in a few houses. A few scattering chimneys escaped destruction. The Masonic Home ... suffered but little damage . . . a few insignificant cracks in the brick walls, two chimneys broken off, and two chimneys cracked . . . "

Chapter 19 - A Chamber of Commerce View

Decoto was a land of "opportunities which will bear careful investigation," according to a Decoto Chamber of Commerce leaflet published in 1913.

"The Chamber of Commerce was organized about 1907. As early as 1910 it was trying to open F Street, secure a central Township telephone office, and improve library service and railroad crossing bells," wrote the authors of the History of Washington Township.

In true Chamber of Commerce form, a promotional leaflet was printed which stated: "It's (Decoto's) splendid railroad facilities and its nearness to the great commercial center of the coast make it especially adapted for large industrial enterprises. Coupled with these, an equable coast climate, an extremely fertile soil and fine educational advantages, make it a most desirable residence section."

The leaflet reported 950 people living in Decoto. Willett & Burr, California's "largest railroad constructors," had located their repair and storage plant in Decoto.

"Decoto will be on the Oakland-San Jose state highway," reported the leaflet. "It is estimated that for every 1,000 miles, 2,900 tons of broken rock and 260,000 barrels of asphaltic oil will be used besides vast quantities of cement, lumber and steel. The whole work is to be completed for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915."

Decoto was pictured thus: "From the background of beautiful hills, tilled to their summits, the eye sweeps a great domain, from Oakland to the north, taking in the entire lower bay and the San Mateo and Santa Cruz mountains, and culminating in historic Mission Peak, sharply dominates the landscape, a crowning feature of perpetual beauty. The soil is a deep alluvial loam, its richness proven by the luxuriant growth of wild grasses and the thrifty oaks, eucalyptus, elm, bay and madrone that adorn the townsite. In the village many front yards are made handsome with beautiful orange trees ...

"Fine pure water, not hard is found in abundance at a depth of fifty feet. The Bay Counties Power Company furnishes electric light and power at reasonable rates. The Key Route people will soon be heard from with swift electric trains running through this tract on the San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose Railroad ... It will be suburban property 'near in' to a city and county of Oakland of 500,000 inhabitants, the largest and most important city on the Pacific Coast, the eighth largest in the United States. This is not idle talk. When the Grand Lodge of Masons of California were seeking a site for their great Home, they chose that at Decoto over many competitive offerings from all parts of the State—a convincing testimonial to the superior attractiveness of this district."

Chapter 20 - Ethnic Beginnings in Decoto

Both Alvarado and Decoto were the home for peoples of many backgrounds, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Japanese who joined to help the towns grow.

During Prohibition many immigrants from the Hawaiian cane fields and pineapple plantations came to Decoto to work in the orchards and fields of South County.

A personal narrative of two local residents, Alexander Duperrior and Rafael Guitterez, gives a striking, colorful view of Decoto from 1915 to 1935.

Dupperior remembers:

"I was named Alexander by my Puerto Rican parents, Tano and Stella. My mother and dad picked cherries and apricots and did all types of labor. There were very few rich people in Decoto. Most worked in the fields or salt plant or on the sugar refinery, or the local nurseries around Niles. We came to Decoto from the San Francisco Ferry Building to downtown Oakland on the Key Route boat, San Leandro. At 12th and Broadway we boarded a Peerless Bus which brought us to live in Decoto. The only bus station then was Filetti's Ice Cream Parlour which boasted of a gas pump, a news stand and a ticket office. This corner is now occupied by Jim Stockman's Bar. Our family walked from the bus station to a friend of my father's home. He had a two-room shack-which he shared with us until my father could find work. My dad was a proud man and didn't like charity from friends so we had our own little cottage and my dad had a steady job.

"I would look through the cracks in the roof of our shack to see the stars and the moon and wish I was back in the city. My mother was very strong for education and she lost no time in sending me to school and to church, My first day at school was hectic. I got my hair pulled by a teacher. Also I got a spanking from the principal and got into a slapping incident with my first friend, Louis Brazil.

"The second friend I made was Lawrence Combra, whose nickname was 'Cupie.' He had a horse to ride. I certainly liked the old Decoto School house with its bell in the tower. I liked to go down to the school ground shed and bring wood and coal for the potbellied heating stove we had in each room. Sometimes I sit today and wonder about those classmates of mine-like Alfred Filetti, Alfred Ferreira, Lawrence Garcia, Irene Duarte, Virginia Ponti, Clara Silva, Mary Janiero, Minnie Paniagua, Frieland Sanchez, Lawrence Delgado, Clarence Perry, Ann Sequieria, Charley Hernandez, Augustine Vegas, Selmo Torres and Tony Dutra.

"When marble season came along in the spring, Selmo Torres and I started a business. We would play agates with other boys and win. Then we would sell the captured marbles back to them as taws for five cents for every 10 agates. When school was out in June we had to go out to the crops. But I didn't like field work-I preferred to stay in town. Melvin Peppitone and George Landavazo and I would walk past the almond trees which lined the dirt roads outside of town and go to Jim Carr's cherry orchard and steal some fruit.

"Joe Peppitone was the town barber. He had accumulated many tall tales to tell his customers. He would go twice a week to the Masonic Home on the hill and give the aged men a shave and hair trim.

Mr. and Mrs. Olson, owner of one of the two general stores in Decoto, also ran the post office. They had all sorts of merchandise. The other grocery store was owned by a man named Avila who had a son named Corky.

"Our School Principal, Mr. Benson, would play basketball with us at recess and lunch and play as rough as you liked, no holds barred. But when the play was over he was the respected principal. Incidentally, I was born in 1911 in San Leandro on what is now Orchard Avenue. I was first in Decoto in 1921. I remember my father worked for the Vega Hog Ranch on Railroad Avenue and Whipple Road. I would watch him feed the pigs, his boots covered with mud. I resolved I would improve myself so I would not have to do that. Eventually my father discovered from his friends that there was more money to be made from becoming a contractor for farm labor. So he started contracting the picking of fruit in the Hayward-Tennyson area next to Decoto. The Jake Harder family apricot orchard on the country road near Valle Vista was one place he contracted the crop; another was at Dr. Billings' ranch at Niles; Dad didn't know how to write and could read only words that were printed. The only time he spoke English was when he was angry and then he used only a few swear words. Decoto was a town where the doors had no keys and everyone helped and trusted one another. We were tolerant and forgiving. We became better men for having grown up there."

Rafael Guitterez arrived with his family in 1921 after a few years of indentured service in Hawaii. Here is what he remembers of Decoto then:

"We stopped two weeks in East Oakland with Hawaiian friends and then moved on by wagon to Decoto. I have never seen anything so forlorn and miserable as the house we settled in. It was a one-horse town. I lived at the corner of Fourth and E street across from the Ramos Grocery Store. I worked part time on the fruit ranches at Mission San Jose, Centerville, Santa Clara and Morgan Hill. We were harvesters of the crops of peas, apricots, prunes, tomatoes, string beans, cherries and sugar beets.

"My dad was disappointed at first with the town of Decoto. The streets were full of mud holes; there were no cement curbs or sidewalks and there were only a half dozen stores and warehouses and the railroad in 1921. Of course, our relatives were very nice to us and helped us find a place to live. It was a rental house, situated next to the old school house. It was a very small cottage but my mother made it very cozy.

"So we used to go down into Alameda Creek bed and harvest the young sprouts and cook it Spanish style with wine vinegar and spices, or fry the stalks in an egg batter."

Rafael Guitterez worked weekends and some nights playing the guitar or banjo in a Mission San Jose speakeasy. He married in 1934 and earned his citizenship papers. He played in a Spanish orchestra at dances and fiestas to entertain the workers when World War II came along, and worked days in the Richmond shipyards.

"Because of the Spanish tradition in town, Decoto was a cockfight center for the East Bay. I vividly remember the Sunday afternoon when a heavyweight rooster from Alvarado named 'Pancho Villa' was pitted against the 'Decoto Pheasant.' Local betting in the ring was very heavy and when the Alvarado rooster killed the Decoto entry, the Decoto adherents were very sad and short in the pockets for weeks.

"Decoto was then known as a 'hot' semi-pro baseball town. On Sundays at 1:30 p.m. the Decoto town team would play any challenger. You could hear the loud cheering or booing from any part of town." Joe and Phillip Ruiz, Domingo Perry, Al Ferreira, Al Filetti, Manuel Faustina, "would fan as many as 14 men per game. Louie signed with the Nebraska State League and afterward the Oakland Oaks gave him a tryout.

"A former ice-cream parlor became the boxing gym for budding pugilists. The property was owned by Mr. Galarte. Learning boxing in this crude ring were local four-round fighters such as Charlie Hernandez, Gus Veta, and Frankie Nieves. Young Jack Thompson, the champion welterweight, trained in Decoto and so did Young Pancho Villa, whose name was really Paul Ammoroso."

Louis Pagan remembered early Decoto in an interview with a Daily Review reporter in 1975:

"Louis Pagan raps a lot about Decoto because he was born and raised there and has about 140 kinfolks in the vicinity. He still lives in the area.

"He is a layman authority on California history. Because, he says, 'I think I was born a hundred years late, all the time I visualize my grandfather, six feet four, Manuel Garcia, bringing his family around the horn from Spain. Folks didn't need visas so they came in bunches from Spain, Portugal and the Azores-all second class packed in like sardines down in the belly of the ship. Some stopped off in Argentina and Hawaii, the rest came to South County. There were about 80 families in the township when grandfather arrived and worked like devils until they owned little chunks of land to give to each of their children. Grandfather had 12 children.'"

Louis himself attended the "new" Decoto Grammar School built in 1925. "'The whole town went to Washington High which had about 400 students so we knew everybody.' Louis' father, Ramon, organized the Puerto Rican Mutual Aid Society in 1934, with 40 members. In 1946, he was largely responsible for the permanent memorial of Decoto's World War servicemen with 231 names from all of the old town gangs." (The monument was dedicated on November 10, 1946.)

"'And Pete Decoto worked with us. (From 1920 until 1940, Pete Decoto, the son of the city founder, was the Decoto Boy Scout leader.) Old Pete was great on teaching us practical things. He would tell us how to hustle meat every Friday so he could teach us how to cook.

"On Holy Ghost feast days old man Perry supplied all the steers to feed the whole town."

Another person (also interviewed in The Review) who remembers the old Decoto Grammar School before Louis' time is Joseph Marciel, whose family came from the Azores. Now in his 80's [1978] and living in Fremont, Joseph remembers the first airplane he saw flying over Alameda Creek and his first automobiles 1915 Model T Ford which he bought second hand when he came back from the war in France. His folks had the first bathtub in the Township and he remembers going to Niles in a horse and buggy and riding the railroad to Oakland and the ferry to San Francisco.

Chapter 21 - Alvarado Memories

Alvarado, too, grew as the combined effort of peoples of many cultural heritages.

In 1860 the county census showed 96 Asiatics in Oakland. By 1906 there were about 2,500 Chinese in the East Bay. The number of Japanese grew, too. Wherever these cultures settled they showed their concern for preserving their heritage, establishing churches and schools as well as benevolent associations.

Land was relatively cheap by 1910. The Spanish and Portuguese established their homes in Alvarado, working for large farmers and at the salt mills.

Ben Matsumoto, well known in Union City because of his grocery store on Smith Street, was born in Alvarado. So were his sisters, Grace Handa, Alice Motozaki, and Dorothy Matsumoto. He remembers some of the families active in Alvarado business around the turn of the century.

His father, Katsusaburo, who first worked in the salt mills, and his mother, Fusa, built and owned the grocery store in 1917, along with four other families. Among them were Shigeru Matsumoto (not the same family) and Mr. Wakabayashi. Ben Matsumoto's father also had a boarding house next door to the grocery. It was two stories with the Japanese Association office on one side and a pool room at the front.

"I remember also there was a one-armed bandit in there," Matsumoto said. In 1924 the boarding house burned down.

There was a store on the corner of Smith Street where the park is now. That may have been in the Twenties, Matsumoto said. The store also had a Japanese language school in the back yard and rooms for rent on the second floor. The head man at the mill was Kakemoto. He boarded his boys (he was a contractor for laborers) there and then took them to work at the salt mills each day. Later Leslie Salt built a camp on their property and the workers stayed there.

Across the street from his store there was a "whole string of gambling dens, a Chinatown," Matsumoto said. "People used to come out of Oakland in the evenings after work."

"Then in the middle Twenties or so the town decided to clean out Chinatown so they vacated the prostitution and gambling houses and burned the buildings down." He remembers they took busloads of people to Oakland.

"The fire started one night and went out, and then when it started again the next day, we knew it was set on purpose."

Matsumoto said the Union City salt mill was the oldest industry, except for Holly Sugar, and most of the workers were Japanese. (The Japanese were working in the salt mills as early as 1878, according to George Kato of Fremont. Kato is working on a history of the Japanese in Southern Alameda County. He said his research indicates that the first Japanese were settling in the area even earlier than that.)

Around the corner where Priego's Store is now [1978], there was a building owned by a Japanese family, said Matsumoto. Mrs. Wakabayashi was a dressmaker, taught sewing in one part of the building, and lived in the back. When the neighbor in the building quit business, she took over the store he had. Later she sold out to the Yamagami family. Subsequent owners were the Sugimotos and then the Kawanos.

Other early Japanese in the area included Teisuke Nishi, who worked on the Harvey Ranch, and Mrs. Tanaka, who worked on the Garin Ranch. Masato Fujita had a laundry in the building on the end of the block between Fredi and Smith streets.

Mr. Tsurumoto farmed land along Whipple Road, raising strawberries. Five Japanese families worked in the fields with him as sharecroppers, according to George Kato. Nishi was president of the Alvarado Japanese Association, he said. Other presidents included Mr. Fujita, Mr. Tsurumoto and Mr. Kato, Matsumoto remembers.

Hikoichi Tajima, who lives in Alameda now, was active in the Alvarado Japanese Association which he describes as an association which covered most of the Washington Township area, including Irvington, Niles, Decoto, Alvarado, Mission San Jose, and Newark. He said the group often planned events such as picnics, benefit movies, and July 4th celebrations. The treasury was used to help local people. Tajima came to the United States in 1913, as a young boy, and became active in the association in about 1925. He lived in Centerville and started the Warm Springs Japanese Language School. He is 81 (1977) and has been a Hokubei Mainichi (San Francisco Japanese newspaper) reporter since 1948.

The Japanese Language School was open Saturdays and after school. It started in the early Twenties in the building on the park site and then moved to the Japanese Association building. Among the teachers were Motoroshire Motozaki, and Masao Koga. The first teacher was a minister from the Alameda Buddhist Church. Most of the children of the Alvarado Japanese families attended.

Tajima summed up the lives of the Japanese in the area thus: "It was a hard struggle for our fathers and mothers, so today we have a successful and peaceful condition. But we often forget that."

Memories of Little Tijuana in the Twenties, school days, and boardwalks were revealed in an interview with Peter Pinto by Beth Jacobs, Daily Review reporter in a special issue in 1975.

Pinto, Leslie Salt engineer, and his wife, Annette, described Alvarado as it was in 1920. "That year Pinto's family arrived from Germany and his father set up a shoe repair shop. Farmers gathered around a pot-bellied stove to talk and play cards while their boots and harnesses were mended," Jacobs wrote.

Pinto told her: "Sausage made in Hellwig Brothers' butcher shop was known the Township over. Bank President August May branched out to banks in Niles and Irvington. Peter remembers May, honest as the day is long, but 'stingy' enough to roll his own Bull Durham until he got shot in the hand by a bank robber.

"The fire station next door to the bank had a two-wheel hose reel that young pranksters borrowed one night and ditched out in the country along Hop Ranch Road.

"Even in Prohibition days, Alvarado was known as 'the town with a saloon on every corner.'" (There were Mexican cantinas, betting parlours and saloons in "Little Tijuana.") "Annette remembers August Silva's Saloon. The saloon keeper with his handlebar moustache was her uncle, and he gave out the best homemade root beer to the cousins in the backroom," Pinto said.

"The flamboyant Hotel Chanteclair and Saloon stood across the street where Priego's market is today. Down the street the Alvarado Hotel, originally built for foundry workers and boat passengers, was owned by Joe Roulette, before Fernando Paredes remodeled in 1947.

"Like every building in town, including the first St. Anne's Church, the hotel had a boardwalk about three feet high.

"Peter Pinto recalls 'the longest boardwalk extended from the waterworks on Veasy Street to the Southern Pacific station,'" Jacobs wrote.

"Every winter a flood washed through the town and farmlands along the old Creek Road, what we now call Niles-Alvarado Road. But that made this place rich black soil deposits which produced record crops of potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage and sugar beets," Pinto concluded.

In the early days Alvarado had artesian wells. W. H. Dingee sank 35 wells for the Oakland Water Works. Peter remembers the giant steam engine would pump the flow into Oakland through a large water main. Almost too late the community repurchased the wells to set up water programs.

Mrs. Mae Santos, widow of Antone Santos, lives in Alvarado, and recently talked about the early days. She was born on Leevee Street (Union City Blvd) in Alvarado. Mrs. Santos' husband opened the U-Auto-Stop service station in Alvarado on the corner of Horner and Vallejo Streets in 1927. "One day he came home with a flagpole," Mrs. Santos said. "We put it up at the station and it is still there. He saved the flagpole from the second Alvarado School."

She remembers that, as a child, she was in her father's saloon one day when "a guy came into the saloon with a bag and asked my mother to take care of it. He came back soon, grabbed it and ran out. I found out the bank had been robbed, and he had shot Mr. May, the bank president."

Mrs. Santos owned the house on Horner Street that was probably the second Alvarado School. It has been designated the city's first Point of Historical Interest.

Chapter 22 - Growing Toward Incorporation

Decoto and Alvarado were still small towns when World War II started, with barely more than 2,000 people in each settlement.

They were plagued by small-town troubles. Transportation was poor. Only periodic trips were made by busses such as the Peerless Stages and Greyhound. The number of passenger trains was declining. The Sheriff's office in Oakland was a long way off. The single County Supervisor representing Washington Township found it difficult to get improvements or services for little communities.

Orchard crops were in decreased demand and employment was down at the sugar mill.

The year 1950 marked a turning point. California population growth exploded and Southern Alameda County developed quickly. By 1955 Newark and Fremont were incorporating, and Hayward had extended its boundaries south to Whipple Road. These incorporating cities began to eye the Decoto-Alvarado areas.

A citizens' committee that included Tom Kitayama, John A. Ratekin (Holly Sugar Company manager), Oscar Dowe (Pacific States Steel), Kenneth Garcia, Joseph Lewis, Elvin Rose, and others petitioned for incorporation.

On January 13, 1959, following an election, the towns of Decoto and Alvarado were incorporated into the City of Union City. The new city had an area of about 9 acres. In 1962 when the hill areas were annexed, the total city acreage rose to the present 14-plus and boasted 6,103 residents.

Tom Kitayama was elected the first Mayor. The City Council also included John Ratekin, George Sloan, Joseph Lewis, and Oscar Dowe. Dean Seeger was appointed City Administrator.

The new city of Union City was united - a city which grew from the determination, the vigor, the success and failures of those early settlers, proud of its heritage and dedicated to preserving it even as it has grown and continues to grow with the people and the times.

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