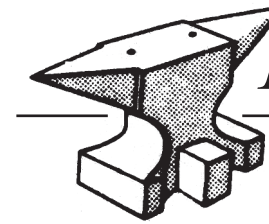


about to replace the stages as the main mode of transportation. F. J. Mette is listed as a “Stage Driver” in the San Francisco 1860 Census but by 1868 he is a New York Life Insurance Agent. The “Red House,” where the first stages stopped to refresh horses and give passengers a chance to stretch or get something to eat/drink, remained as a well-known landmark at the southwest corner of San Pablo Avenue and Central for many years after its stage experience.

Sources:

- History of Contra Costa County California, 1882, San Francisco, W. A. Slocum, page 387
- Daily Alta California - May 18, 1855
- Census Records, 1852-1940
- <http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/vitals/sfbirma.htm>
- Voter Registrations - 1868-1872
- Christine Jeffords, “Here She Comes! The Stagecoach”: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=25449
- San Francisco Bay Ferryboats - Bridging the Bay With Our Ferries, Collected by Joe Thompson, Home/Yesterday/Today/Tomorrow/ News/Links/Bibliography/What’s New. This article appeared in the March, 1921 Southern Pacific Bulletin, an employee publication. This edition was identified on the cover as the “Steamer Division Number.”
- Full text of “History of Contra Costa County, California; with ...” 1926 https://archive.org/stream/historyofcontra00munr/historyofcontra00munr_djvu.txt
- A Golden State, Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California, Editors James J. Rawls and Richard J. Orsi, University of California Press, Berkeley · Los Angeles · Oxford, © 1999 The Regents of the University of California
- The Origins of Bay Area Transportation, or Do You Know the Way to San Jose? Historical Essay by Robert F. Oaks, originally published in The Argonaut Vol. 14, No. 1



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The Forge

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***Native People of El Cerrito
Past, Present, and Future
7 PM Thursday, March 15
El Cerrito Community Center
7007 Moeser Lane***

At our next meeting East Bay Regional Park District cultural services coordinator Beverly R. Ortiz, Ph.D., will present an overview of the culture and history of the Huchiun, an Ohlone-speaking tribe in what is now known as El Cerrito. This will be a journey spanning thousands of years and end with a summary of the contemporary cultural involvement of today’s Ohlones. You are sure to enjoy this event and learn a lot. The event is free and light refreshments will be served.

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a volunteer, non-political, non-profit corporation that has as its purpose the preservation and appreciation of the history of El Cerrito. It does this by providing educational and research opportunities; by collecting of historic photographs, documents, artifacts and cultural objects; by advocating for the preservation of historic resources in the city; and by encouraging others to help further these aims. Anyone may join; dues are \$25 (Household member), \$60 (Sponsoring member), and \$300 (Life member).

Stagecoach Stop - El Cerrito, California - 1855

by Joanne Rubio

A Wells Fargo stagecoach was part of the 2017 Centennial Parade in El Cerrito. It was a reminder of the early days of stagecoaches in West County, shortly after the Gold Rush. On December 19, 1855 El Cerrito (San Pablo) became a stage stop for the first stagecoach line that went from San Francisco to Martinez. The new stage line was started by F. J. Mette & Company.

F. J. Mette was listed in the 1855 Daily Alta California paper as the "General Manager." Passengers could buy a ticket in San Francisco at the "General Stage Office Plaza" at the corner of Clay and Kearny (in those days, this was 1 block from the Bay.) The History of Contra Costa County, California (written in 1882) states that the stage stop in El Cerrito was at what was then called the "Red House." Mrs. Lewis was listed as the owner of the "Red House."



NEW LINE OF STAGES.
SAN FRANCISCO AND MARTINEZ
via OAKLAND, SAN PABLO and PINOLA
RANCH.
On and after December 19th
The above Line of Stages will run as follows, viz : Leaving
San Francisco by the half-past 9 o'clock A. M. Ferry-boat
every TUESDAY, THURSDAY and SATURDAY.
Leaving Martinez every MONDAY, WEDNESDAY and
FRIDAY at 6 o'clock A. M., arriving at San Francisco at 12
o'clock M.
For further particulars, inquire at the General Stage Office
Plaza, San Francisco ; or Prince House, Martinez.
d29 F. J. METTE. General Agent.

Daily Alta California, Volume 6, Nbr 126, 18 May 1855

The ferry ride across the Bay to Oakland took about 20 minutes. Once in Oakland passengers boarded the stagecoach. The stagecoach ride went along what was then called San Pablo Road. This is about the same route of today's San Pablo Avenue. Passengers could leave San Francisco Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 9:30 AM on a ferry. They would reach Martinez around 3:30

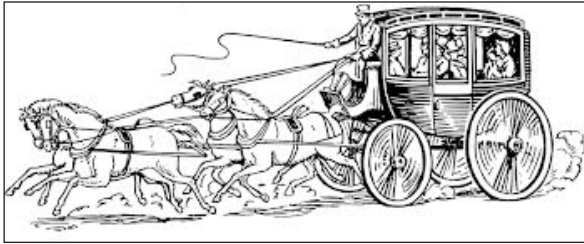
later that day. They could stay overnight in Martinez if they wanted to return to San Francisco the next day.

Tickets in Martinez were sold at what was called "Prince House, Martinez." The stage left Martinez on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6:00 AM. Passengers would arrive in San Francisco by noon. The trip from Martinez to San Francisco, including the ferry ride across the bay, took 6 hours. It was about 30 miles from Oakland to Martinez. It made stops in "San Pablo and at Pinola Ranch."

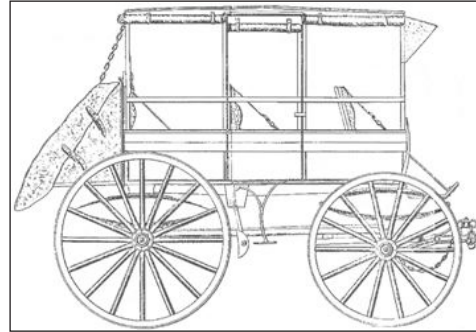
At that time this area was called "Rancho del Cerrito" by Victor Ramon Castro and his wife, Felicidad Carrillo Castro. (Victor was a younger son of the owner of the original land grant of Rancho San Pablo, Francisco M. Castro.) Most early records indicate the whole area was also called San Pablo which included what we now know as El Cerrito, the City of San Pablo, El Sobrante, Richmond, Hercules, Rodeo and Pinole. By 1855 the Cerrito Creek area was referred to as the "County Line District" or "San Pablo" and was included in Township 1 of the newly-formed Contra Costa County. Township 1 went from the "County Line" (Cerrito Creek) to Martinez.

The exact route the stage took after leaving "Pinola Ranch" is not known. From Pinole the stage could have travelled on the Pinole Valley Road which turns into Alhambra Road or it could have gone on to Rodeo and east through Rodeo Valley and up Franklin Canyon to Martinez, coming alongside the land of Vicente Martinez. Stages had been running in the Bay Area since 1850, shortly after the first Gold Rush arrivals began to appear in 1848. From 1848 to 1852 the population of San Francisco rose from 1,000 to around 36,000 according to the first census of 1852. People needed ways to get to the Gold Fields and to travel inland from the rivers and bays. Stages transported travelers, miners, mail, and newspapers. Riding in a stagecoach was called "staging."

Mette ended his stage service in the late 1860's when the railroads were



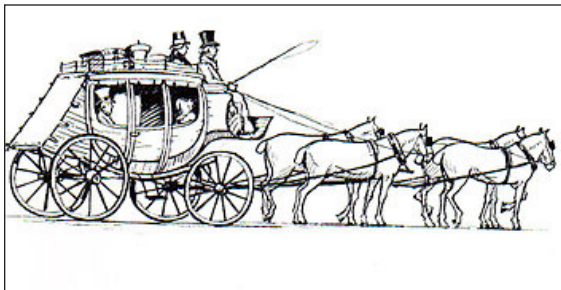
The Mudwagon Type



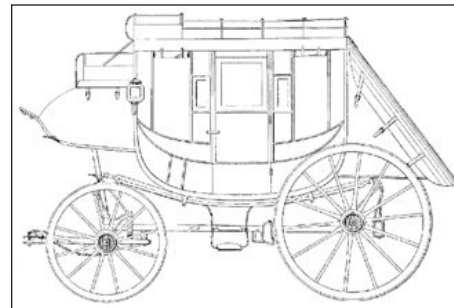
Stagecoaches In California - 1850s and 1860s

The Concord is what comes to mind when most people think of a stagecoach. Both the “Concord” and the “Mudwagon” were made by the same companies. The first stage in San Francisco came “Around the Horn” of South America by sailing ship in 1850. Later they were made here in California.

We do not know the type of stagecoach used by F. J. Mette but the most common one used in the west on dusty, muddy, roads was the “Mudwagon.” A special feature of the mudwagon stage was its canvas curtains that could be rolled up to let in a breeze. The curtains could be lowered if the ride got too dusty, windy or rainy.



The Concord Type



The Red House

The Red House was a famous landmark in Contra Costa County for decades. It is mentioned in many histories and records; it was also used by some as a reference point in land boundaries. It stood for many years. Here are some recollections about it:

“The ‘Red House’ was where it still is, and in 1855 was kept by Mrs. Lewis; it afterwards became a stage station, while it has maintained its name....”

- The History of Contra Costa County California, 1882, SF, W. A. Slocum

“At the corner of Central and San Pablo Avenue, on the southwest corner, stood the big red building known as the ‘Red House,’ which consisted of a saloon, rooms to rent, gambling and a restaurant.

It was very well known throughout the Bay Area. This building was remodeled from time to time by the J. Chebotarewiche family, with entrance to the saloon at the corner and a separate entrance to the restaurant. It had rooms upstairs and was also known as the Six Bells. For years it was run by the Figone family. The building was later called the Bank Club but has since been demolished.”

- Mervin Belfils, El Cerrito Historical Society, 1975

The Mrs. Lewis mentioned in 1882 is unknown to us today but was well-known in her day. We do have a photo of the Chebotarewiche family standing on the steps of the Red House (then called “Six Bells.”) Joseph Chebotarewiche came from Russia and his wife Hilda Chebotarewiche was from Finland. Their two children Elsie and Victor grew up in El Cerrito, living at the Red House from 1920 - 1942. Today’s Nations Restaurant is built on the former site of the Red House stage stop.

Felix J. Mette

F. J. Mette is considered an early Pioneer of Contra Costa County. He was born in Michigan in 1829. His grandparents came from France. He was about 18 or 19 when the Gold Rush started. It is unknown whether he traveled overland or by ship to CA. 1848 - Mette traveled to Calif during the Gold Rush 1855 - Started Stagecoach - SF to Martinez 1856 - SF, Felix J. Mette of San Pablo married Margaret J. White from Australia 1859 - SF Ad - Mette selling 100 acres on San Pablo Rd 1860 - SF, F. Mette, 31, Stage Driver, Margaret, 2 kids 1868 - Martinez, Felix J Mette, Insurance Agent 1870 - SF, Mette, Felix, 41, Life Insurance Agent, Margaret, 6 kids 1880 - Ruby Hill, Nevada, F.J.Mette, 51, Life Insurance Agent, Margaret, 3 kids 1900 - Granite, Montana, Felix J. Mette, 71, Insurance Agent, family in Oakland, Calif 1910 - Granite, Montana, F. J. Mette, 81, New York Life Insurance Agent, family in Oakland, Calif 1912 - F.J. Mette, 83 died May 6, 1912, Oakland, CA 1927 - Margaret J. Mette died December 1927 in Oakland, CA Felix's children and grandchildren continued to live in the Bay Area and Fresno.