

A HISTORICAL COMPILATION OF THE BAY AREA RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER

90 – 125 Winchester Boulevard, Santa Clara

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BAREC – Relevant History 1920 to 1962

Sharon McCray, March 14, 2003

Here is a brief history of the 17.5-acre parcel on Winchester Road in Santa Clara that was a home for widows, children and orphans of Civil War Veterans. Much of this information has been collected from San Jose Evening News newspaper articles, dating back to the 1940. Deeds and other relevant information have been gleaned from other reliable resources. According to phone books at the California Room of the San Jose Library, a Doctor Osborne owned the original 18 acres. He stops being listed in the phone book as a physician in 1916 and it was confirmed by the state that they acquired the property from Dr. Osborne in approximately 1919. There are no records available to detail the terms of that acquisition and it is assumed that the property contained a medical facility of some sort.

I will start with a brief history of the Women’s Relief Corp and the role of the land as a hospital.

Women’s Relief Corps Home
125 Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road, Santa Clara
1928-1962

In 1866, Civil War veterans of the Union Army and Navy established The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Founded and headed by prominent military, membership peaked in 1890 with more than 400,000 members. The mission was to strengthen the bonds of comradeship, to preserve the memory of their fallen comrades (they secured the adoption of both Flag and Memorial Day) to give aid to soldiers’ widows and orphans and to handicapped veterans, and most of all, to fight for pension increases and other benefits.

Auxiliary societies associated the GAR included the Sons of Veterans (1881), the Women’s Relief Corp (1883), and the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic (1886). The organization held it’s last encampment in 1949 and the last GAR member died in 1956.

To meet their mission, the Women’s Relief Corps built and operated a hospital for widows and veterans on 5 acres in the Evergreen area of San Jose on Cadwallader Road. The corner stone for this home was set April 6, 1889 and the property dedicated December 28, 1889. The five-acre property housed “inmates” until October 10, 1920, when it burned to the ground. The inmates were housed in private residences until a suitable property could be found. It should be noted that there were only three such homes in the nation. It is reported that a facility in Santa Clara replaced the Evergreen home.

After the fire, the women were eventually moved to another facility on the subject property in Santa Clara. It is believed, from oral accounts, that those structures were demolished in the mid-1950. In 1928’s, the building at 125 Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road (90 North Winchester Road) was completed. Designed by University of California Davis

Architectural students and constructed of redwood from Sanborn Park in Saratoga, the building not occupied by University of California researches until 1963. In 2003 the property was returned to the State of California.

From 1928 until 1962, the property housed the remainder of the original Cadwallader "inmates". In 1947, there remained 43 "old ladies". On June 11, 1947, the State Assembly, by a poll of 54 to 20, voted to close the Women's Relief Corps Home. Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon stopped a similar action in 1942 and Assemblyman Thompson of San Jose gave notice that he would ask for reconsideration of the measure. Somehow the facility was saved and continued as a state budget item, with \$39,500 included with California Governor Goodwin J. Knight's 1956-57 budget.

In May 1954, the hospital was leased to Charles N. and Genevieve (formerly Mrs. Charette) Holderman and the name of the facility was changed to the Holderman Sanitarium. They had a lease operating agreement with the State; the property belonged to the Veterans Dept. Governor Warren signed the bill, which permitted the lease in 1954. Charles Holderman's father was the son of Col. Nelson M. Holderman, commandant of the California Veterans' Home in Yountville. As a condition of the lease agreement, 25 new patients could be added to the facility.

Because of declining patient numbers (admissions had been closed since 1947), it was considered by the County that they take it over and use it for the care of the aged. Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon stated that the buildings on the site were a bunch of shacks and that the county would probably not be interested in taking over the site for that reason.

In 1951 the home was operated by the Veterans Bureau of California and hosted 23 patients.

In 1958 the State Department of Veterans Affairs began construction of the existing building at 70 North Winchester (.543 acres): the VA currently occupies the building. At various times, Winchester Road is referred to as Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road and curbing near the site, reflects that name.

In 1959, the WRC, Nevada and California convened at the Hotel Saint Claire. The 150 attending members whose goal was to raise money for a museum in Springfield, Illinois.

In 1961 there remained two survivors at the "Holderman Facility" and the Governor's budget recommendation of \$10,600 to continue their care validates the commitment of the state to this facility and its patients.

In 1962, the final surviving patient, Eva Simpkins, was moved to a newer facility owned by the Holdermans at 340 Lakelake Drive, and on February 3, 1963, the San Jose News reported that the remaining 5 acres of the site would be transferred to the University of California. Miss Simpkins died March 1966. She was 18 when stricken with polio and admitted to the Cadwallader home in 1911. She was bedridden the remainder of her life. Her father was a civil war veteran.

A review of the records at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum indicates that there was a Los Gatos chapter of the WRC. Newspaper clippings from 1931-1932 are all that are available from this collection, along with some photos of different members from various California Chapters.

University of California
Bay Area Research and Extension Center
90 North Winchester Road, Santa Clara

1920-2003

After the Agricultural Stations in Mountain View and Willow Glen were closed, the operation moved to the back 13 acres of the property and was known as the Deciduous Fruit Experiment Station. It is reported that they operated through a “gentlemen’s agreement” and were carrying out their research on “borrowed land”.

An undated history, unsigned, states that the Deciduous Fruit Field Station moved to 125 N. Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road in 1920, but did not purchase the land or build on it. It appears that the facility in Mountain View was leased for five years and it was closed in 1926. At the urging of influential farmers a temporary station was opened in 1927 on Settle Avenue in Willow Glen.

The report goes on to say that 13 acres were leased from the WRC in 1928 at the site on Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road. The WRC owned a total of 18 acres.

In 1950, UC was contemplating the closure of the research facility. The rich agricultural community that included 23 growers fought the closure.

A measure to transfer title of the property, to the University of California was before the Assembly Committee on April 22, 1951. It was noted that if UC wishes to discontinue use of the property for agricultural purposes, then title would automatically go to State Dept of Finance.

Alfred W. Amstutz graduated from Campbell High School and promptly went to work at the station where he remained for the next 40 years. During those days both Shasta and Lassen strawberries were developed at the property and others, including Fresno and Tioga followed with better flavor. Research continued with tomatoes, and smog control issues. Because farmers were being blamed for so much pollution because of burning the cuttings from their fruit trees, Amstutz worked with new methods of disposal including chipping and grinding up the plant material.

The demands of the agricultural community prevailed and kept the station open for several decades.

As January 18, 1956 Planning Commission Report stated that UC took title to the property (10 acres) in 1937. There is also a Deed dated March 13, 1963, transferring 5.08 acres to UC, recorded Book 6003, Page 8, Inst. # 2393103. This deed also referenced .543 acres that were not a part of the transaction (Veterans building).

In 1975, a deed was recorded transferring .060 acres to the City of Santa Clara for road widening. Book 618, Page 34, Inst. #5102163

In 1983, Tom Kretchun, the superintendent of the facility noted that the focus of the research had shifted to the backyard gardener. The research focused on the needs of the homeowner’s and their water usage.

The Bay Area Research and Extension Center closed on January 1, 2002. The promised \$2 million permanent augmentation to the Cooperative Extension that was part of the original deal, was never realized and UCCE received \$1 million for the transfer of the total 17.5 agricultural property. Left behind were 3 greenhouses, a shop, historical home and shop, potting shed, remaining experiments including oak trees, and outbuildings. The pump for the working water well was removed.

Excerpt from History of Santa Clara County, California by Eugene T. Sawyer
(Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1922), p. 568

MRS. GERALDINE E. FRISBIE. A woman of rare capabilities and good business judgment is Geraldine E. Frisbie, the efficient president of the Woman's Relief Corps Home of California, and past national president, having served as president of the national woman's Relief Corps during 1912-13. Since November 10, 1921, the Woman's Relief Corps Home of California has been located at Winchester, Santa Clara County, where it now owns thirteen acres, formerly owned by Dr. and Mrs. A .E. Osborne, and known as Osborne Hall. Too much credit cannot be given to the noble women who have built up this institution, which provides a real home to mothers, wives, widows, sisters, and daughters of Union veterans of the Civil War. It is a state institution, being amenable to the State Board of Control, but an institution which primarily owes its existence to philanthropic and noble California women, starting with Mr. Cadwallader's donation of five and thirty hundredths acres at Evergreen in Santa Clara County, where the first home was built and occupied until destroyed by fire October 10, 1920. Mrs. Geraldine E. Frisbie was then its president, and through the loyal and hearty support and cooperation of the secretary, Mrs. Sarah J. Farwell, no time was lost in getting temporary quarters for the inmates, who were left in sore distress. Appeals were immediately addressed to the various W.R.C. posts of the state, who responded very promptly in sending money, clothing, and food, while the state authorities gave the use of one of the buildings at Agnew, until November 10, 1921, when the present premises had been secured. Dr. and Mrs. A. E. Osborne have given liberally. The sum of \$12,500 was obtained as insurance on the former Home at Evergreen. Several thousand dollars have already been expended in remodeling and refitting up Osborne Hall for the Home. Of the \$55,000 now invested at Winchester, the women have raised \$20,000, while the state has appropriated the balance. It will be necessary to purchase some more land in order to meet the needs of the Home, and a movement is now on foot where by its holdings will be increased to eighteen acres...

Mrs. Geraldine Elizabeth Frisbie is a native of Rochester, N.Y....Her first marriage occurred in San Francisco on March 20, 1866, and united her with Lester P. Cooley, a native of Vermont....Lester P. Cooley passed away in 1882, and in November, 1883, Mrs. Cooley married at Redwood City Mr. Frisbie, a Civil War veteran, who served three years with the Wisconsin troops as first lieutenant and special aide and private secretary to General Charles Devan; he passed away in 1885. Since 1887 Mrs. Frisbie has been active in Relief Corps work, serving faithfully and well and she has the loyal support and cooperation of her six coworkers and matron in the care of the Home and its thirty inmates.

Excerpt from: Garden of the World or Santa Clara County, California; H.S. Foote, Editor; The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1888

California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children on Winchester Blvd, Santa Clara, California. Established About 1886.

In October, 1886, Dr. A.E. Osborne, having attracted general attention by his studies of the subject of the care and treatment of the feeble-minded, was elected to succeed Dr. B. T. Wood in the office of Superintendent of the California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-minded Children, assuming charge on December 1, 1886, proving himself the right man for the position by the admirable manner in which he at once brought the institution to a high state of efficiency. Drawing from a thorough knowledge and a wide experience, he is creating a higher plane of success. Dr. Osborne is the only physician engaged in this work on the pacific coast, and is in charge of the only institution of the kind west of Nebraska. Under his hands there are now 110 children, and there are fully 150 applications for admission on file, waiting the completion of enlargements now contemplated.

The successful efforts that are being made at the present day for the amelioration of the lot of the indigent, the insane, and the feeble-minded, are something of which too much can hardly be said. It is only of late years that any general attention has been paid to the subject. A number of learned and philanthropic gentlemen, chiefly medical men, have studied the matter and by the rearing of institutions for the care and treatment of the weak-minded, have accomplished a good that is shown most clearly by the surprisingly great success that has been met in relieving these mental disorders and in many cases entirely curing them. Upon this coast the California Home for the care and training of feeble-minded children, an institution located on the extreme western borders of the town of Santa Clara, and which is described elsewhere in this volume, is a worthy representative of what is being done. Though founded but a few years back, and not yet as extensive as it will be later, it is acknowledged to be one of the best managed and most successful on the continent, the appointments and arrangements being admirable, and the most perfect system prevailing throughout.

Excerpt from History of Santa Clara County, California by Eugene T. Sawyer (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1922), p. 570, 573.

“DR. A. E. OSBORNE. A distinguished citizen of California long and eminently identified with Santa Clara County....He was born at Chester, Pa., on February 23, 1857....He was sent to the military academy known as the Pennsylvania State College, in Center County, where he took a course of four years in science and natural history....He then went to the University of Pennsylvania, where he pursued the regular medical course for three years...and was graduated on March 12, 1877, with the degree of M.D...and in 1879...the degree of Doctor of Philosophy....He began to specialize with nervous and mental diseases in his practice of medicine...[which was] connected with the Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded...[He was] chair of natural sciences in the Media Academy, where he organized the department of physical culture and established a gymnasium. In...1886 he was appointed...as medical superintendent of the California State Home for the Feeble-Minded and for fifteen years he was secretary of its board of trustees...Later has been made medical superintendent of the Napa State Hospital for the Insane...**Since 1901 Dr. Osborne—who was long the only physician engaged in his line of work on the Pacific Coast, and in charge of the only private institution of the kind west of Nebraska—has been the owner and director of Osborne Hall, at Winchester, Santa Clara County, an institution for the treatment of mental deficiencies.** Prior to that he had been professor of nervous and mental diseases in the College of Physicians and Surgeons in San Francisco, and he also held the same post in the Oakland Medical College. He was also lecturer on

nervous and mental nursing in the Nurses' Training School, and psychiatrist at the O'Connor Sanitarium at San Jose.

On September 7, 1880, Dr. Osborne was married to Miss Margaret H. Paxton, the daughter of Col. John C. Paxton, a Civil War veteran*...His original researches and independent treatment of medical and scientific subjects have made a name for him in the line of new discoveries, so that he has frequently been cited as an authority in these lines particularly his own. He is now active in the California State Medieval Society, being for six years a member of its council, and has twice been president of the Santa Clara County Medical Society. He was...very active in the building of the [San Jose] Scottish Rite Temple...which was erected when he was master...

...Dr. Osborne has served two terms on the board of trustees of Santa Clara...and vice-president of the Commercial League of Santa Clara. He has been chairman of the probation committee of the Juvenile Court in Santa Clara County continuously since the court was established, and he served as chairman of Draft Board No. 2 of Santa Clara County during the World War. [In] 1920 Dr. Osborne was elected to the State Senate from...Santa Clara County... He...introduced into the Senate the joint measure on conservation and reforestation, which was duly passed and made a law...He served on the following committees: Civil service, conservation, county government, hospitals and asylums, labor and capital, Normal Schools, public charities and corrections, public health and quarantine... He is an able physician and public-spirited citizen...one of the first citizens of the Golden State.”

* Note: This connection to Civil War veterans is probably the reason for his donation of the BAREC site as a home for the families of the Civil War Veterans.