Membership News

Our first newsletter of the year 2003 brings hope of good tidings for the Menlo Park Historical Association members. This issue, therefore, would like to spread the offering of membership, not only to our current members, but also to our neighbors and friends living in Menlo Park. This invitation guarantees that wider representation will result in a rejuvenated organization that will serve our community in a much more effective way.

Our organization is certainly about the history of Menlo Park, but as our last two issues have shown, we are dedicated to the living Menlo Park, creating its own history with respect for those who have given us so much.

Membership envelopes are enclosed for our current members, but we need each of you to use your influence to invite others that should be members, like your close neighbors, relatives and friends. An appreciation of the past certainly enriches our shared culture, and that appreciation will help us make wise decisions in the future history that we are now living. What we do today will affect others for a long time.

Our heritage in Menlo Park is a rich one, especially because it was cultivated by hard work, logging and the railroad primarily, and the entrepreneurship of leading California families, like the Athertons and the Floods.

Our history has been the work of many. Let our future also be the work of many.

We need each of you to use your influence to invite others that should be members...

Inside This Issue

- Dr. A.E. Blake, Early M.P. Native
- Menlo & Atherton Clash
- Dick Alvarez Honored
- Two Book Reviews

Board Meeting Tues., 4 Feb., 2 p.m. at History Room
Menlo Park and Atherton Clash

MOST OF US are unaware of the tensions and fighting that came before the incorporation of Atherton (then known as Fair Oaks) in 1923 and the later incorporation of Menlo Park in 1927. The history and drama of this battle was captured in a chapter of a work written by Frank M. Stanger, “South of San Francisco.”

He described a meeting of electors from the two towns on September 10, 1911. On the one side representing Menlo Park was A.G.C. Hahn, John B. Kelly, Harry B. Morey, Sr., John McBain; on the Fair Oaks side was George A. Batchelder, Perry Eyre, George M. Wilcox, W.L. Growall, Clarence R. Walter and Thomas H. Breeze. At this meeting a line was carefully drawn between the two towns “in the pending proceedings for incorporation.”

If the electors were ever amicable, it was not known. What was known is that the pending proceedings and the interesting map signed by the electors “has now become a museum piece but nothing more. Twelve years and a World War intervened to overshadow things...” Camp Fremont came and after the war all this boundary agreement was “conveniently forgotten.”

“In 1923, proposals were once more brought up for discussion in Menlo Park, apparently with the hope again of including some of the valuable Fair Oaks-Atherton property. This time, at a meeting on the subject, with both communities represented, somebody lost his self-restraint, hot words were banded about, and the Fair Oaks men bolted the meeting. The affair then became a race to be first in filing incorporation papers at the County Seat, and Fair Oaks came in just one hour and twenty minutes ahead of Menlo Park. But the new town was officially named Atherton because the latter name was found to have been pre-empted by a town in Sacramento County. The boundary line that now became legal was not far from the one previously agreed upon but more crooked and complex, and less to the liking of Menlo Park.

“The people of Menlo Park, frustrated in their ‘imperialistic’ ambitions, put off incorporation until 1927.”

Stanger’s article, therefore, might shed some light on the difficulties the two towns have had since the beginning of the incorporation of Atherton. It is small solace to Menlo Park that the Fair Oaks men did not get their choice of name. Rumor has it that there have occasionally been mutual friends from both cities. At this moment that rumor has not been authenticated.

Dick Alvarez Honored

IN THE NOVEMBER/December, 2002 issue of “Caltrain Connection,” Caltrain paid tribute to our own Dick Alvarez, who inspired and guided the Water Tower plaque to a successful completion.

The article commended Dick Alvarez for his interest and work to commemorate a special part of Menlo Park’s history, long forgotten. Dick had found a photograph and with his engineering background determined the location of the water tower where few references remain. One reference that the MPHA has not published is an account from the early 1900s by Roland Midgley, who lived across from the train depot. He remembered how excursion trains would stop in Menlo Park during the summer and get water from a big, high water tank.

“They needed very clean water to keep down boiler scale,” he explained, “and Menlo Park could supply it.”

During the watering, passengers would dash to one of the six saloons to take on liquid, too. It took several minutes to fill the engine, and a “toot-toot” signaled an eight-minute warning to passengers to “get one for the road” and settle their bill.

Now we have the commemorative bronze plaque and some interesting memories of times past in Menlo Park.

We at the Menlo Park Historical Association have applauded the efforts of Dick Alvarez. The Association also helped Dick in his efforts and admired him, as did Caltrain, for his interest, ability and perseverance. Thanks to him, a part of the railroad, which has been a major part of Menlo Park history, will live on for generations through that dedicated bronze plaque on the northbound platform. Some of us may also smile at the memory of those dashes to our saloons.

We hope the work of Dick Alvarez will inspire others to help preserve the rich history of Menlo Park.

Note: Pictures for Dr. A.E. Blake story on page 3 are from a Tradition of New Horizons, City of Menlo Park, 1974.
Dr. A.E. Blake, Early Menlo Park Native

RECENTLY the MPHA received a letter from Harriet McGinley Webster, Altadena, Calif. Enclosed was a Redwood City Times Gazette article, November 4, 1927, that sheds more light on the history of Menlo Park. The article was in a closet of Harriet’s cousin, Margaret Duff, the granddaughter of Michael Duff, the owner of Duff and Doyle. The article speaks of a rather famous Menlo Park native, Dr. A.E. Blake, “the first white child born within the corporate limits of the proposed city of Menlo Park.

“Dr. A.E. Blake, candidate for trustee at the election to be held on Nov. 15, was the first white child born within the corporate limits of the proposed city of Menlo Park, passing his childhood here. He was a relative of the late Robert C. Johnson, whose vast domain contains a portion of Menlo Park. Back in 1852 there arrived in Menlo Park, two young Irishmen, Oliver and McGlynn. They purchased a vast tract of land extending from the San Franciscoo creek (sic) to Valparaiso avenue (sic) and running back beyond Holy Cross cemetery (sic). They constructed two imposing gates on the state highway in 1854, that were the admiration of the traveler. On these gates was the Inscription “Menlo Park 1854.” The big estate was named Menlo Park, after the estate of the two men in Ireland, close to the hills of Tara, called Menlo Park, and from this the town received its name. In 1859 General George C. Johnson came here and bought the property from Oliver and McGlynn. Johnson was a Norwegian who made a fortune in shipping supplies and material up the Sacramento river (sic) to the mining camps. He afterwards engaged in the steel and iron business in San Francisco. For years he was the Norwegian consul at San Francisco.

Mrs. Blake was a niece (sic) of the consul’s wife and lived here with her aunt.

“She was strikingly beautiful and in due time was married to Dr. Charles Blake, Sr. In the cosy home a quarter of a mile back from the gates that was a show place in these by-gone days the candidate for trustee was born and romped about the big farm then covered with live oaks and a growth of chaparal (sic). Times without number his proud mother carried him in her arms through these gates and to the dwelling wrecked when Camp Fremont was established here. At the death of the general his son, Robert C. Johnson, came into the possession of the broad acres that at one time was the envy of the late Senator Stanford who wanted to erect his big university there.

“The candidate for trustee in early life went to college and became a dentist, later becoming a physician and surgeon and thirty years ago practiced in Menlo Park, his birthplace. Dr. Blake now lives in a cozy home, only a few hundred yards from the place in which he first saw the light. His mother, who spent her girlhood here is still living and resides in Berkeley and is 86 years old. Dr. Blake is a dignified, cultured gentleman who desires (sic) well at the hands of the electorate of Menlo Park, where he and his family have been identified since 1859. It would be a fitting honor to make him the first mayor of the new municipality.”
Two Book Reviews: Pillars & Portola Valley

FRANK HELFRICH, who has submitted all but the membership appeal article, also submitted the notice of the impending arrival of a wonderful book about Portola Valley, expected in early April of 2003 and a press release on a book about Cypress Lawn, a copy of which is in the MPHA History Room.

PILLARS OF THE PAST AT REST AT CYPRESS LAWN MEMORIAL PARK, by Michael Svanek and Shirley Burgett, who wrote a book in 1992 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Cypress Lawn, and also the co-authors of our book, MENLO PARK, BEYOND THE GATE, were commissioned to write this book. The book is comprised of 78 brief biographical sketches of the families and personalities from San Francisco's colorful past interred at Cypress Lawn.

Included in the stories of those interred at Cypress Lawn are many names familiar to Peninsulans and Menlo Park. Familiar names like Hearst of newspapers, Matson of Matson Lines, Spreckels of sugar fame, Flood of silver are some of the very recognizable names presented in the stories of Cypress Lawn.

Also, William H. Hanson, who erected a 132 foot flagpole in front of the San Mateo County Hall in Redwood City after the earthquake and Andrew S. Hallidie, who developed and tested the first San Francisco cable car on the Clay Street hill between Jones and Kearney are there too. Gertrude Atherton, author, and member of the famous Atherton family is the only member of her family to be interred there.

More recent familiar names are the legendary "Lefty" O'Doul of San Francisco Seals fame and his owner Paul Fagan. Dixieland Jazz fans, of course, will remember Turk Murphy and his trombone of Earthquake Magoon's.

These and hundreds of others are featured in this wonderful book that honors our Bay Area history.
Another book, LIFE ON THE SAN ANDREAS FAULT, A HISTORY OF PORTOLA VALLEY, by Nancy Lund and Pamela Gullard has more than a hundred archival pictures and contemporary photographs by Susan Thoms, Sheldon “Woody” Woodard, Ken Gardiner and others. It also includes paintings by Jane Gallagher, Herb Dangler and Patricia Akay.

“This valley was not always so peaceful. It has a rich history, of struggle, ambition, almost superhuman effort, of triumph and failure, conflict, and determined idealism that went into the town we know today. For over two hundred years, this rugged, fertile valley, plagued by earthquake and drought, has attracted colorful people with high hopes, who could live with uncertainty. Since the eighteenth century, idealists and scoundrels, schemers and inventors have made and lost fortunes, and then picked themselves up and started over. Real estate and water rights have been traded furiously, whether through legitimate sales, sweet talk, swindles, or legal wrangling.”

Included in this book are fascinating characters who have shaped Portola Valley. For example, Maximo Martinez, who 160 years ago owned all of Portola Valley (more than 13,000 acres) was the founder of a small dynasty here, but yet he could not write his own name.

Many locals will warmly smile when they learn about Mary Ann Stanton, who for 70 years owned the roadhouse known today as Zot’s. Zot’s has always had colorful bartenders.

Bridget Doyle was a widow who donated her life savings for the bells of Our Lady of the Wayside Church, but she did not live to hear them ring.

These and many other rich stories of Portola Valley’s heritage will be found in this beautiful book to be priced at $60 apiece, unless one orders before February 1, 2003. Then it will be $50. Check with the Friends of the Library, Cultural Arts Committee, 765 Portola Valley Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028.
TIME DATED MATERIAL
Deliver before Jan. 10, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Memberships (per person)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>$ 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer-Founder</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life – one time fee only</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Memberships</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$ 25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patron/Sponsor</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P.O. Box 1002
Menlo Park, CA 94026-1002
Phone: 650/ 858-3368