

Early History of Richmond

By Evan Griffins

For some time I have been prevailed upon to write some of my recollections of the early settlers of this community, their habits, handicaps and other adversities which they endured.

In the early days this was known as the San Pablo Valley in which were the towns of San Pablo, Gallagher, and the Potrero, on which Standard Oil now occupies a part and the Point Richmond section of our present city occupies another part. [Editor's Note: When Mr. Griffins speaks about the Potrero, he is referring to the area around the short range of hills that runs north and south through the Pt. Richmond area, plus the adjacent land.]

The Potrero was by nature an island but the soil washed down from the hills and assisted by the efforts of Dr. Tewksbury finally became a peninsula so that by 1874 it was accessible at all seasons of the year. Prior to that time it was impossible to reach these hills in winter months. The floodwaters of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and their tributaries apparently had a course of their own which ran close to the shore, being diverted by Point San Pablo. Their waters over ran the marshland, thereby causing an inland lake which did not recede sufficiently until March and April to make team traffic possible.

This flood condition prevailed to a far greater extent from Stockton to Antioch where it was likely to occur as late as the month of June. In May 1886, I saw the whole area inundated, but diking of the rivers and dredging for the improvement of Mare Island navy yard evidently produced a different channel, for after that these parts were not affected by the overflow. The water carrying sand and other debris aided this transformation to the Potrero to such an extent that in 1872 the government was asked to declare it a peninsula. Hence the Potrero became part of the San Pablo Rancho which was a Tewksbury move.

At that time there was a dwelling about where the Standard Oil Barrel house now stands. It was lived in by James Fennon, who used the northern portion of this Potrero for cattle and sheep raising, disposing of it by selling meat to the farmers during the summer months. The land between this house and what is now Washington Avenue was farmed by Peter Davis whose house was at the head of a canyon that runs up from the neighborhood of the Standard Oil administration buildings. The portion south of Washington Avenue was used for farming.

At one time the Morgan Oyster Company operated an oyster bed on a shoal extending from this section at a point just opposite to where the Ford plant now stands.

One projection of this Potrero was Point Richmond, so named by the government engineers in 1852; how the name originated there is no definite information but nevertheless it supplied the name for this city.

Sheep Island, known now as Brooks Island remains in my memory as a place of horror, so remote and so lonely, used only for sheep grazing with no contact with the main land. We were always told about a mother in sheer agony of loneliness decapitating her own child and throwing her down a well so she would escape a life on this island.

The shell mound was an old Indian burial ground situated on a marsh east of the Ellis Landing or where the municipal warehouse now stands. The University of California has published a book on the shell mounds which describes the relics of the past. A great many of them can be seen in the Museum at Golden Gate Park. [Editor's Note: The Ellis Landing shell mound was about 20 feet high and 170 feet across.]

The Ellis Landing was a very important place as it afforded transportation for freight to San Francisco. Hay, grain, poultry and eggs found ready market there. The produce was carried on hay schooners operated by Captains George Ellis and James Smith.

The lone hills in this Valley took their names from their owners: the one on the south side of Cutting Boulevard was known as Wood and Seaver Hill, the one at the county line was called the Charles McKeever's Hill, and the one now known as the Best Hill was the Boyd Hill. The Pullman shop occupies part of the Wood ranch. Mr. Wood arrived here via the covered wagon. He died in the early seventies and Mrs. Wood married Benjamin Boorman, after which the ranch became known as the Boorman place.

[Editor's note: McKeever's Hill is now called Albany Hill.]

W. P. Coleman, who was president of the vigilance committee of San Francisco was the original owner of the Stege Ranch. This place was always known as the Quilfeldt Ranch as they operated it. I did not know until the final settlement of the San Pablo rancho that Mr. Coleman retained any title to this property. I do not know what arrangement existed between Coleman and Quilfeldt but it was always referred to as the Quilfeldt place and later as the Stege Ranch. Some years after the death of Mr. Quilfeldt, his widow married Richard Stege, a restaurant man from San Francisco. Under Mr. Stege's management this became one of the show places in this section. His idea was to raise frogs for market. The gardens had large lawns banked by all varieties of flowers and huge trees. There were four artificial frog ponds on the grounds, which totaled between three and four acres in area. Those ponds were stocked with California red legged frog and the American bull-frog. While the business was never very profitable, the ponds were most artistic. [Editor's Note: It seems to have been a very common belief that Mr. Coleman owned the Quilfeldt Ranch. However, property records show that Minna C. C. Quilfeldt purchased the land directly from Victor Castro in two separate transactions dated 1852 and 1853.]

There was a boat landing on the Stege Ranch about where the Cap Factory now stands which was operated by a Captain King, whose career ended in a mystery. He took his schooner as usual in the spring to a dry dock in San Francisco, went ashore with \$600.00 and was never heard of nor seen again.

The Walls Harbor Center tract was owned by Thomas D. Young, a resident of Oakland and one of the first engineers on the 7th Street Oakland trains.

The adjoining property was owned by my father Owen Griffins. He sold one half to Chas. Mayborn, who later sold it to C. L. Watrous, who married my sister, Betsy. This section is known as the Griffins-Watrous tract. The next place was purchased by L. D. Reynolds, who later sold it to John R. Nystrom, who married my sister, Mary. The Nystrom holdings were among the first subdivisions of the San Pablo Rancho. The above three parcels of land were the first Tewksbury sale conveyed to W. Fleming by a specified bargain and sale meets and bounds deed which guaranteed to the purchaser that described land at that specified area. [Editor's Note: A "meets and bounds deed" describes a piece of land in terms of fixed points (i.e. a creek, an iron post, a prominent landmark) combined with distances (feet, chains, rods) and compass bearings.]

The Nicholl Ranch was divided into two parts by Macdonald Avenue, the southern portion extending from Macdonald Avenue to a point just north of Ohio Street and from 23rd to 34th Street, in which Metropolitan square, the Nicholl home reservation and Nicholl Park are located. The northern section extended from Macdonald Avenue to what is Gaynor, easterly to 34th Street south to Grant west to 30th, then south to Macdonald Avenue. 23rd Street was the west line of both sections. This tract is now the Nicholl Macdonald tract. 30th Street was a road leading from MacDonalD Avenue to Grant, branching at 34th and Grant, one of which continued into the Boyd Ranch, the other going 34th and after various turns finally connected with San Pablo Avenue at the old San Pablo School site. [Editor's note: The old San Pablo School was built in 1852 on San Pablo Avenue a bit north of McBryde, where Natalie Court is today.]

East of 30th Street between Macdonald Avenue and Grant Street, extending east to include Mira Vista was the John Davis Ranch. The Mira Vista Section was considered worthless, used only for pasture.

There was a four hundred acre tract between the Wood and Seaver holdings and the Stege ranch facing on the present site of Macdonald Avenue. It extended to the bay and was in the possession of John Nicholl, but was claimed by Dr. Tewksbury. It was known as the Morgan ranch. The house was on Potrero Avenue near the Southern Pacific tracks and was kept tenanted by Nicholl. This resulted in a long and famous lawsuit which was concluded by Tewksbury winning the case. The southeastern part of the Stege Ranch was sold in 1868 or 1869 to H. H. Rockfellow. It was acquired by George W. Haight in 1886, who was an attorney at law in San Francisco. He was also a nephew of ex-Governor Haight who served in the early days of California statehood.

The town of Gallagher derived its name from the Right Reverend Father Gallagher; a very influential priest in San Francisco who owned the property on the north side of Fairmont Avenue facing San Pablo Avenue and extended eastward to include part of what is now Sunset View Cemetery. On this ranch, his sister, Mrs. McAvoy, raised her large family. The house still stands to the left of Fairmount Avenue near the cemetery lines.

Rancho San Pablo at the county line was the home of Victor Castro in my day. He was the brother of Mrs. Juan B. Alvarado.

The property north of Fink Lane was owned by John and William Galvin, Captain James Gill, and Meyhew. Mrs. Gill was Meyhew's daughter.

The land north of Mira Vista to the San Pablo Dam Road was all in possession of Tewksbury. My readers may think from the frequent mention of the name Tewksbury that he was the largest owner in the San Pablo Rancho. This, however, was not the case. He acquired the Joaquin Y. Castro interest which, according to deed of partition, was one-eighth of the said rancho. In the final settlement this one-eighth was reduced to one twenty-second.

What is now the Richmond Farm Creamery or the Scow place was owned by Colonel May whose house was far above the present Skow dairy house. The road leading to it is still in evidence. I was brought up in the belief that he was a Colonel in the confederate army, consequently a southern sympathizer, hence the isolation. [Editor's Note: The Skow Dairy was located above the intersection of today's Clark Road and Wesley Way in El Sobrante. This is just a bit beyond the intersection of San Pablo Dam Road and Appian Way.]

Across the San Pablo Creek from the Tewksbury holding were the homes of Weber, Wolf, Franks and Herman, now the J. J. Jerome intended amusement park site. On the left hand of San Pablo Avenue, going toward Pinole were the Quaylia, Machado, White, Rumrill, Reposo, Goodale and Henry Benson ranches. The most important of all these places was the Rumrill home, as it was there people were in the habit of going, seeking Mr. Rumrill's advice and to enjoy the wonderful hospitality of himself and his admirable wife. I recall many happy visits as a young man with his congenial family.

The Andrade tract was owned by men whom I knew as Manuel Garcia, Antone P. Silva and Manuel Aguair. The section north of the Barrett home place was owned by McGan, Porero and Lucas. John Perez bought the Porero property, Mrs. Lucas was a daughter of Porero. Most of these holdings are now in the Turpin addition. North Richmond was known as the Charles Shimmens place. Another holding in this locality was the Guitierrez Ranch (I cannot vouch for the spelling of this name.)

The Meeker tract on the South side of town was originally owned by Tewksbury, as was the property on which the Santa Fe shops now stand. The City of Richmond tract west of 10th Street was the George Barrett place. The home stood where the Elks Building is now. East of 10th Street to 23rd Street was occupied by Jeb Whipple, afterward purchased by Barrett. His house was at 23rd and Barrett. [Editor's Note: The Elks building was at 10th & Macdonald in downtown Richmond.]

Joseph Emeric was the possessor of the tract that bears his name. His house and gardens were another show place in the vicinity. He was a great traveler and his gardens were filled with birds and animals of many species. The peacocks and deer created the most excitement. The Alvarado home is still in existence in the rear of the Belding store, in the town of San Pablo. I have a very vivid memory of this estimable family. One of the sons, the late Honorable Judge Henry V. Alvarado was a schoolmate of mine. His father, the Honorable Juan B. Alvarado was governor of California from 1832-1836. In connection with this family, I wish to express my appreciation and feeling for the late Judge, I regarded him during my early school days as a good, true and just friend, always ready to protect the younger scholars from the bullying of the older ones, who seemed to me to delight in seeing me become enraged and finally reduced to utter despair. My judgment was correct. Throughout his entire life he was in sympathy with the oppressed and a defender of right and just in his dealings with the world at large. He possessed the qualifications of which real judges are made. The word justice was not an unmeaning word on his lips; but the sentiment of his heart and the practice of his life. [Editor's Note: Juan B. Alvarado was governor of California from 1836-1837 and then again from 1838-1842, after a short period starting in 1837 when Carlos Antonio Carillo served as governor.]

Among other residents of San Pablo was T. J. Wright, who had a general merchandise store. Another, the Chesevich family, whose oldest girl, Anita is the widow of the late Judge H. V. Alvarado. Mrs. Masterson (nee Antone) ran the San Pablo Hotel. Bouquet ran the blacksmith shop, as did A. F. Dyer, who for many years was justice of the peace. Lizzie Bouquet married the late E. M. Downer. There was an old building at the junction of the San Pablo Dan road and San Pablo Avenue called the Berkshire house. The Protestant Church was about half way between the Wild Cat Creek and the Alvarado home in

the rear of which was the Protestant cemetery. My father and four brothers were among the many interred there. This cemetery was abandoned in the early 90's. In 1905, the church on the present site was erected.

I now come to the man who was the most conspicuous figure in the early affairs of the San Pablo Rancho. This man was Dr. Tewksbury. It seemed to be the Doctor's aim to acquire all the land he could possibly obtain and this rancho offered the best opportunity for such endeavors. I had heard so many conflicting reports regarding the character of this man that I was unable to form any opinion as to the category to which he belonged and it was not until 1884, that I received my first favorable impression of the man. I became acquainted with Dr. L. C. Lane, a most eminent surgeon of San Francisco, who later founded the Lane-Stanford Hospital. Dr. Lane intoned me that he first met Dr. Tewksbury in Buenos Aires and knew him to be a man of sterling qualities and a wonderful physician. He considered the medical profession lost a very valuable member when he gave up his practice and went into "land grabbing". Mrs. Tewksbury, a very excellent lady, was a native of Buenos Aires where she married the doctor. They had two children, Lucien and Jennie. Jennie married a Dr. Weir who was a doctor on a steamer that was running between San Francisco and Panama. He died after a few years and Jennie married a Mr. Mintzer. This accounts for the Mintzer name being associated with the affairs of the community. For the last several years Dr. Belgum has run a sanitarium on the old Mintzer home place in the hills beyond Grand Canyon Park. The old Tewksbury home was at the junction of San Pablo Avenue and San Pablo Dam Road.

I do not know how Dr. Tewksbury gained his titles before the Potrero was declared a peninsula but nevertheless he accomplished this coup and guarded his rights by keeping a watchman at the only entrance gate. He retained his title until the final settlement of the San Pablo Rancho. There was an area of marshland that was situated between the Potrero and the mainland that was declared to be state lands. Under the "Tide and Overflow Act", Dr. Tewksbury bought a portion of this extending the whole length of the Potrero. He became possessor of the great holdings that eventually would be of great value. The Standard Oil Company is now owner of a portion of this marshland.

I have been asked several times lately about a French colony. I do not recall any such settlement during my time. Some seem to think that it refers to two Frenchmen, who lived near the Tewksbury entrance gate, which was where the old road joined what is now Standard Avenue, but I think it relates to a settlement established by some early French adventurers on a flat piece of land near the present site of the Rod and Gun Club. I know that there were the remains of an orchard there. I am informed that there still is a grape vine in evidence. That no doubt was the site of the first school. An impression exists that the Jesuit Fathers attempted something at what is known as the shrimp camp, near Winehaven. This may be a fact, as Father Murasky had acquired large holdings in that vicinity. Another factor in the case of the French colony is that in 1857 a Mr. Aine, father of H. E. Aine, first superintendent of construction of the Standard Oil plant and grandfather of our own citizen, H. E. Aine at 431 Dimm Avenue, did locate on this Potrero at the site of the present brickyard. This could also be an explanation of the French colony. It can easily be seen that the Potrero being an island was government property, therefore open to pre-emption and homesteading rights, so it was on those conditions that Grandfather Aine acquired his property by squatter's title and set up a colony of people. In my own time the place was occupied by Beau Peere and the establishment of the brickyard was not in evidence until 1874.

The inception of the church and school of the French colony was before my time and I cannot offer more on the subject.

My first impression of churches was a meeting place where the godly repaired on Sunday dressed in their best clothes and sanctimonious faces to wrangle over the merits or demerits of the preacher and pour everlasting condemnation upon the native Californians who insisted on horse racing past their church.

At that time there were two factions in the church. The dissenters in the case were members of the church and the main cause for their dissention was that they did not consider the minister who occupied the pulpit a fit person for the position he held. One objection was that he smoked but being a retired seafaring man such a procedure was a matter of fact to him. The dissenters were defeated and the victors then decided to improve their church by adding a gallery to it. This proved to be their Waterloo. This gallery was an ideal place for the younger generation of male element for target practice, until the day when the preacher's eye stopped a wad of freshly masticated tobacco with the result that the church was discontinued. The Presbyterians effected an organization in 1875 and lasted until 1889. Dissention arose and the church was again disbanded. The Baptists finally took over the church and succeeded in their

efforts and so at this time we have a fine and credible institution which was known as the San Pablo Baptist Church. I mention the trouble in the churches to show the conditions with which the settlers had to contend, not only in churches but also the schools. As I grew older, I came to the conclusion that conditions were made intolerable by bigotry, conceit and pure cussedness by the factions that impeded progress.

The San Pablo School district included the territory from the County Line to San Pablo Bay and as far east as what is now known as San Pablo Dam, as well as what was then referred to as El Sobrante grant.

I cannot recall the exact date that the Catholic people decided to have a school of their own. This was consummated in the Seventies. This School building was erected near the manse on the property they owned which included the old Catholic Church which is still used. This school functioned for a few years and then the project was abandoned.

A little explanation in regard to El Sobrante might be advisable. At the close of the Mexican War in 1846, the United States acquired California by the terms of the treaty in which guaranteed to respect all legitimate Spanish or Mexican grants. Reference to this tract of land as El Sobrante grant is an error as there never was a Sobrante grant. Sobrante is a Spanish word meaning an un-granted tract of land intervening between two grants. [Editor's Note: Mr. Griffin's recollections are in general quite accurate and his suggestion that there was no Rancho El Sobrante is perhaps a matter of semantics. A "Rancho El Sobrante" did exist, as illustrated by the 1909 map of Rancho El Sobrante created by the courts to authoritatively define the owners and boundaries of the land in Rancho El Sobrante.]

As this tract was occupied and held by squatter's rights, it naturally brought on a controversy which clouded the title to be settled at Washington, D.C. in 1886. The Interior Department had no record of such a grant so they decided in favor of settlers who were required to prove up on their claims, pay the required fee, and were given deeds by the United States. The Standard Oil Tank farm is located within this tract.

I can recall the many weary hours that I was compelled to listen to my father and the neighbors argue over the school question as to whether the district was too large, whether the Catholics had any right to share in public money, about their religious convictions, the proper way to raise a family and the correct procedure to educate the rising generation, all according to their own immediate needs. It can be readily seen that this great difference of opinion would eventually lead to a demand for better school conditions by the more broad minded ones of the section. This resulted in the Sheldon School district being formed. This district was formed at the eastern end of the San Pablo school district beginning at what is known as Skow's ranch. The main issue of education was apparently overlooked and that was that some attention should be given to the education of the parents. For a long time there was no leader of these people. They must be made to realize that they owed a duty to the community in which they lived, that the education of their children must be their first consideration, as these children in a few years would have to face conditions in a different world than that in which they themselves then lived.

Some may think that the above statement and the subsequent assertion has no place in memoirs but when I recall conditions that existed sixty-five years ago and attempt to analyze such by the aid of observation and experience I can realize what a task it must have been to even attempt a transformation. This state of affairs was not wholly due to ignorance but to indifference, disappointments, and a desire for wealth.

Education was a secondary consideration. Children went to school when they were not needed at home. The parent seemed to think that the more that was produced within the family, the sooner that prosperity would arrive. It was the few who brought this community out of this unconcerned state. These people could be led, not driven, so as always happens, there appeared one who had been silently working for some time among these inhabitants, who slowly, but surely was raising them above their environment. This he accomplished by force of example, honesty of purpose and kind advice.

This man was Azro Rumrill.

He succeeded in improving our school system which today is second to none in California. That this condition does exist might be justly termed the lengthening shadow of this broadminded man. The foundation he succeeded in building is being carried on and advanced at this time by his son-in-law, our present Superintendent of Schools of this city, Walter T. Helms.

Mr. Rumrill was elected trustee of the district and one of his first moves was to establish a school at the county line called the Castro school. It was afterwards moved to the site of the St. John's church on San Pablo Avenue. This supplied a needed want in that part. Soon after this, another branch school was built a short distance beyond the office of the Standard Oil tank farm but on the opposite side of the road. The gum trees still mark the site. The late J. E. Rogers, for many years a county clerk of the county and later a senior member of the law firm of Rogers and Bray of Martinez, was one of the first teachers of that school.

My recollections of my early school years and the difficulties and crudeness which I endured has never been dimmed by the lapse of years. I was sent to school in the summer of 1869. Our school was the first unit of the school system. A part of the building still stands near San Pablo Avenue and is now used as a saloon. The seats were a long wooden bench on which sat ten or twelve boys or girls who were supposed to keep absolute silence. My first teacher, Miss Ida Walsh, saw that this order was kept. My first equipment consisted of a slate, pencil and a primer. No provision was made for the cleaning of the slate so we had to resort to primitive methods of wetting our fingers with our tongue but in my case that was not necessary as I shed enough tears to supply all the moisture that was needed due to the bullying by the older boys. The next year conditions improved and we had double desks. What caused my most minute embarrassment was the economic conditions of the community.

I have told how all the freight from San Francisco was carried here by the Ellis Landing schooners. The goods intended for the different ranchers had to have their initials marked on the freight. Most of the goods came in sturdy flax sacks and our supplies were designated by O.G. (Owen Griffins). Many of these sacks came around the horn or else from New Zealand. The New Zealand sacks came in a better grade of material so mother used them for various necessities, among which were blouses for me and in every case that O.G. came in the middle of my back. It was no use to object as it was a necessary economic measure and I suffered the humiliation. This torture was insignificant compared to a few years later, when my father, an ex-trustee who was extremely positive considered it his duty to visit the school and cross-examine the students in regard to their history and geography. If he considered the answer wrong even if it was right, he would try to correct the student, in which case the teacher would endeavor to correct him and this resulted in a very strong rebuttal. The first principal that I remember was H. S. Raven who took up horse raising at Walnut Creek. He was followed by H. C. Wilson who resigned before completing his fourth year. H. Tillotson followed and he also resigned to engage in mercantile business in San Pablo. Mrs. Vincent finished his term.

In 1877 Alfred Dixon was installed principal and I will always have an admiration for Mr. Rumrill's judgment in employing Mr. Dixon. Both these men realized that at the best these older students would have but a few years at school so that an effort must be made to give them the most essential things in a limited time.

When boys reached the age of sixteen and sometimes much less it seemed to be necessary that they assist in the maintenance of the family so that many of us were put to plow at the age of thirteen. I was one of those boys. Opportunities for learning a trade were nil. If by chance a boy did have a trade offered him, he was paid only \$2.00 per week which was not sufficient for his maintenance so that any money needed for his upkeep had to be provided by his parents. This condition prevailed also in the professional lines and in so many cases it was not financially possible to provide a livelihood. Another factor that contributed to these conditions was the shortage of men for manual labor.

When the first transcontinental railroad known as the Central Pacific between Oakland and Ogden was being built, labor was impossible to obtain. To get sufficient help the builders adopted the expedient of importing Chinese. This class of labor continued for what is now known as the Southern Pacific lines, so that soon we had a sizable Chinese population which upon completion of the railroad entered into other lines of business. This labor was chiefly as cooks in restaurants, hotels and homes as well as for manufacturing bricks and explosives.

By 1874 or thereabouts the Portuguese population began to increase. As far back as I can remember there were quite a number of these people here but they were landowners, who originally left whaling ships in the United States. Whaling was a very profitable industry in those days, the crew working on a percentage basis of the season's haul. A little explanation may be advisable on this. New Bedford and New London were the home ports for the whaling vessels, consequently the ships fitted out at these ports left with just enough men to work them until they reached the Azore Islands when they would secure a full crew. They would leave there, proceed around the Cape of Good Hope to the Asiatic coast and

follow the sperm whale northward reaching the Arctic circle for the winter and hunt for them for two or three years before returning home. Whale oil and whale bone were greatly in demand. The oil of the sperm whale was the most valuable as it was used for lighting purposes. Whale bone was used in many ways, the most common usage was for women's corsets and hoops for their skirts which I remember most distinctly.

I recall the introduction of kerosene to replace the whale oil in lighting. It was considered more dangerous than dynamite is today. If a lamp was lighted it must not in any case be moved and to use it in lanterns was certain suicide. Tallow candles were used in our bedrooms and kitchens.

Those men hired on a commission basis so that with a ready market, good prices, good luck and long voyages they had in most cases a handsome pay when discharged in the United States. San Francisco and New Bedford were favorite discharge ports so a great many of these men bought land and started most prosperous ranches in this section.

One peculiarity of these ex-whalers was that a majority of them wore small gold earrings. The reason for this I could never understand until I grew older and found out from my brother-in-law, Chas. L. Watrous (whose father owned and was a captain of a whaler) that a superstition existed that if a man wore earrings he would be saved from snow-blindness. The first thing a new recruit did on a whaler was to have his ears pierced by the captain, a silk thread run through the hole, turned every day until the wound healed and then insert a gold ring.

I was brought up to believe that this class of people was penurious but that was another grave mistake of the early settlers. These ex-whalers were very thrifty, never lived beyond their means and as their finances improved their living conditions kept pace with their purses. I once asked a butcher, who drove a meat wagon out from Berkeley twice a week, why he quit the service. His answer was when the Portuguese asked for porterhouse steaks he did not need to drive all that distance because he could sell that type of meat in his shop in Berkeley. By this time a great many of the early hardships had been overcome and luxuries were creeping in due to improved transportation facilities and a desire to keep pace with the spirit of the times. The increase of the Portuguese population was also due to a heavy immigration, which was a blessing to the farmers. They were good law-abiding people as thrifty and industrious as their predecessors and filled a long felt need during hay making and hay baling time.

The descendants of the early Californians (i.e. the early Spanish settlers) were excellent help in the grain harvest. They were past masters in the art of binding the reaped grain and could accomplish so much, as the grain pouring into the sacks was most appealing to them. Nevertheless the hay field did not tempt them and winter work did not interest them in the least. They had many annoying and peculiar habits, one of which that they never could be depended upon to show up on Monday mornings. As this type of labor grew scarce farm help was at a premium. Chinese were tried and failed. Other devices were resorted to but nothing settled the problem until the advent of the self-binding reaper.

I have often been asked why so much dampness is apparent on San Pablo Avenue at the county line. The land at that place is of a marshy nature consequently soft and very troublesome during winter months. I remember seeing Charles Shimmens (who was then road master) with ox-teams hauling huge rocks into this road, thereby forming a very substantial roadbed but there has always been seepage of water that causes dampness.

I was born on December 4, 1863. My old home is still in use after 82 years of service. It formerly stood at what is now 14th and Ohio Streets. It was moved to 15th and Florida Streets two years ago and remodeled. My most cherished memory is of the noble women of those early days, who under such adverse conditions, by determination and force of character overcame those obstacles and built better than they knew and succeeded in producing a very different environment. This community as it is today is a living monument to their courage and devotion.

There was one happening in October 1868 that will ever be fresh in my memory. That was the great earthquake. I was very young but the excitement was so intense that it left a very lasting impression. People were panic stricken running in every direction, but mostly to the hills, while stock ran bellowing toward the bay and I got a spanking for standing too near a chimney. This earthquake was not as severe as 1906 but of longer duration. The property damage was small as compared to 1906 and I do not recall any fatalities while in 1906 the financial estimate was at \$600,000,000 in San Francisco and the number of deaths was not or ever will be known,

I recall an incident related by my father which happened in New York in 1858 when he was returning to San Francisco from England. He went into the bank Drexel, Church and Sather where he was entrusted with a letter to be delivered to an attorney for the Sather Bank in San Francisco at the earliest moment on arrival. So precarious were the mails that they preferred to entrust a vital document to a stranger. This letter gave information that the New York bank was about to fail. This warning gave the San Francisco bank time to arrange their affairs so that they escaped a suspension. The Sather estate are the donors of Sather Gate and the Campanile at the University of California.

Another incident that I remember was in 1873, my father returned from a trip to San Francisco and told us that he had met W. C. Ralston who was then President of the Bank of California, who told him that he was intending to build a seven story building at the Corner of Montgomery and Market Streets. My father asked him if he had lost his mind, as the first big earthquake would level it to the ground. Mr. Ralston replied that perhaps it would but he would have the satisfaction of giving an opportunity to men to earn enough to buy food. This happened during the panic of 1873. Those men worked for \$1.00 per day. Ralston did not live to see the completion of the Palace Hotel and neither did my father live to see those walls still standing after the earthquake of 1906. It cost \$150,000 to tear down those walls. One of the biggest sights on a Saturday afternoon in San Francisco was when Mr. Ralston started down to his home on the peninsula driving his carriage and four. This home is known now as the Belmont Sanitarium.

We have lived in a great age. I can recall the ox-teams, faintly remember the first transcontinental trains, the wonderful trek of the lightning express which ran from Philadelphia to San Francisco in seven days in 1876, arriving July 4th, celebrating the 100th anniversary of independence of the United States.

My parents were three months en route from England to Australia and then three months from Australia to San Francisco; compare the above with the present-day airplane, telephone, telegraph, Diesel engines and Marconi system.

My first trip to San Francisco was from what is now known as 13th Avenue, East Oakland or Brooklyn as it was then called, the steamer terminal for the East Bay. This was afterward moved to 1st & Broadway and in 1868 the long wharf was built, and the trains ran on the present 7th Street tracks. The present Oakland mole replaced the long wharf in 1878 when trains began running on the present right-of-way through Richmond. The first Overland trains came through Niles in 1869 as the present railroad through Richmond was not built until 1876 and 1877. Operation became regular in 1878. We had one overland, one Los Angeles, and one Sacramento local train. These were first class trains and did not in any way compare with our present day locals. The second class took their chances in the smoking car. Those who could not afford this high price transportation traveled on what was called the emigrant train which was old passenger cars equipped with wooden seats attached to the rear end of a freight train, consequently very slow. As boys, we used to jump on and off anywhere we took a notion. This train took about 21 days to New York, the other, 10 days and about 24 hours to Los Angeles. Railroad transportation did not function to Portland until the middle of the 1880's.

FINALE

Now, my friends, the time has come when I deem it advisable to bring these memoirs to a close. If there are any details that I have omitted, please consider such as being errors of the head rather than the heart and let them rest in oblivion unless someone by chance may recall some incident to which I might be an enlightening agent. It is my intention that this should be of an historical nature, so I have purposely omitted as much biography as I could for two reasons: (1) Biographical details are hard going and would not in any case add to what I wanted to relate and would be better served in an independent article; and (2) I believe that details are being written up by other persons who have devoted much time and thought in gathering data of the early settlers. I understand these articles are for the Richmond Public Library so I am going to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the honor thus conferred upon me. When undertakings of an educational nature are attempted in a community, I consider it an honor to be invited to contribute even my poor best, and I hope all interested will accept my heartfelt thanks for being worthy of that consideration.

I wish at this time to express my appreciation for the assistance rendered me in this production by Mrs. J. H. Rumrill, who impressed me as to the necessity of such an article; to my two daughters, Miss Virginia C. Griffins and Mrs. Ethel G. Kerns for the present designation of the different tracts of land which I

have described, and suggestions and advice which have been of great assistance; to Miss Maude Wood for typewriting and to the Contra Costa County Development Association for mimeographing my paper; and to Mr. J. H. Rumrill who has supplied information in various ways that has served to refresh my memory to the extent that this undertaking was made possible. Again I wish to emphasize that should anyone at any time wish any further details, I will only be too glad to supply the information.

Your obedient and faithful servant,
Evan Griffins
1321 Pennsylvania Street
Richmond, California

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