



Summer, 2011

The Sentinel

Newsletter of the San Ramon Historic Foundation



The Wiedemanns: Early Pioneers to the San Ramon Valley

By Richard J. Gorthy

Above: The original Wiedemann home, still occupied by Wiedemanns!

This is a short story about the Wiedemann family, their roots, and contributions to the growth of the San Ramon Valley community. It's also about their original house that was built (ca 1868) in the hills just off of Norris Canyon Road and still in everyday use by a family member (4th U. S. generation).

The early history of the family can be traced back to a young Christian Wiedemann, born on May 22, 1834, and raised with 2 brothers living in Eckernfoerde, Germany (or Denmark, depending on who had won the previous war). Eckernfoerde is and was part of the duchy (province) of Schleswig-Holstein, a peninsula that borders on Denmark to the north and is between the North and Baltic Seas. These were very unsettling times as the territory was frequently fought over between the Germans and the Danes. If you were a teenage boy, chances were very good that you would at some point be conscripted to serve in the German army.

In 1855, Christian boarded the ship Helene, a three masted German barque, as a passenger. The ship arrived in New York Harbor on May 30, 1855, and Christian had just turned 21 a few days before. For some unknown reason(s), Christian had a final destination of San Francisco, and as the ship Helene did not go that far, he had to board another ship headed to that port. According to family lore, he signed on as a ship's carpenter (his trade) and sailed around the treacherous Cape Horn of

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Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social at the Farm

On August 13th, from 10am to 3pm, the Foundation will sponsor an ice cream social with free admission and a free scoop of ice cream with sprinkles. Jump rope, hop scotch and other old fashioned games will delight children and parents. There will be entertainment and a variety of ice cream delights for sale along with hot dogs, sodas, and kettle corn. There will be sheep dog demonstrations, tractor rides for sale, and docents to explain our vintage tractors. In honor of the Pierce Arrow that Ruth once owned, 1930s Pierce Arrow automobiles will be shown.

Historical tours of the property are available from \$5.00 to \$8.00. Tours are free to members.

Come in your favorite old fashioned outfit and enjoy a wonderful summer day out.

Wiedemanns

South America. The route would have taken him through the Drake Passage between the southernmost tip of South America and Antarctica... a passage with strong unrelenting winds, large waves, strong currents, and frequented by icebergs and sea ice.

Sometime during the fall of 1855, Christian arrived in San Francisco Bay. This was at the tail end of the Gold Rush, and when he sailed into the Bay, he would have seen the harbor choked with ships, most of which had been abandoned by the crews seeking to strike it rich. By the time the U. S. Federal Census was taken on June 27, 1860, Christian was listed as a "laborer" working for a fellow German (Henry Schwerin) who owned a dairy in Visitation Valley (now Daly City in San Mateo County). Currently the Cow Palace occupies this property. This is where Christian learned how to tend cattle and butcher meat for the marketplace.

On December 13, 1864, Christian became a citizen of the United States. About 3 years later, Christian decided to leave the employment of the Schwerin dairy, and purchased 160 acres of bounty property issued under the Scrip Warrant Act of 1855. At the same time (November 1, 1867), his good friend, Carl Schwerin (younger brother to Henry) made an identical purchase on land adjacent to that of Christian's, with the obvious intent of selling it to Christian at some future point in time. With the first permanent American settlers having arrived in the San Ramon Valley beginning in 1850, by the time Christian

entered the area, most of the flatland of the Valley had been taken. He consequently had to settle in the hills, on land suitable for raising cattle, but limited for growing crops. On October 8, 1875, Carl Schwerin sold his 160 acre adjacent property to Christian for one dollar.

There is no documentation as to when Christian began his ranching operation, but to survive, it would have been soon after obtaining the land. He purchased the "PS" brand plus a few head of cattle from a Mr. G. W. Povich. The brand had been originally registered in Contra Costa County on September 17, 1856 and is still the one used today at the Wiedemann Ranch (it's said to be the oldest brand to have been in continuous use in all of California). At first, most of Christian's survival depended on being able to barter. For example, he would chop firewood and trade it for chickens, then trade the eggs for something else. Christian, and later his family as well, pretty much lived off the land, breeding more than just cattle to sell for meat to the surrounding neighborhood. The property supported the raising of horses (for transportation and pulling farm equipment), cows (for milk and butter), chickens (for eggs), turkeys and hogs, as well as growing hay, barley, fruits and nuts. Firewood was cut to help clear the land and to be sold (the Wiedemanns cut and sold firewood until 1988). There were also predators to be dealt with such as mountain lions, coyotes, and bobcats. Very few deer were in the area at the time, only growing in numbers and competing with the cattle as the predators were killed off.

The story that has been relayed by 4 generations of Wiedemanns as to how Christian and Chatharina Dittmer met is that Christian was delivering meat with his butchering wagon to the back door of a household in the "Haywards" (Eden Township in Alameda). Chatharina was working as a maid and answered the door. Very little is known about Chatharina or her family, but I did find where a "Cath Dittmer, age 22," who was German, arrived in New York from Hamburg on May, 1864 aboard the ship Bavaria (an early steamship, powered by both a steam engine and by sails). On September 11, 1869, "Christ Wiedeman" and "Marie Dittmer" (as noted on the certificate) were married at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Mark's in San Francisco. The Wiedemann house in San Ramon was now a home.

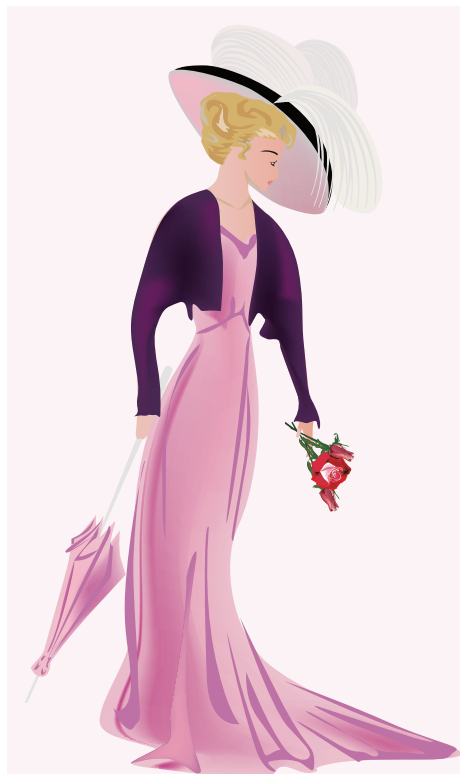
On June 25, 1870, the Wiedemanns' first child was born, Maria Ann. In all, the Wiedemanns had 4 children who lived to adulthood (Maria, Henry, Emma, Frederick). Three more (Eliese, Fredrich, Chatharina) died in early childhood (7 - 12 months). During the 1870s, the Wiedemann Ranch did not grow in acreage. By 1880, assets were listed for the tax assessor at furniture worth \$25, a vehicle for \$49, 3 Spanish horses worth \$50, 22 calves at \$5 each, and 41 stock cattle worth \$410. They also had 2 dogs. The value of the land was \$5 per

acre with \$500 worth of improvements. In the same assessment it was noted that Christian had 50 acres of hay and 15 of barley. That was only about 16% of the total acreage planted in crops. Sadly, on October 9, 1881 Chatharina Wiedemann died. She was only 42 and had been married to Christian for only 12 years.

Christian Wiedemann lived to be 80 years old and died on June 28, 1914. He is buried with his wife and all but one of his 7 children at Mt. Eden Cemetery in Hayward. His two daughters never married and stayed on at the house that their father had built in (ca) 1868. Eventually, when they could no longer take care of themselves, one by one they retired to live at the nearby house that pioneer David Glass had built in 1877, and by this time had become a rest home. At the time of Christian's death, both sons had moved from home, gotten married, and acquired their own property. Sometime between 1920 and 1930, the Henry/Fred Wiedemann cattle ranch partnership dissolved, Henry eventually moved to San Mateo, and younger brother Fred became the sole manager of the day to day operations.

During the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the Wiedemann Ranch continued to grow with Fred in control of the operation. By about 1962, the size of the Ranch reached

See WIEDEMANNs, Page 5



TIME FOR OUR ANNUAL VICTORIAN TEA!

SEPTEMBER 11, 2011, 1:00PM TO 4:00PM

The San Ramon Historic Foundation is honored to sponsor the 12th annual Victorian Tea to commemorate Ruth Boone and her donation of Forest Home Farms to the City of San Ramon. The venue for the event is the beautiful Fountain Room in the San Ramon Community Center. The Men in Brass will feature rag time and patriotic numbers. The 10th anniversary of 9/11 is remembered by our Victorian Red, White and Blue theme.

The theme and entertainment may be different but the food and ambience are the same as last year. The famous Whole Foods scones will be served with lemon curd and cream. Checkers will supply finger tea sandwiches, tea and desserts. Opportunity baskets are being assembled now and a free ticket will be handed out at the registration table. There will be prizes for hats and costumes, and the Gift Shoppe will have a table with lace umbrellas, beaded purses, tea pots and other tea related items for sale. Admission is still \$35.00 and reservations must be made in advance. Contact Carol at 828-0586 or use the registration form on the last page.

Foundation Donors

Included in our general membership are a special group of donors who have made a large commitment to Forest Home Farms. Their names are etched on a beautiful board in the lobby of the welcome center. They are being honored in the newsletter today with renewed thanks for their commitment to the farm and the Foundation.

1600 Club (\$1,600)

Phil and Pam Henry
Ruth Henry
Herb Moniz

1877 Club (\$1,877)

Guerdon Churchill, Jr
Sandy Glass Giacom
Claudia Mauzy Nemir
Wayne and Elaine Ove
Arlita Smith
Kaye Mauzy Wightman
Curtis and Ingrid Wood

In Memoriam

Clyde J. Bushong
Marilyn Langen
Otto Ohman

Benefactors (Over \$10,000)

Claudia Nemir
Shapell Homes
Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee
Dublin / San Ramon Women's Club
Kaye Mauzy Wightman
Chevron Corporation

Rancheros (\$5,000-\$10,000)

Rotary Club of San Ramon Valley

Pioneers (\$1,000-\$5,000)

Barbara Jean Agendo
Patricia Boom
Danville / Alamo Garden Club
Cyrina Elissondo
Joel Gelderman
Roy Ginochio
Al and Ann Kaplan
Jean Ohman
Rotary Club of San Ramon
Carol Rowley
Diane and Don Schinnerer
Mike Sorenson
Sunset Development
Paul and Sheila Truschke
Mary Wohlers
David and Shirley Ernest

SRHF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:

Make checks payable to the San Ramon Historic Foundation. Mail to SRHF, P.O. 1, San Ramon, CA, 94583.

Name _____ Date _____

Billing Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Membership Level General, \$35 Ranch Hand, \$50 - \$199 Foreman \$200 - \$999

Method of Payment Check Visa Mastercard Amount of Donation _____

Credit Card No. _____

Security Code _____ Expires On _____

Signature _____

Wiedemanns

a peak of nearly 10,000 acres (4,500-4,800 owned and 4,000-5,000 leased) and about 800 head of cattle. Fred was a big presence in the local community, active in the nearby rodeos, organized roundups, was a Mason, active in politics, a founding director of the Contra Costa Soil Conservation District, and an original member of the Contra Costa Farm Bureau. He and his wife Mattie (Jorgensen) raised two children, Ann Marie and Howard. Ann married and had three daughters.

During the 1950s, most of the day to day operations of the Ranch were turned over to Howard. His father died on March 18, 1963 at the age of 83. Howard was much like his father, a good family man and very active in the community (Commissioner of the San Ramon Fire Department, a rodeo rider, Secretary of the Contra Costa and Alameda Cattlemen's Association, Director of the Walnut Growers' Association, member of the San Ramon Planning Commission, and on the school board for 20+ years). Howard married Doris (Chapman) and together had 2 daughters (Roxanne, Sandra) and a son (Jeffrey). Howard died on April 2, 1982 (age 65) leaving his son in charge of managing the family operations.

Today, the original ranch house on Norris Canyon Road is owned and well maintained by Roxanne Wiedemann Lindsay and her husband Randy. It's nestled in some oak trees on the side of a hill taking up about 5 acres of the property purchased in 1867. Jeffrey Wiedemann has built a new ranch house in the Tassajara area, out of which he oversees the family interests, including about 3,800 acres of Wiedemann property, and 200+ head of cattle. He is married to Nancy (Bogges) and has 2 sons. Sandra Wiedemann lives nearby to her brother. Although the size of the ranch has declined because of years of periodic drought, depressed beef prices, high feed costs, taxes, and intrusion of the suburbs, one thing that hasn't changed is the high level of Wiedemann involvement with the surrounding community. Jeff has been President of the Contra Costa - Alameda Cattlemen's Association and "Cattleman of the Year." Roxie has been President of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley and is currently a Director of the San Ramon Fire Protection Board. And Sandee is very involved with Shepherd's Gate that helps battered women and their children. She has also been Chairwoman of the Contra Costa County Region of the

Commonwealth Club, President of the San Ramon Valley Republican Women's Club, chosen "Woman of the Year" by the 15th Assembly District and CA Legislature, and chosen "Citizen of the Year" by the City of San Ramon.

Note: This write-up is a summary of the original version. For those interested, the complete detailed Wiedemann history can be found at the Danville Museum, Forest Home Farms, and the public libraries in San Ramon and Pleasanton.

Our thanks to Dick Gorthy for providing this abridged history for the enjoyment of our members and the general community.

Foundation Updates

Email Addresses

We are still trying to get members' email addresses to send the newsletter electronically. Please email dall.barley@sbcglobal.net.

Holidays on the Farm

Our event organizer is already working on the two Saturday event in December which always features a variety of vendors, crafts and of course the Victorian Santa.

SRHF Elections

Paul Truschke has been elected Vice President and Mary Wohlers has been reelected as Treasurer. Jean Ohman and Carol Lopez will remain in their positions.

Resident Appreciation Day

The City is presenting a Resident Appreciation Day at Forest Home Farms on October 8. There will be free tours, tractor rides and demonstrations. The Foundation will be participating in the event.

New Logo

The Foundation is working on a new logo reflecting the main focuses of the group: education, volunteers, fundraising and community involvement. Look for it soon on all our documents.

Events at Forest Home Farms

2nd Saturday of the every month, 9:00am – 1:00pm
Forest Home Farms Gift Shoppe

The Gift Shoppe at Forest Home Farms is now open featuring new merchandise and a friendly atmosphere. Operated by the Foundation, all profits benefit Forest Home Farms and its programs.

2nd Saturday of every month, 10am, 11am, Noon & 1pm
Glass House Tours

The Glass House at Forest Home Farms Historic Park is now renovated and furnished in period pieces. Come see the home and wander over the bridge to the Boone property to see additional historic buildings. The tours are \$5.00 each. Purchase a same day tour package of both properties for only \$8.00.

Sunday, August 7, Noon - 3:00pm
San Ramon Valley Historical Society Summer Social

Come one, come all! An afternoon of good friends, good fun, and good food! Visit SRHF.org/Events or more information.

Saturday, August 13, 10 am to 3 pm
Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social

There will be live entertainment, interpretive exhibits and sheep dog demonstrations. Everyone gets a ticket for one free scoop of ice cream. Purchase hot dogs, drinks, seconds on ice cream. Wear old fashioned attire to add to the fun. Free Admission.

Sunday, September 11, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Annual Victorian Tea

Presented by the San Ramon Historic Foundation
San Ramon Community Center
1250 Alcosta Boulevardm San Ramon, CA 94583
Admission: \$35.00 per person, includes 1 free Opportunity Basket Ticket
Deadline: August 22, 2011, or until sold out.
See the RSVP included in this newsletter.

Saturday, October 8
Resident Appreciation Day

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Newsletter Editor Sue Yura



www.SRHF.org
PO Box 1, San Ramon, California

2011 VICTORIAN TEA RESERVATION



Sunday, September 11th, 2011
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, \$35.00 per person.
San Ramon Community Center
12501 Alcosta Boulevard
San Ramon, CA 94583

Click here or type SRHF.ORG/TEA
for more information.

DEADLINE: August 22, 2011, or until sold out.

To guarantee seating together, payment for all attendees must be submitted with a single reservation form. Tickets are \$35 per person. Each table seats 10 guests. Your cancelled check guarantees your reservation.

Please make checks payable to the San Ramon Historic Foundation. Complete the attached reservation form and send it with your payment to:

SRHF
P.O. Box 1
San Ramon, CA 94583

IMPORTANT: Reservations **cannot** be made through the City of San Ramon. To RSVP, please provide all of the information requested below. Tickets are \$35 per person. Please list the guests to be included in the enclosed check.

Enclosed: \$ _____ For _____ people.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Guest 1: _____

Guest 2: _____

Guest 3: _____

Guest 4: _____

Guest 5: _____

Guest 6: _____

Guest 7: _____

Guest 8: _____

Guest 9: _____



SAN RAMON HISTORIC FOUNDATION

Dedicated to the Preservation of San Ramon's Early Farms & Homesteads