

08
1852

Nuggets from the Past

By Norman McLeod

European families: Rendezvous in Foresthill

For the many who find pioneer history fascinating, the following is a brief background of two families that immigrated to America, with branches of them eventually settling in Foresthill.

Mark Patric Haney was born in Ireland in 1826. In about 1840, he immigrated to Tennessee with his parents. Here he met and married Emily Frances Scott from New York. Their first child, born in 1847, was Thomas Francis Haney.

Early in 1852, the family sailed to San Francisco via the Isthmus of Panama. There they purchased a team and wagon for a journey to their anticipated home, Sacramento.

Shortly after their arrival, Mark Patric met an old friend from Ireland who told him he owned an active gold mine near Michigan Bluff. This friend extended an invitation to Mark to help him work his mine and to bring the entire family.

This sounded good, so Mark, Emily and their two children moved on to Michigan Bluff. Here, Mark worked for his friend in the mine while Emily, who came from a wealthy family, took in laundry from the miners and tradespeople.

In 1853, Leland Stanford opened a general store in town. As his wife was not yet with him, he brought his soiled shirts to Emily for washing and ironing. Later in life, Emily enjoyed telling her grandchildren about Stanford and his shirts, and how fussy he was about her ironing.

When Michigan Bluff burned in 1857, the Haney family moved to Bath - near Foresthill - where they followed a new star in the raising of cattle, sheep and chickens. Also children. Eight more, plus an adopted son.

During a political argument, Thomas Patric Haney was shot and killed. This left Thomas Francis Haney, his eldest son, as head of the family.

Thomas Francis was both ambitious and skilled. He constructed a hotel on a site about 10 miles east of Foresthill that he named Main Top. It was located at the head of Volcano Canyon on the original road to Forks House and Westville.

Thomas Francis did not marry until he was 35, when in 1882 he met a local girl named Annie. Annie helped him manage their hotel - until their divorce.

Needing someone to assist him with the hotel, Thomas then went into Foresthill and invited Lucinda Stevens, a widow with four children, to move to Main Top. She agreed.

Lucinda's mother, Belinda Pratt, came from the Alsace Lorraine region of France.

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In America, she married a Welshman named William Davis, and they settled in Springfield, Ill. There Lucinda was born - one of 11 children.

Their home was next door to the Abraham Lincoln family; in fact, Belinda Davis served as midwife and general helper for them.

Young Lucinda rode to California with her family on the first transcontinental railroad train in 1869. Their destination was Placer County, where she met and wed Denman P. Stevens. Shortly afterward, the newlyweds moved to Virginia City where Denman became superintendent of the Comstock Gold Mine.

In a tragic accident, Denman fell down a mine shaft and broke his back, leaving him crippled and unable to work. Lucinda took care of him for a long time, until he turned seriously ill with pneumonia and died.

Lucinda, now a widow with four small children, moved back to Foresthill to be near her family. To support her family she took in washing and sewing.

When Thomas Haney invited her to help him with Main Top, she was ready. She and her brood moved to the roadhouse where she enjoyed a different, less lonely way of life. Thomas' mother, Emily, also living at Main Top, proved to be good company for Lucinda.

After several years of working together, Thomas and Lucinda were married. They had four children together, all born at the hotel.

Main Top included 42 acres of land with a natural, bubbling spring that created a rivulet flowing through the center of the property, thereby in turn producing a beautiful green meadow. This meadow contained a park with picnic tables, a baseball diamond, skeet shooting range and a large dance hall.

On the property as well were huge barns and corrals accommodating cattle and sheep that in the summer months were driven to mountain pastures. The hotel itself - a two-story, wood-frame building - contained a barroom, large dining room and several bedrooms on its first floor. More bedrooms were on the second story.

About three miles east of Main Top was the location of the prosperous Hidden Treasure Gold Mine, owned and operated by Harold T. Power. He and Thomas Haney were good friends, whose friendship did not prevent them from engaging in a good-natured campaign against each other for the office of County Supervisor. Power won the election and was later elected State Assemblyman.

During this period, both men were blessed with newly-born daughters, both girls named after Power's mine - Treasure Haney and Treasure Power.

Sometime later, the Hidden Treasure tunnels undermined the spring at Main Top, causing a natural disaster at both locations. The mine tunnels flooded, and the water supply at the inn disappeared. Without water, Main Top was forced to close forever.

The Haney family moved back to Foresthill, and later again to Bath. There the children attended school and grew to adulthood. When they reached high school age, Lucinda went with them to Berkeley, while Thomas remained in Bath.

While visiting sister Emily in Oakland, Treasure Haney met and later wed Gerald Whitaker. They remained in Oakland and raised two daughters. When the girls were ages eight and 14, their parents divorced. Treasure Haney Whitaker never remarried.

Treasure Power became a nun.

Thus ends this rather incomplete saga of the Thomas Haney and William Davis families. My informant was Shirley Mae Tillotson Brown, currently living in Tucson, Ariz. Her father was Norman Tillotson.

I met her last year on the Foresthill Road overlook while I was filming the road's history. She introduced herself as seeking the Glenn Mine on the upper divide, where her father once worked.

I was unable to tell her the mine's location, but I did inform her of a possible

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Tillotson relation in town - Tillie Grant. The two ladies met later that day for the first time in Tillie's home, to discover they were first cousins.

And, Shirley Mae has not given up her search for the Glenn Mine. She promises to return this summer to renew her quest.

(Epilog: A few years back, thanks to Bill Martinsen, I was shown the site of Main Top. Not a trace of the old roadhouse exists. Bill did point out a level place he thought was the old baseball diamond. Traces of the old road may still be seen.)