



The Sentinel

Fall, 2010

Newsletter of the San Ramon Historic Foundation

Annual Victorian Tea is a Great Success

On Sunday, September 12th, the San Ramon Historic Foundation held its 11th annual Victorian Tea honoring Ruth Quayle Boone who donated Forest Home Farms to the city of San Ramon. After Ruth Boone passed away on July 5, 1998, a group of San Ramon women decided to honor her with the Victorian Tea. Ruth loved to wear her pretty hats, and we have tried to continue that tradition each year with our Tea.

This year was an exceptional Tea. The Foundation paid special tribute to our good friend, Shirley Simmons, who devoted many hours each year to the Tea and other events. We lost Shirley in April of this year, but she will remain in our hearts forever.

The Fountain Room at the San Ramon Community Center was filled in a sea of lavender – flowers, napkins and scone baskets. The event was catered by Checkers who provided delicious tea sandwiches. Desserts included mini fruit tarts, mini petit fours, chocolate mousse squares and mini bundt cakes donated by Nothing Bundt Cake. Of course the Tea also included scones, lemon curd and pots of tea.

Twenty-four opportunity baskets were designed by Sheila Truschke. Each basket contained an assortment of gifts, each with a theme. The baskets contained a gift certificate donated by local businesses.

The afternoon was crowned by the unbelievable talents of *Tapestry*, a women’s choir and a bell-ringing group that joined in 2006 to raise funds for an HIV/AIDS resource center in Zambia. They continue to delight audiences with a repertoire of folk, songs, sacred, pop, classical, Broadway and art songs performed to raise funds for a variety of charities. The music selected for our Tea reflected the golden era of Victorian Teas



Shirley Simmons with her Granddaughter



Donna Kerger, the event chairperson, offers special thanks to our many San Ramon Historic Foundation members and volunteers who worked so hard to produce such a delightful afternoon and invites everyone back next year for the 12th annual Tea! The Foundation and Tea Committee thank Donna for her commitment to this great event and for the wonderful day she orchestrated.

Red Hat ladies. Organizations frequently reserve a table to support the Tea and are always a welcome addition. Great Hats!

Joel Harlan: A San Ramon Valley Pioneer

Joel Harlan came to California by wagon train with his parents, siblings and other relatives including his grandmother who survived the trip only to die in Sacramento where she was buried. The *History of Contra Costa County* reported that her grave is directly under the capital dome.¹ Joel was 17 years old in spring, 1846 and endured a treacherous trip up steep canyons, over high mountains and through treacherous deserts. Some travelers did not survive.

His father George was in charge of about 66 wagons. After a long trip from Missouri, the family left Fort Bridger, Wyoming on July 29 with another group of wagons known as the Donner party. The two groups traveled together until they reached the entrance of Weber Canyon.² Why the Harlan party survived and the Donner party was trapped in the mountains is a convoluted story of circumstance including heavier wagons and waiting for Lansford Hastings who wrote *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*. In *History of California, vol 3*, the author stated that "Hastings **pretended** [my bold] to have discovered a new and shorter route around the southern end of the Great Salt Lake, which was not only easier and better provided with grass and water, but over two hundred miles shorter than that previously followed."³

Different accounts of the migration exist, but the Donner party started over the mountains at least one week after the Harlan party. The Harlan wagon train arrived at Johnson's Rancho outside Sacramento on October 25, 1846.⁴ It was raining very heavily and that rain had turned to an early snow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The snow didn't stop.

Joel worked with his cousin Jacob splitting wood, operating a livery stable and searching for gold. His greatest wealth was made selling to the miners, and he took his wealth to the San Ramon Valley where he purchased land in 1852.⁵ The original county of Contra Costa was divided to create Alameda County and the border was Joel Harlan's home.

He always felt that his home was in Contra Costa County. Within a few years he purchased more land and built a new home (c 1856-1858) in San Ramon.⁶ The home, named El Nido "the nest," was a reference to the large number of children he and his wife Minerva raised in the home.

Local historian Virgie Jones wrote that by 1860 Joel was recognized as a member of the American cattle growers in the San Ramon Valley. He was also recognized as one of the earliest farmers in the area. In 1858 the valley was growing predominately wheat and some barley.⁷ James Dale Smith recalled in *Recollections*: "The Harlan brothers, Joel and Elisha and their cousins George and Jake.... These men were all tall robust men and though it might be thought they were backwoodsmen and not well-educated, many of them filled important government positions."⁸

Joel died on March 28, 1875 and the Danville Grange adopted a memorial resolution which read in part "Resolved, that in the death of Brother Harlan, we have lost an esteemed member of our Order; the community a worthy and upright citizen and his family a devoted husband and father."⁹

El Nido, the family home, was inherited by his widow and their oldest son, Elisha. Upon Elisha's death the property was inherited by Carmen Geldermann.¹⁰ The house still stands today. It is unoccupied and boarded up just off of San Ramon Valley Boulevard.

Footnotes

¹J.F. Munro-Fraser, Historian, *The History of Contra Costa Count* (San Francisco: W.A. Slocum & Co.) 1882, p. 573.

²Zoeth Skinner Eldredger, ed. *The History of California, Vol 3*. (New York: The Century History), pg. 122.

³Ibid, pg. 119.

⁴Virgie V Jones, *Historical Persons and Places . . . in the San Ramon Valley*. (Alamo: MORRIS-BURT PRESS), 1977, pg 34.

⁵Ibid pg 33. ⁶Munro-Fraser, pg. 574.

⁷Jones, pg. 38.

⁸G. B. Drummond, ed., *Recollections. Early Life in the San Ramon Valley*, pg 22.

⁹Munro-Fraser, pg 574. ¹⁰Jones, pg 36.

FOUNDATION UPDATES

Michael McHugh, Jr. is elected to Foundation's Board

Mr. McHugh was elected to the Board of Directors on August 25, 2010, and has already started to contribute his time and knowledge. Although it is not yet clear what Mr. McHugh's role will be with the foundation at this time, he does bring with him not only his love of Early American History but a vast amount of knowledge and experience that will benefit the SRHF.

Mr. McHugh was born in Los Angeles, CA and was raised in Pasadena, CA. Shortly after graduating from Pasadena City College, Mr. McHugh joined the US Navy Submarine Service, where he rose to the rank of Assistant Navigator. Upon leaving the service, he was reunited with and married his high school sweetheart Karen Soldwedel. Mr. McHugh has recently completed his MBA at CSU East Bay (formally CSU Hayward), and has been working as a Corporate Controller for the past 7 years.

Crab Feed - Save the Date This popular annual event will take place January 29, 2011 at the Dougherty Community Center. One of the main fundraisers of the year, the Crab Fred is always a fun filled evening with lots of great food, including pasta, French bread, salad and mounds of crab.

Gift Shoppe at Forest Home Farms The gift shop is open Saturday from 9:00am to 1:00pm with a nice selection of jewelry, purses, tea related items in addition to cuddly lambs, musical toys, books and other child friendly toys. Still available are our popular bags perfect for your Farmers Market purchases. The Gift Shoppe will be open through October and during Holidays on the Farm.



Holidays on the Farm Co-sponsored by the City of San Ramon and the San Ramon Historic Foundation, this popular December event has been expanded. Make your family some special holiday memories by visiting Forest Home Farm at least once. Each Saturday the Glass House will be decorated and open for tours and the Gift Shoppe will also be open. Hours will be 10:00am to 2:00pm, and admission is free on each of the following Saturdays:



Saturday, December 4 will feature children and family activities including a puppet show, ornament making, tractor rides, entertainment and a Victorian Santa.

Saturday, December 11 will see the farm converted to a Holiday Market with vendors, entertainment, food and a Victorian Santa.

Saturday, December 18 is an Old Time Farm Holiday with demonstrations of old time crafts, a sheep dog demonstration, entertainment and of course Santa

Donations The Foundation continues to promote programs that encourage citizens to support FHF. Membership dues will be compounded until they reach \$1000. At that point the member's name will be added to our beautiful Donor Board. Memorial donations of over \$1000 will place the name of your loved one on the Donor Board. Donations of \$1877 are dedicated funds for the Glass House and \$1600 donations will be directed to the Boone property only. Of course any donation large or small is appreciated because all the monies are used for the upkeep or improvement of FHF and its educational programs.

San Ramon Historic Foundation

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<http://www.SRHF.org>

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Fall Events at Forest Home Farms

Farmers Market: Saturdays 9:00am – 1:00pm through October

Back again this season through October, the Farmers Market features a variety of vendors selling local produce and home made foods. Live entertainment adds to the festivities.

Gift Shop: Saturdays 9:00am – 1:00pm

Open through October and during Holidays on the Farm, the Gift Shoppe at Forest Home Farms features new merchandise and a friendly atmosphere. Operated by the Foundation, all profits benefit Forest Home Farms and its programs.

Glass House Tours: Second Saturday of the Month, 10:00am, 11:00am, Noon, 1:00pm

The Glass House at Forest Home Farms Historic Park is renovated and furnished in period pieces. Come see the home and wander over the bridge to the Boone property to see additional historic buildings.

Boone Property Tours: Second Saturday of the Month, 10:30am and 12:30pm

Purchase a same day tour package of both properties for \$8.00.

Pumpkin Patch: October 3 – 31, 10:00am to 8:00pm

This city sponsored event is a great new tradition to start for your whole family. Pick your perfect family pumpkin or two while the children enjoy a hay tunnel, bounce house, inflatable slides, train, hay rides and more.

Holidays on the Farm: First three Saturdays in December, 10:00am – 2:00pm

Saturday, December 4: Children and family activities

Saturday, December 11: Holiday Market

Saturday, December 18: Old Time Farm Day