

A HISTORY OF BOYD PARK

FROM THE

MARIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Printed for a Historical Society picnic August 18, 1996 in Boyd Park. Plans for the restoration of the park will be presented at the picnic.

Information taken from the 1987 publication of the Historical Society entitled Louise Boyd - Science and Society.

More information is available in the museum in addition to memorabilia of the Boyd family.

A HISTORY OF BOYD PARK

Gold from the hills of eastern California gave the City of San Rafael Boyd Park and Boyd Gate-House. Gold and the tragic death of two very young men.

First the story of the gold. In 1877 three men, Seth and Dan Cook and their friend John Boyd invested in the Standard Mine of Bodie, California. Bodie-- in the arid hills near the California-Nevada border and just north of Mono Lake. The investment totaled \$67,500. and paid \$6,396,270. A very welcome profit to three men who from the early days of the gold rush had searched, mined, worked their own claims and those of others and had gained only modest success. Now they had found their big bonanza! The Bodie Standard that year reported "Our Standard Mono County, Has the Richest Gold Mine in the World!"

The bonanza brought money to enhance the home in San Rafael already owned by the Cook family. Three years earlier in 1874 Ira Cook with his widowed daughter, Theodocia Cook Arner and her daughter, Louise Arner arrived in San Rafael from New York. As Louise Arner was only thirteen, her mother ill with tuberculosis and her grandfather very elderly, they obviously came west for Louise to be left in the care of her uncles, Seth and Dan Cook. They bypassed San Francisco and came directly to San Rafael, probably due to Mrs. Arner's illness. At first they rented a house at 5th and "F" Streets but in 1875 Mrs. Arner purchased a home on the side of San Rafael Hill from Richard Hellman. (That house fifteen or twenty years old at the time still exists in 1996 somewhere within the building we know as the Elks' Club.) According to contemporary newspaper reports, it was the first purchase on San Rafael Hill for sometime and the plans of the new owners were very welcome to the other citizens of San Rafael.

Mrs. Arner died a year later and left the property and the care of her young daughter to her father, Ira Cook and her brothers, Seth and Dan. Ira and Seth began improving the property adding the carriage house, enlarging the main house and eventually after the big bonanza adding more land and a gate-house at the entrance to the estate. They purchased six acres from Joseph Angelotti and that addition is the major part of what is now Boyd Park. In 1879 they contracted with Adam Murray, a San Rafael builder, to build the

Victorian Gothic gate-house now the Marin County Historical Society Museum.

Ira Cook hired John Frederick Jordan from Boston to design and plant the formal garden that became the show place of San Rafael for many years. Mr. Jordan was responsible for the profusion of Japanese maples originally on the grounds that gave the estate its name--Maple Lawn. The newspapers stated that Mr. Cook in the few years he had resided in San Rafael had reduced unemployment considerably with the building of his gardens and the water system for them. The news described the hill covered with Chinese workmen laying the pipes for the intricate system Mr. Cook and Mr. Jordan designed to bring water from the springs near the top of the hill to the gardens at the foot. Some of that system is still in use in 1996. (Mr. Jordan, his wife and family remained in San Rafael. Judge Jordan Martinelli was their grandson.)

In addition to the improvements to the estate father and sons gave great care to their young charge, Louise Arner. They took her on a grand tour of Europe and enrolled her in a young ladies' finishing school in New York. In 1880 Mr. Cook died of injuries he received in a fall at the reservoir in his water system. Two years later his son, Dan, died of tuberculosis. Now young Louise was alone on the estate with her Uncle Seth but only for a very short time. In 1883 at the age of twenty-two she married her uncles' partner in the Bodie Bonanza, John Franklin Boyd. At forty John Boyd once a respected mining engineer was now a respected San Francisco business man.

They were married in a quiet ceremony in the Nob Hill home of Dan Cook's widow, Carrie Colton Cook. Louise's wedding present from her Uncle Seth and Aunt Carrie was the complete estate in San Rafael, the house known as Maple Lawn, the carriage house, the gate-house and all the landscaped acres.

Seven years later in 1889 Seth Cook died and added to her fortune almost all of his estate including 47 acres on Mt. Diablo now most of Diablo Country Club, real estate in San Francisco, mining interests in Mariposa and property throughout the West. It also included an very long list of blue-blooded cattle and thoroughbred trotting horses. She was an extremely wealthy young matron with a wealthy husband and three children, Seth, John, Jr. and Louise.

The Boyd family had a lovely and charmed life with winters in San Rafael and summers on their country

estate on Mt. Diablo. Then tragedy struck! One summer morning in August of 1901 young Seth, then 17, was found dead in his bed. Eight months later a telegram from Nordoff School in Ventura County informed his parents that Jack (John, Jr.) had died. He was 16. Both boys died as a result of rheumatic fever. The charmed life was over.

Elsie Mazzini in her story of the park and gate-house described the grief stricken family:

The Boyd family, John and Louise, mother daughter, emerged from grief resolved to find a memorial for Seth and John. They wanted something that would perpetuate their memory in a way that for all time there would remain something of their love of life and joyousness.

The result was the donation of the eastern portion of their estate, the gardens and the gate-house to the City of San Rafael for a park in memory of their sons. John Boyd to enlarge the park grounds purchased additional property and removed some structures to clear an area for the park that would stretch from the gates at the top of "B" Street to the top of San Rafael Hill. A gently graded path led to the summit with concrete benches placed at resting places along the way. Each bench had a name; Over-Look, Oakwood, Bide-a-Wee, Bonnie Brae and more. The bench at the top was called Hillcrest and had a marvelous view of San Rafael and San Francisco Bay. Mr. Jordan superintended the work during the last two months and soon the park was ready for the grand opening.

And what an opening it was! Major Newell Vanderbilt was the Grand Marshall and led the children with their marching bands from all the schools in San Rafael, public and private, down 4th Street and up "B" to the gates. As the parade passed shop owners and business people closed their businesses and joined the children.

State Senator Ennio B. Martinelli represented the Boyd family and greeted all at the gates. Luther Burbank was the main speaker of the day. Following the ceremony more than 4000 citizens of San Rafael were served lemonade and sandwiches. An added note was that Mrs. Jordan made so many sandwiches Mrs. Boyd gave her a lovely sunburst broach in appreciation.

The donation of the park was then and is now as the City and the Historical Society plan the restoration a generous gift and a fitting memorial.

NOBLE SENTIMENTS BY LUTHER BURBANK

The following is the full text of the address delivered at the dedication of Boyd Memorial Park at San Rafael, Saturday April 29, 1905, by Mr. Luther Burbank, the noted horticulturist:

My kind friends: Our honored friend, Judge Morrow, has shown his usual fine sense of humor in asking me to address you today. It is wholly out of my line of business. And he knows it is the keenest torture. I know he does, because I have told him so; but he knows a kind heart for he has said I was to address the children, and for this reason only have I consented.

Everything has its place in the order of nature. When you wish to communicate with some one at a distance you make use of the telegraph or telephone, never send your message by violin or wheelbarrow, do you? An automobile is a poor craft to cross the bay with--a ferry boat is much more seaworthy.

I love sunshine, the blue sky, trees, flowers, mountains, green meadows, running brooks, the ocean when its waves softly ripple along the sandy beach or when pounding the rocky cliffs with its thunder and roar, the birds of the field, waterfalls, the rainbow, the dawn, the noonday and the evening sunset, but children above them all.

The vast possibilities bound up in the life of each child are far beyond anything else which we shall ever see or know.

All of us in this wonderful world life should have an ideal, something to reach up to. We all have some lessons to learn, and sooner or later we all learn this, which is perhaps the most important one of all, that the painful effects of selfishness will follow you like a deep shadow, while kind and generous thoughts, words and actions toward others will make you life joyous, sunny and full of happiness

Today--now--we have before us some whose lives of love for others may make brighter and happier their own lives and the lives of all who may ever tread this earth. Enfolded in your young lives are vast stores of power for good or bad; is it a small matter to help these young plastic lives to a higher appreciation of the possibilities of life?

Trees, plants and flowers are always educators in the right direction. They always make us happier and better. Cherish these beautiful trees and plants cared for by those who now for your perpetual joy, happiness and improvement have given them to you. What a gracious gift this is toward your peace and happi-

ness you may hardly know yet, but time will show its value to you. Every tree, shrub and flower which you see is the result of love, care and culture. Each one has a daily measure of cheer for you. The apple, the orange, the cherry and the fig trees say, "Here! I bring you shade, sweet spring flowers and luscious fruits; help yourselves freely." The rose bushes say "See what we have to offer you, beautiful roses! Help yourselves, but we are frail bushes, so do not be too rough else you may feel the stings of armor which we have to wear."

The giant Redwoods which adorn your beautiful hill-slopes say, "We give you shade and temper the harsh winds and the chilly fogs for you, and though we often feel very much cut up to furnish you fences and houses, yet we give you a lesson in perseverance; we will sprout up again, and make the best of it." So all trees and flowers have messages of cheer for us. Well grown trees and shrubs speak of loving care by some one and fully respond as far as it is in their power for all the care bestowed upon them. But how much more appreciative is a child? Just watch these sensitive quivering creations of sunshine, smiles, showers and tears. In all this world you will never find anything so sensitive to its surroundings. These young lives are for a few years at our mercy, then we and all who follow are at theirs.

Here in child and youth life and material is ready for building up knowledge, beauty, health and strength and with them happiness;--or to wreck and twist into ugliness and pain that which is now so precious in its possibilities.

Our surroundings here are very beautiful, showing years of constant thought and care. May they ever continue to make better and therefore happier these young lives--in this most beautiful city of San Rafael on our sunny Western Shore .