

Milpitas Muse

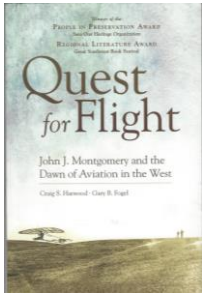
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The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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October Zoom Meeting: The Quest for Flight!

The Milpitas Historical Society's Zoom meetings are back! Our October meeting will take place at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, October 13. Our speaker will be Craig Harwood, a professional geologist and history enthusiast with over thirty years experience in technical writing. He will share with us his deep knowledge, meticulous research, and great enthusiasm for the story of John Montgomery, a scientist and teacher at Santa Clara University, who even in the years before 1900, was researching and developing the science of human flight, and succeeded in flying gliders twenty years before the Wright Brothers performed their famous flight. Many of Montgomery's glider flights took place in the hills above where Evergreen college now sits.



Craig Harwood's book, shown to the left, also details both the rivalry and the cooperation among the the large number of flight enthusiasts in the 40-some years before air flight 'took off.' Mr. Harwood will also provide the information necessary to obtain his book if you'd like to read it.

To join this meeting, from your Mac, PC, tablet, or smartphone, click on this link below and you will be connected!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8538460380?pwd=WXJMdGFKTWFlMkE5eU5JL3FOSFVxUT09>

OR use your browser to go to milpitashistoricalsociety.org, and on the home page there will be a link to click that will automatically take you to the meeting.

We will have a social time afterwards (as we usually do after the meetings), so this is a great opportunity to catch up with friends who have not been able to see each other in person for quite a while now. We very much look forward to seeing *all of you* at this meeting!

The Stories of Milpitas Parks: Martin Murphy Jr. Park

By Joseph Ehardt



The broad story about the illustrious Murphy family and more specifically the individual, Martin Murphy Jr., for whom this park is named, is one of the more remarkable stories in Milpitas history.

Martin Murphy Jr. (1807-1884) was born in County Wexford, Ireland, the first child of Martin Murphy Sr. and Mary Foley. He was the eldest of nine children, having four brothers and four sisters. His father, at the age of 13, had participated in the Irish Rebellion of 1798 (inspired by the American and French Revolutions), which the Irish lost and later caused Martin Sr. to migrate with most of his family rather suddenly from Ireland to (Catholic) French Canada in 1820.

Unable to sell his estate quickly, Martin Sr. left his eldest son and daughter, Martin Jr. and Margaret, behind in Ireland to live with their grandmother until Martin Jr. came of age and could legally sell his father's property, after which those two joined the family in Canada.

As it turned out, Canada was not to be their final destination. The Murphys sold their property in Frampton, south of Quebec, to begin another migration to the western border of Missouri in 1840, which in those days was rough frontier country. The fact that farming land was plentiful was the principal drawing card. *(Continued on next page)*

They bought land to permanently settle, but their dream was elusive. They were isolated Catholics in essentially lawless surroundings, so after only a few years the Murphys made their third migration even further west to Mexican Alta California as part of the historically famous Stephens-Townsend-Murphy overland party of 1844. At this point, there was no discovery of gold to attract the surging hordes. They simply were pursuing the contagious vision of political and religious freedom.

Population in California was sparse (8,000 people), the land was vast (although available only to Mexican citizens), and the Hispanic people were devout Catholics. Three important pluses in their quest. Finally, the 24-year journey of the Murphy family was coming to its end half-way around the world from their Irish roots.

After adopting Mexican citizenship, in 1849 Martin Murphy Jr. purchased more than half of the 9,066-acre Rancho Pastoria de las Borregas from Mariano Castro, one-time alcalde of Pueblo de San José. Title to Martin's 4,894 acres of land was patented by the U. S. Land Commission in 1865, fifteen years after California had become the 31st state about 20 years after his arrival. His father and brothers settled similarly.

Martin Jr. was the founder of the Sunnyvale, and he was an important landowner in Santa Clara County, including 1,578 acres of land (roughly one-third) that were part of the original 4,437-acres of Rancho Milpitas (as shown in the 1876 plat map). All of this history is why one of today's public parks in Milpitas is named in his honor.

The 8.7-acre park is located in southern Milpitas, between Yosemite Dr. and Yellowstone Dr. (north

and south) and east of Park Victoria Drive. It is one of the parks located in Parktown.

In the park's north is an expansive space for field sports such as soccer. Centrally positioned is a children's area with numerous pieces of large play equipment (still to be updated to newer standards) with nearby bathrooms. To the south is a large picnic area with tree-shaded tables and BBQ grills. There is parking for automobiles at the southern end of the park accessible from Yellowstone Dr.



This park is occasionally used by the City's Recreation Department for outdoor musical events as well as an evening-in-the-park showing of a popular movie with popcorn and, while we endure the pandemic era, socially distanced seating.

Our Society's Contact Information

You can contact the Milpitas Historical Society:

- by mail at 160 N. Main Street, Milpitas CA 95035
- by email at tmhs@milpitashistoricalsociety.org
- at our website: <http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>

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