



Milpitas Muse

May 2019

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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May 8 Meeting: Another One of Those Innovators!

The Milpitas Historical Society's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 8 at 7:00 pm in the Multipurpose Room (Auditorium) of the Milpitas Library, 160 North Main Street.

Our last month's speaker, Robin Chapman, who told us about Native American innovator Lope Inigo, also mentioned the other California innovators she wrote about in her recent book, *Historic Bay Area Visionaries*, and one of them was Thomas Foon Chew, the founder of the Bay Side Cannery in Alviso and many other businesses.



Our speaker this month, Gloria Hom, is a granddaughter of Thomas Foon Chew, and she will give us the complete story of this pioneering businessman, his family and his achievements.



Gloria's own story is also amazing: because her father was a diplomat, she grew up in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, China, Manila, Bangkok (Thailand), and Taiwan, as well as in San Francisco. She holds a doctorate from the University of San Francisco in Education.

Gloria's passion has always been in teaching Economics, Political Science, and History, first at Foothill and De Anza, and later at West Valley/Mission College. She also taught at San Jose State University and UC Santa Cruz. Please join us for this informative presentation and stay for treats and conversation afterwards. Meetings are free and all are welcome.

Milpitas Street Name Stories: Abel Street



Abel Street, originally Abel Road, was named for Henry C. Abel, who lost his mother, Mary Ann Marks, in 1860, when he was about 12; he migrated to California from Wisconsin in 1869, when he was 21.

Henry first arrived in Stockton, where he worked for a surveyor. He next got a job on the Warm Springs ranch of Josiah Stanford (elder brother of Leland), where he met his Irish wife-to-be, Margaret Mulhearn, whom he married at Mission San Jose on April 19, 1872.

After Henry Abel settled in Milpitas in 1874, he sent for his brothers and sisters: George, Emily, Edwin, Henrietta, and Anna. Henrietta and Anna respectively married into the Cropley and Evans ranching families, who have left their names on other area roads. He went into the meat business, where he prospered for the next forty years. His shop was on Main Street in Milpitas, south of the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church.

He also acquired a farm of 500 acres on Trimble Road, southwest of Milpitas, where he had 500 dairy cows, according to a newspaper article in 1900.

Henry Abel bought the home of Matthew Dixon, and with teams of horses moved it south around 1910 to a lot beside the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church on Main Street, where the family lived for a long period. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Abel had a family of five children: William, Gertrude, Grace, Arthur, and George.

At that time, Henry was one of the major growers of asparagus and was also serving on the school board.

While he and his brother Edwin were operating the butcher shop, his sons were running deliveries around

town and out into the countryside as far as Calaveras Valley (east Milpitas hills). His daughter, Gertrude, became a teacher and taught for a time in Berryessa. The Abel Elementary School was named after her.

In 1888, Henry Abel and the Curtner brothers, (sons of Henry Curtner) went into partnership (Abel & Curtner Livestock Company) in cattle ranching in Nevada. Henry Abel's sons were to become involved in this huge ranch which spread out over parts of both Humboldt and Elko counties until it was disposed of in 1941.

Henry Abel passed away on January 29, 1917, a few years after the death of his devoted wife on September 29, 1913. After his father's death, George Abel managed the Milpitas portion of the Abel estate, the 500 acres of which were devoted to grain, hay, vegetables, and fruit, thirty-five acres being in pears.

While he was managing the ranches in Nevada, George Abel was married to Miss May Staunton in 1914. They had two children, George, a Gonzalez area cattle rancher, and Margaret, who became Mrs. John Donovan, who with her husband developed Serra Shopping Center on Abel Street in the 1970s.

The Great Mall History Exhibit Moved Out

The Milpitas Historical Society has removed all of the historical items it had displayed and stored at the Great Mall exhibit space; what remains are Ford Assembly Plant memorabilia and the green-and-white 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner (shown in last month's newsletter) barely visible at the end of the photo in the next column. This automobile belongs to Simon Property Group, the Great Mall's management.

The Milpitas City government is very kindly letting the Historical Society store our historic objects in safe places as the Society makes plans for locating new areas where some of our history can be put on display, such as in the locked glass cases in City Hall and the Community Center.



The now-empty space where the Milpitas Historical Society's Great Mall history display was located



Milpitas Historical Society Board Meetings

The Board will meet next on Wednesday, June 5, at 2:00 pm in the Milpitas Library Group Study Room A. Subsequent meetings will be announced in the newsletter for each month. Members are always welcome.

Our Society's Contact Information

You can contact the Milpitas Historical Society:

- by mail at 160 N. Main Street, Milpitas CA 95035
- by email to tmhs@milpitashistoricalsociety.org
- from our website: www.milpitashistoricalsociety.org

You can see the traditional Milpitas history website here: www.milpitashistory.org/home/index.html

**Milpitas Historical Society
160 North Main St.
Milpitas, CA 95035**

First Class