

HISTORY OF ARDENWOOD AND THE PATTERSON FAMILY

Adapted by Frank Jahn from: "Faces in Time" by Susan Simpson, Research Intern EBRPD 12/82; and "George Washington Patterson: Protagonist of Ardenwood," by Keith Kennedy.

THE FIRST RESIDENTS

The rich and colorful history of the park site starts well before the Patterson farming history. Ohlone Indians, who were the first inhabitants, had a village west of where the Patterson House now stands.

The Spanish arrived in 1775-76. Later the area became part of the Mexican land grant ranch, the Potrero de los Cerritos, and is reported to have been the boundary between the Alviso and Pacheco ranches. After its founding on June 11, 1797, Mission San Jose acquired the Rancho, and on this land the Fathers of the Mission grew grain and garden crops, tended orchards and vineyards, and raised cattle. (Note: Translated, Potrero de los Cerritos means "pasture of the little hills," referring to the area currently known as Coyote Hills.

In 1846, the first American settlers arrived in the Bay Area. With the 1848 discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada, the nearby Mission San Jose became a center of overland trade between San Francisco and gold mining areas. In the 1850's, unsuccessful miners began to engage in agriculture in the fertile valleys by the Bay. George Washington Patterson was one of the Americans who purchased land from both American settlers and Spanish landowners and established a successful farming operation.

GEORGE WASHINGTON PATTERSON

George Patterson was born on July 26, 1822, in East Berlin, Adams County, Pennsylvania, the son of Henry and Lydia (Kimmel) Patterson. In 1824 the family moved to a farm in Greene County, Ohio, and moved again in 1832 to a farm near Americus, Indiana.

In 1847, three years after the death of George's father, the family moved to Lafayette, Indiana. It is here that George became the owner and operator of a lime kiln located near the Wabash River and Erie Canal. The discovery of gold in California, however, cut short George's stay in Lafayette. Anxious to try his luck in the gold fields but lacking the necessary funds to move westward, he sold his lime kiln business for \$500. This money he invested in the Lafayette-California Mercantile and Mining Company, a stock company consisting of 23 men formed for the purpose of moving to California and participating in the gold rush. They ordered supplies from New York City to be delivered to San Francisco and started their journey on March 13, 1849. George was 27 years old.

The Company took a steamer down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, and then went by coastal ship to Port Lavaca on the Texas coast. There they bought mules, wagons, and saddle horses and traveled west across Mexico toward Durango and Mazatlan. The route they choose was not an easy one, and along the way they suffered from shortages of food and water, were robbed by natives, and had to depend upon non-English speaking Mexicans and Indians for trail guidance. They moved cautiously through towns in Mexico then infested with cholera, and one of their company died of the dread disease when camped near Durango. Near Santa Rosa, Mexico, for reasons unknown, the stock company dissolved. The assets were divided equally, but the company did not part ways until they reached San Francisco.

On July 13, they boarded a sailing brig named the "Louisa", which was renewing its water supply at Mazatlan on the last leg of its voyage to California from Sydney, Australia. The "Louisa" arrived at the port of Yerba Buena on August 29, 1849 (47 days after it left Mazatlan), where the men found on the docks the shipment of goods they

had ordered forwarded around the Horn six months previously. The now defunct company sold some of the supplies for cash, divided up other mining tools and foodstuffs equally, and went their separate ways to the gold fields.

George Patterson joined with four members of the company and traveled overland to the American River area, where he met with moderate success as a gold miner. Encouraged by his luck, he sent 20 ounces of gold back to his family in Indiana on March 13, 1850 and requested that his brother Henry come out to join him. Instead, the family sent George's brother Andrew, in the hopes of eliminating his compulsion for gambling. In the summer of 1850, perhaps after Andrew had joined him, George traveled to the mining areas of Trinity County where he suffered great financial and physical pressure. He returned to the San Francisco Bay area late in 1850.

Having no land of his own, Patterson secured employment on a ranch near Mission San Jose belonging to an old friend from his Lafayette, Indiana days, E.L. Beard. He worked as a paid laborer at first, probably making about \$4.00 per day. After three years he started leasing some acreage from Beard. Patterson's lease agreement called for splitting with Beard one half of the net proceeds from the land. A year later, however, we find that Patterson had been given permission to farm "the same land farmed last year by said Patterson under a lease from E.L. Beard together with a portion of a tract or parcel of land known as the Frank Place and containing in all two hundred and fifty acres, for the term of one year from the first day of December 1854 at the annual rent of six dollars per acre...". Because he was now renting land, he no longer had to split his earnings with Beard, increasing his net income greatly.

In 1856 Patterson made his first land purchase. On December 1, he bought 291 acres for \$9,748 from A.F. Branda, a San Francisco resident. It was on this piece of property that he built his home, a project made necessary by events soon to transpire.

A series of family crises prompted George to visit Lafayette in 1857. While there, it was decided that his mother and brother Henry should return to California with George. Since he now owned land and had family members to provide shelter for, George began

building a two story farmhouse, which still stands and comprises the east side of Ardenwood's Victorian farmhouse. Lydia and Henry stayed with George until 1866, when they moved back to Indiana for unknown reasons.

Patterson initially acquired land adjacent to his own. On December 20, 1864, he purchased two lots of land from Augustin Alviso, owner of large tracts of land within the Rancho Potrero de los Cerritos, for \$5,000. In February of 1866, Alviso made his largest land sale to Patterson: 1,500 acres at the price of \$15,600. This deed included "the western portion of the Rancho and consisted of Mayhew's and Butler's landings, the hills, willow swamp, and all the tract used by Alviso as pasture and grain fields". As his holdings grew, he began to acquire more distant lands. By the time of his death in 1895, he owned 3,778 acres near the Coyote Hills and another 2,700 acres in the hills south of Livermore. This "Mountain Ranch", as he called it, was purchased on September 21, 1893 for \$45,267 and was used as the winter grazing area for the Patterson's stock, both horses and cattle.

By 1874, Patterson owned over 2,500 acres within the Rancho Potrero de los Cerritos. This land was considered especially valuable for at least three reasons. First, Alameda Creek was at that time navigable as far as Alvarado, providing convenient transportation of farm products by scow schooner to San Francisco. Second, the chert and basalt found there could be used as a hard base material for the foundation of roads. And third, it was some of the most fertile and profitable land in California. In the early days of American occupation, from 1850 to 1860, the land around Coyote Hills was used very successfully for the cultivation of wheat.

Not only did Patterson acquire land for farming and ranching, but through good irrigation and sound agricultural practices he and his sons also managed to manipulate the land to their advantage. Part of the land purchased by the Patterson family was in the form of a narrow corridor which ran from the main portion of their tract to a meander of Alameda Creek. Patterson devised the following ingenious land-reclamation system. He would plow this corridor deeper than necessary, and then 'forget' to plant it; in the winter, when Alameda Creek was in flood, the water would flow onto his property - bringing with it the

silt load it carried. This silt was, of course, deposited on the salt marshes and eventually the marshes were reclaimed with a fine layer of very fertile new soil. Before this system was implemented by George's son, William Patterson, the town of Alvarado would periodically flood. After this diversion took place, however, the "river", as they then called Alameda Creek, no longer posed such a threat.

William Patterson also built levees on the property so that the flood waters would remain there longer than normal. This allowed the silt within the water time to settle to the ground below. At one point, the Coyote Hills were called "tidal islands", because it was only possible to reach them during high tide. Grandson Donald Patterson recalled that when the area flooded, the entire acreage to the Northeast of the hills would be under about eight feet of water, making it necessary for him to "row over the property".

Thus, a large portion of the Patterson land became, agriculturally speaking, extremely productive as a direct result of the silting that took place after William diverted the water and sediment of Alameda Creek onto his land.

THE CROPS

George Patterson initially raised grain and cattle. These were sold in the gold fields and in San Francisco. From as early as 1855 there are records of San Francisco Commission Merchant firms selling Patterson's goods. These firms paid freight and storage charges, and billed Patterson for a commission upon selling his goods. They were in a sense, "food brokers". For example, the Hathaway Company, with whom Patterson did business during the mid-to-late 1850's, charged a 5% commission on the grain they sold and 8% on other produce. When Patterson reinvested his profits with the company, they gave him an interest rate of 1.5% per month, or 18% per year.

Patterson was also able to buy goods from the company at a substantial discount. These goods included sugar, flour, lard, salt, tobacco, twine, candles, cornmeal, yeast powder, sacks, etc. For example, in 1858 Patterson bought coffee for 20 cents per pound and bought 2,741 burlap sacks at a total cost of \$20.55.

Patterson's farming endeavors were enhanced by the fact the Alameda Creek flowed directly through his property. Because of its size and the fact that the Creek was navigable beyond Alvarado, grain, hides, and vegetables were brought by ox-carts and teams from as far as the Livermore Valley to this main embarcadero, from which much of the food supply for San Francisco was shipped.

Patterson built his own landing on the edge of Alameda Creek. At this landing he kept his own scow schooner, which he used to transport his goods to San Francisco. Purchased in 1878 for \$3,950, the schooner was named the "Broadguage", and over the years the Patterson's retained several captains that sailed her to San Francisco. In 1884 they employed Captain J.W. Tourich; from 1886-1888 Captain Fischer was in charge; and in 1889 a Captain Popham was retained by the family. It is said that Popham sailed to San Francisco on the morning tide and returned on the evening tide the next day. Captain Popham was paid \$60.00 per month, and kept a two man crew who he paid \$1.25 per day or roughly \$40.00 per month. Dock fees at San Francisco at the time were \$1.40, and the Harbor Commissioner's toll was \$3.15. After the South Pacific Coast Railroad laid tracks to Alvarado, the Pattersons stopped using their boat and used instead the convenience of the new railroad.

By the late 1880's, the Patterson farm crops included oats, barley, wheat, potatoes, cabbage, onions, garlic, turnips, carrots, tomatoes, corn, beans, squash, sugar beets, peas, and rhubarb. The animal products included beef, milk cheese, butter, eggs, poultry, hides, and tallow. In August 1855, Patterson sold 272 sacks of potatoes weighing 29,534 pounds, for a total of \$516.81. In 1857 he was barging produce to San Francisco where he found sea captains willing to pay \$1.00 for a head of cabbage and \$20.00 for a sack of flour. In 1887, he sold chickens for \$11.50 per dozen, and in 1886, sold a total of 2,345 bales of straw for \$187.60, or for eight cents per bale.

In addition to farming, Patterson also raised cattle, and it is from his involvement in this industry that an interesting story arises. In 1854 Alameda County was beset with cattle thieves. The people of Washington Township held a meeting and appointed a committee of twelve to solve this problem. In November of 1855, four cattle thieves

were captured and placed under guard on Patterson's ranch. Before the next day, two escaped, which angered the citizens immensely. They formed a posse and seized the two remaining prisoners from the guard house, took them to the Willows area (near Coyote Hills Park today) of Mr. Patterson's farm and hung them. The posse then sought and found the two thieves who had escaped, and hung them on the banks of Alameda Creek.

At one time, there were between 30 and 40 hired laborers who worked in the fields and as household help. These workers included some immigrants from southern China with experience in farming the peat soils common in flood plain areas. The single men lived in bunkhouses near the barn, the household help lived in a small house adjacent to the Patterson farmhouse, and workers with families lived near the "The Willows" in the vicinity of Coyote Hills Regional Park.

The eucalyptus plantations were intended initially to produce hardwood for the furniture industry. However, the wood proved to be too rough to mill, and the logs would not float and could not be rafted on the Bay to the saw mills in Hayward. The eucalyptus plantations are believed to be among the first in the State, the seeds having been brought from Australia by one of George's friends in the shipping industry.

THE FAMILY

Among those assisting George Patterson in his endeavors was his good friend James Hawley. Hawley was an early settler in the vicinity of Mission San Jose. He married his wife, Hetty Munn in May 1845, and in 1849 they came around the Horn from New Jersey and settled in California. Hawley built the first frame building in the town of Mission San Jose in which he operated the Red Hotel. The Hawley's had six children, one of which was to become George Patterson's wife.

Clara Hawley, who was thirty-one years George's junior, was attending school in Oakland when George began "courting" her. Although there is no information in the literature regarding her course of study, it is known that Clara was well versed in French, math, and the social sciences. George and Clara attempted to keep their

relationship a secret. In a letter dated June 24, 1877, George arranged a clandestine meeting with Clara and later asked her to "disguise her handwriting whilst writing to him". On July 11, 1877, George W. Patterson and Clara Hawley were united in marriage. George was 55 years of age, Clara, 24.

In the early 1870s, the South Pacific Coast Railroad was being developed in the Newark-Fremont-Union City area. George opposed the planned right-of-way through his land, arguing that it would bisect his fields, making planting and plowing more difficult. He went so far as to post armed guards on his property. In 1877, however, while George and Clara were away in Sacramento getting married, developers of the railroad got the six armed guards drunk with free whiskey. Before the guards recovered and could resume their duties, the track had been laid across the entire Patterson Ranch. Patterson sued, spending over \$500 in retaining A.M. Crane as his lawyer. On November 22, 1877, he won a "right of way" suit against the S.P.C.R.R. and collected \$2,095 for the value of the 5.56 acres taken by the railroad and for unspecified damages to other land.

Besides seeking a monetary settlement, Patterson also asked that a train depot be placed on his land. "Although Patterson lost the eminent domain suit to have the railroad evicted, he gained the convenience of a family depot". The family commissioned Havens and Toepke, two architects from San Francisco to design the railroad station. The station was named "Arden", and because it was only twenty feet above sea level, it was often subject to flooding. At the time, the cost of a one way ticket from Arden Station to San Francisco was \$2.45.

The first portion of the Patterson house was built in 1857 by George, his two brothers and James Hawley. George called his estate "Ardenwood", after the forested area in England mentioned in Shakespeare's play, "As You Like It." There were two subsequent additions to the House. The largest was in 1889 when George and Clara added the Queen Anne Victorian section to the House. The second addition came in 1915 when George's son Henry and his wife remodeled the old farmhouse section and added rooms including the kitchen, a large bedroom above the kitchen, the sun porch, nursery,

and a bathroom with "indoor plumbing". Electricity was added in 1903.

George Patterson, like his father, was a staunch Republican. During the Civil War, he donated funds to help support the war effort. Being a Republican, he supported the North, and voted for Abraham Lincoln. In 1873, Patterson donated funds for the relief of people from the dust bowl region of Nebraska. In 1888, Patterson was elected President of the Harrison and Morton Club by other Republicans of Washington Township. He was very interested in the creation of the State of California, and had a lifetime membership in the Society of California Pioneers.

George Patterson was active in the politics and social functions of his community. In 1866, when an elementary school was needed in the community, he took up the cause by donating money and financing a fundraising picnic on his ranch. The building, Lincoln Elementary, is still standing today, but has since been moved onto the grounds of Miller School in Fremont. Years later, when the community was opposed to having Union High School built, they asked for Patterson's support, but he refused, saying that all the children in the community should have the same opportunity that his children had for a good education.

Patterson, himself, was well educated. In 1883, he was one of the first subscribers to the Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft. His younger son, William Donald, went to law school at Stanford, while his elder son, Henry Hawley, took up studies at the University of California at Berkeley, graduating in 1900.

In a taped interview with a man who remembers him, George Patterson is described as a quiet, nice man who would offer his neighbors rides in his horse-drawn carriage. His grandson, Donald Patterson, remembers that he didn't allow the children to speak unless spoken to after dinner in the living room. The land on which the ranch was situated was naturally marshy, and in the winter, when the ground was saturated, the children were sent up to the attic to bowl. Also, according to Donald, George Patterson once buried 40 or 50 slugs of gold in his backyard. Many members of the family have tried to locate this buried treasure, but it had never been found. Donald suspects

someone saw Patterson burying the gold and that it disappeared soon thereafter.

In August of 1895, George Patterson attended a State Board of Equalization meeting in Sacramento at which the tax assessment for Alameda County was being considered. He testified against raising the County's assessment, and apparently, his appearance there created a good deal of interest for the local press. He testified that he had paid as high as \$312 an acre for some of his land. This was to be Mr. Patterson's last appearance.

At the beginning of September, Patterson's health began to fail. It did not seem serious at first, but on September 12, 1895 at 8:00am, George Washington Patterson died of heart disease. He was 73 years old. The funeral was held on the following Saturday afternoon at his home, and was attended by a large number of friends and neighbors. His body was interred at the I.O.O.F. cemetery in Decoto (now known as the "Chapel of the Chimes") in Union City, and it was said that his funeral cortege was one of the largest that had ever taken place in the township. On May 26, 1898, the Granite Company erected a marble monument at the cemetery at a cost of \$2,400 to the Patterson family. This monument is currently the largest at that cemetery.

According to the evidence, Mr. Patterson left no will at the time of his death, but there is no doubt that his wife and sons inherited his fortune estimated at more than \$700,000. The market value of the 6,478 acres of land alone probably matched the one million dollars that the obituary notices claimed his estate was worth.

After the death of her husband, Clara Patterson and her two sons took over the farming and ranching business started by George. Besides her involvement on the farm, Clara was well-known throughout the community and respected for her kindness shown toward others. She did hospital work, took soup to those less fortunate in the community, and cared for the wives and children of some of her farm workers.

On January 1, 1900, Clara Hawley Patterson was remarried to Reverend William H. Layson of the Presbyterian Church. Very little is known about Reverend Layson. In her