

Township of Tremont never really took off

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In 1855, the northeastern portion of Solano County was designated a township by the Board of Supervisors. This township, called Tremont, was adjacent to the Silveyville Township.

In an 1860 census, there were 83 farmers listed in the township: Seven farm families grew wheat, several grew market gardens and about half operated dairy farms. There was also a scattering of sheep and cattle herds.

The area had a mixed population, but the majority were of German descent.

People hailed from Prussia, Germany, Ireland, the New England states, Virginia, Maryland and Tennessee. One fruit grower was from New York. A sheep herder from Canada. A mechanic from New Hampshire. A man who had a warehouse business was from Missouri.

Tremont is variously referred to in old records as "Tremont" and "Fremont." Speculation among some historians it was meant to be "Fremont," and either it was mispronounced or, because spellings were often a matter of interpretation, it became "Tremont."

Major shopping and business were conducted in Davisville or Sacramento; the latter usually meant an overnight trip.

The Sacramento River was crossed by ferry. Tule Jack operated the only ferry boat and many speculated he made \$200 a day at times.

Davisville provided a trading area for the farmers to barter their eggs and butter for groceries.

Though most farms were self-sufficient, there was also a meat wagon and vegetable wagon that made the rounds. When the bills were paid, the children received a bag of candy from the traveling vendors.

A proper town never developed within the Tremont Township, but there were a few of

the necessities: A church.

The post office-store combination occupied the downstairs portion the Solano House, a building across the fence from a fruit orchard.

The one-room school was located upstairs. Students ranged from age 6 to 18. Heated rocks and water bottles kept the students warm in the winter.

The King School was located in the southern area of the township. Reverend King was the minister of the Baptist church in Silveyville. A third school, the Tremont School, was located between the other two schools, but was actually in the Silveyville Township.

School attendance varied according to the season and labor needed on the farms.

When not going to school or tending to farm chores, the youths organized baseball games in pastures. Horse racing was another favorite sport with the young.

Adult recreation was mainly in competitive rounds of horseshoe pitching. Everyone enjoyed sing-a-longs that happened spontaneously whenever friends gathered and a piano was nearby.

Most of the history that remains about Tremont revolves around its church. Now a historical landmark, it is nearing its 125th anniversary.

The fact that this church is still in place is due to the Tremont Mite Society, an organization that dates back to the church's beginnings.

The first congregation in the area was organized in 1861 in Silveyville. Worshipers in Tremont went by horse and buggy for these services, a good 10 miles away.

The very first Sabbath gathering was in the sitting room of Elijah Silvey's hotel. Eventually a proper church was built in Silveyville and was jointly used by the Baptists and Presbyterians.

In 1863, the women of Tremont organized the Tremont Mite Society for the purpose of building a church closer to home. The "mite" being a 50-cent contribution each family periodically donated toward a building fund.

The society took its name from the biblical writings of Mark about a widow who cast her "mite," the smallest coin mentioned in the bible, into the collection box and was praised by Jesus for giving all she had.

Toward the late 1860s, the Presbyterian interest in the Silveyville church was purchased by the Baptists for \$700.

From that point on, the Tremont residents met in the old Tremont Hall until their church was built.

Cornelia Jane Saunders came to California in 1853 and married S. Fred Hyde in San Jose in 1855. The couple moved to Tremont where a farm was homesteaded.

Jane Hyde was the first president of the Tremont Mite Society.

She and her husband deeded 2 acres of land for the church and cemetery. Building materials were brought up by wagon from Maine Prairie, where schooners sailed up the Cache Slough bringing in lumber and other necessities.

Much of the actual labor in constructing the church was volunteer. The pulpit was built by the Gordon brothers and Judge and Justice of the Peace Cloutman.

The Gordon brothers were also responsible for most of the inside woodwork. Some items of furniture for the church were bought, some hand constructed and others donated by Hale's and Breuners' stores in Sacramento.

The church, this dream of several years, was dedicated April 25, 1871, as the Westminister Church, a Presbyterian church. The white frame building was in the Dutch Renaissance style.

The first services were conducted by traveling pastors. Eventually Reverend Fairbairn became the church's in-house minister.

The ladies of the mite society had eventually collected \$600 and added to that the \$700 from the Silveyville deal. But it wasn't quite enough, so the Tremont Mite Society continued on as a fund-raising organization.

Even after the building debt was paid off, the group continued to see to the upkeep of the church and periodically raise funds for that purpose.

The Hydes were a prominent Tremont family. The first community hall was built on Fred Hyde's land, which was used for programs, local theater and dances.

The town didn't lack for musicians. There was a violinist, guitarist and an accordion player.

Jane Hyde's brother-in-law was Jonathan Hyde. In 1871, he was elected justice of the peace for the Tremont Township, an office he continued to fill until his death in 1890.

Jonathan Hyde was also a notary public and instrumental in establishing the first school district in Tremont.

Another well-known Tremont resident was Betsy Ann Judd, who was born in 1835 in Ohio.

In 1855, she came out West with her married sister, Amanda Wire, her infant son, Franklin Wire Jr., and a brother-in-law. The family group met up with Amanda's husband and all settled in the Tremont.

The highlight of Betsy's social life, as a single girl, was the dances at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento.

Betsy married Bartlett J. Guthrie. Guthrie had journeyed to California and settled on a tract of the Vaca-Pena Los Putos grant in 1855.

By the time he married Betsy in 1856, Guthrie had a land holding of 700 acres. He built a large home for his bride, but there was some problem with boundary lines. Some adjustments were made, and he was forced to move the home about a mile.

By 1884, Bartlett and Betsy had increased their holding to 872 acres on which they raised cattle. The couple had no children of their own, but they raised three orphans; two nephews, including Franklin Benjamin Wire Jr. and one other boy.

Though hard-working farm people, the Guthries, like their neighbors, had a rounded social life. There was the theater in Sacramento and dances at the hotels in Broderick and Silveyville and Mr. Davis' hotel in Davisville.

As time went on, Betsy became known throughout the community as "Aunt Betsy" or "Auntie Guthrie."

The Guthrie home was a favorite stopover place for traveling preachers. Though a Methodist, she was made an honorary member of the mite society.

One of her favorite remembrances was of the night she opened her door to find Mr. Morales asking for shelter for the night for himself and his intended. Naturally, shelter was provided. Only later did Aunt Betsy learn that the young woman was one of Gen. Vallejo's daughters and was eloping with a man her father did not approve of for his daughter.

When Betsy's husband, Bartlet, died, her nephew, Franklin Wire Jr., came to live with her and help her with the farm.

Aunt Betsy lived to be 106 or 107. Once asked her secret to a long life, she said: "I say what I think, I have never smoked or had a drink in my life and I never get nervous over anything or fret."

The population of Tremont grew in the 1860s and these early settlers tell us something about the pioneer spirit. The Grieve family was one such family.

Mrs. Greive was born in Exeter, England. When she was a young girl, her family moved to Canada where she eventually married.

In 1864, with a family of nine boys and three girls, the couple crossed the Plains and settled in Tremont. Their son, George Washington, was 11 years old at the time.

George married in 1876 and managed to accumulate a small fortune. Then in 1902, at age 50, he died of appendicitis. Even though all medical help was given him and no expense spared, there was nothing to save him.

In 1865, Jonathan Sikes homesteaded 160 acres in Tremont. Ten years later he married a local widow who had two children.

Andrew Maxwell, a native of Dumfriesssbire, Scotland, drove a herd of cattle across the Plains for his brother-in-law and then spent five years panning for gold.

In 1865, Maxwell arrived in Tremont, taking up on 160 acres. He added to his property until he owned 640 acres by 1873, the time of his death.

It was then that his son, John Maxwell, not yet quite 15, took up managing this property. He continued in general farming and raising sheep and stock, having from 150 to 200 head of stock.

John Maxwell added to the property until he owned 800 acres, 500 given to the cultivation of barley, a principal crop in the Tremont Township.

The Maxwells had the best library in the community. They were also known for holding parties and dances.

Another early settler of Tremont was Johann H. Stick. Being displeased with his stepmother, young Johann left his native Germany and set sail for San Francisco in 1851. There he jumped ship, even though that meant forgoing his pay as a crew

member.

It was standard practice during the Gold Rush for captains to withhold the crews' pay until they left the San Francisco harbor so as not to lose their crews to the gold fields.

Johann, on foot and without money or command of the language, made his way to Hayward and then Sacramento doing odd jobs. For several years he worked on a farm in Yolo County and then, in 1865, he married and purchased property in Tremont.

It was John Stick, formerly Johann, who sent his nephew by marriage the money to come to America.

It was 1873 and the German nephew, Jochim Jahn, was 20 years of age and about to be drafted into Kaiser's army from which few survived.

Money in hand, Jochim and a friend set out for California. Once in San Francisco they took a train to Tremont.

Though Tremont was not a scheduled stop, the conductor slowed the train just enough for the two fellows to jump off, tossing their foot lockers down first. Jochim became an American citizen, bought a farm and raised grain, as did his Uncle John.

The Foster farm was one of the most noted in Tremont. It is word-of-mouth history that Manuel Vaca was buried on the Foster place.

In 1853, George Foster joined one of the many wagon trains heading West. In 1856, he bought 160 acres in Tremont at \$1.25 an acre. In 1860, he married a woman who lived in Santa Rosa.

When the railroad was established in 1869, George Foster donated 3 acres and built a depot-warehouse known as Foster's Station. It was later renamed Tremont Station. Trains stopped only if a flag was put out.

Grain was stored in the warehouse freighted out. Eggs and produce were sent to San Francisco. San Francisco's Chinatown merchants often received gunny sacks filled with Tremont rabbits. Local youths received a dollar a sack for their hunting efforts.

In 1871, Foster added a general merchandise store at the station, but his farming and warehouse duties took up so much time, he was unable to keep the store going and it closed.

The last regular service at the Tremont Church was in 1912. Now it is only open for the

occasional service, wedding or funeral.

The Tremont Mite Society is still active and holds regular meetings and raises funds to see that its beloved church and cemetery are kept up. Many descendants of those early-day pioneers are members of this active organization.

The Tremont Church and cemetery can be reached by taking Pedrick Road off Interstate 80, following Sparling east and taking a right on Tremont Road. The church is on the south side of Tremont Road a few miles from I-80.

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