

Meet the famous owner of Green Valley Country Club

By Nancy Dingler

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Have you ever noticed how many great public buildings started out as magnificent homes before their conversion?

Such a building is the current Green Valley Country Club. The house was originally built by James Harbin on 130 acres that he had homesteaded. However, in my research, the most interesting owner of the home was the man who took possession of the property in 1864. Granville Swift was larger than life. He was well-known as a hunter, explorer, rebel and gold seeker, whose death was less than heroic.

Granville Swift came from Missouri to California in 1843 on a wagon train destined for Oregon, with a group of his neighbors, many who settled in the Napa and Berryessa valleys. Ruggedly handsome, Granville was the grandnephew of Daniel Boone and could shoot and reload his rifle faster than anyone.

His ability and reputation for gun handling landed him a job working for John A Sutter as a hunter in 1845. Granville went hunting with his old friend from Missouri, Frank Sears (Sears Point). The two hunted along Cache Creek all the way to the Sacramento River. Many times, he and Frank spent the night in tops of trees to escape attack by bears or Indians.

By 1846, the political climate in California was changing. The newly appointed Mexican military governor, Jose Castro, had notices posted in April of that year, proclaiming that the emigrants (Americans) had to leave California within 40 days "without their arms, horses, stock, or goods they had brought and nullifying any land they had obtained."

Granville met at the "Old Moon's Inn with several other like-minded men to discuss what could be done. John C. Fremont was officially in California on a "topography" expedition. What Castro and the Americans believed, was that Fremont was in California to obtain the territory for the United States government, with prominent backing by his father-in-law, Senator Thomas Benton. The upshot of the meeting at the Inn, was to contact Fremont with their plan.

In June, Granville joined the men under Ezekiel Merritt to seize Mexican government horses from Lts. Arce and Alviso at Cosumnes, then deliver the 250 head to Fremont's

camp before joining others on their assault on Sonoma and the capture of General Vallejo June 14, 1846.

Henry L. Ford was made military commander of the Bear Flag revolt. In his capacity as commander he sent two men, Cowie and Fowler to the Fitch ranch to obtain a keg of powder from Moses Carson. When Cowie and Fowler failed to return, Commander Ford sent Sam Gibson and some others to find them.

Gibson and his group captured Blas Angelina and "three or four fingered Jack" Garcia, who revealed the torture, mutilation and death of Cowie and Fowler at the hands of the Padillo Carrillo gang. When the rest of the Bear Flaggers learned of Cowie and Fowler's deaths, plus the capture of two more of their members, they were angry and vengeful.

Granville was among the 23 who went after the gang and to rescue William L. Todd and "English" Jack. Commander Ford's group met up with the Padillo-Carrillo gang near Sonoma at a place named Olompali. This was the only battle during the Bear Flag revolt. According to stories told by those present, anywhere from two to 11 Mexicans were killed. "English" Jack was killed, but William Todd was rescued.

Granville participated in several other small skirmishes and accompanied Fremont on a terrible trek from Sonoma to Los Angeles during the months of December and January when the weather is less than ideal. They suffered from exposure, dysentery, lack of food, and loss of mounts, but managed to arrive in Los Angeles by January 13-14, 1847 for the signing of the Treaty of Cahuenga, which turned California over to the U.S. During his stint with Ford and then Fremont, Granville was promoted to Captain of "D" company.

Granville returned to his corral near Cache Creek where he and Sears had established a home base. The next year, 1848 gold was rumored to be found for the "picking" on the Feather River. Frank and Granville took their Indian helpers to find their fortune. The two young men took out over a half million dollars in gold during 1848-49. It was said, that Granville could smell gold.

A year later, Granville and Frank bought the cattle and brand of the Larkin Children's ranch from John S. Williams, majordomo there. In 1849, Granville returned to Missouri to bring nine brothers and sisters and his father to California. They arrived safely in 1850. By 1851, Granville had become county treasurer for Monroeville in Tehama County.

Granville, a very handsome and wealthy man, was considered quite a catch. He courted General Vallejo's daughter, Josefa who found him too much of a

backwoodsman for her. Eliza Jane Tate, of Kentucky heritage consented to be his bride. He built her Telemec Hall, a three-story mansion with marble fireplaces and gold faucets in the bath, enclosed gardens and a cupola of Swiss glass.

Unfortunately, Granville was lavish, and generous to a fault. His bride also spent money lavishly. He and Eliza became part of the crowd in San Francisco and socialized with the Nob Hill residents who encouraged Granville to invest in speculative gold and silver mines. Granville lost his shirt and had to begin liquidating his assets, including Telemec Hall. He acquired the Harbin homestead in Green Valley, deeding the property to his sister Mary. The marriage must have already been in trouble. In 1869, Eliza sued for divorce.

Granville went on after the dissolution of his marriage and loss of fortune, to attempt to found another fortune. He acquired 2,000 acres between Berryessa valley and Knoxville for quicksilver mining. On April 21, 1875, on a steep and rocky path, his mule stumbled and Granville fell to his death, ending what certainly had been a remarkable life.

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