

Milpitas Muse

October 2025

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

Volume XLVI, No. 7

> WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8th <
EVENING, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
MILPITAS AUDITORIUM
160 N. MAIN STREET, MILPITAS

The Presentation

THE HISTORY OF THE GILROY MUSEUM

This month's presenter will describe the history of the City of Gilroy's museum which is housed in an historic building, originally an Andrew Carnegie Library that opened in 1910 and functioned as such until 1975. The building has since been moved and repurposed into a place where Gilroy's residents and its neighbors can see and experience the things that have filled ordinary life in Gilroy and in California.



Our Presenter



Karen Pedigo is a member of and on the Board of Directors of the Gilroy Historical Society as well as a member of the Morgan Hill Historical Society and California Pioneers of Santa Clara County. Karen also is a docent for the Gilroy Museum and a passionate advocate for sharing her knowledge of and love of history

INNOVATION CAMPUS TIME CAPSULE



On Friday, September 19th, MUSD Superintendent Cheryl Jordan officiated in a ceremony for the burial of a time capsule to be reopened in twenty five years. Inside the time capsule were objects including staff rosters and yearbooks from each site, photographs of school activities, current technology devices, MUSD Culture of We Shwag, items from Milpitas Police and Fire Departments, items from the Milpitas Historical Society, printed newspapers and magazines, momentos from each school site, and various other time-appropriate artifacts.



NOTABLE PEOPLE

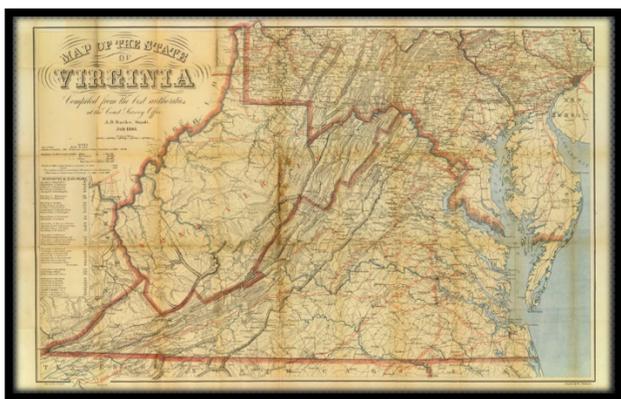
Matthew William Dixon: A West Virginian Comes West

WHO IS HE?

We have visible signs that Matthew Dixon must have had a significant role in Milpitas' history. In the northwestern section of the City, there are two streets and a park named for him: Dixon Landing Road (west of today's Milpitas Blvd.), Dixon Road (east of it), as well as Dixon Landing Park. No buildings or schools, however. Where did he come from and what did he do here that makes him so noteworthy?

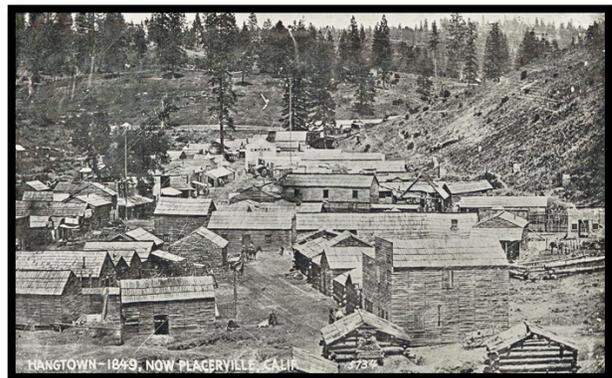
Matthew William Dixon Sr. was born on March 28, 1828 in Kanawha County, Virginia. Thirty five years later, in the midst of the Civil War, numerous northwestern counties withdrew from Virginia to form West Virginia, which joined the Union side of the conflict. Like many others, the Dixon family itself was divided in its belief on the issue of slavery. Matthew's two youngest brothers, William and James, joined the Union and Confederate Armies, and they could have been in the same battle shooting at each other.

Having said that, Matthew and his siblings had very deep roots as Virginians; his second great grandfather, Patrick Dixon, migrated from Scotland to the British American Colony of Virginia around 1750.



In 1840, Matthew's father, Abraham Ebenezer, with wife, six children, and possessions, moved to Fort Osage, Missouri, a slave state that did not side with the Confederacy during the Civil War. Three children, including William and James, were not yet born at the time of that migration.

Although Abraham remained in Missouri until his death in 1884, Matthew's path diverged in April 1849, a few days after his twenty-first birthday, when he became one of the California 49ers eagerly seeking their fortune in its gold fields. On his own, he set out for Hangtown, today's Placerville, and arrived in Sacramento at the end of September.

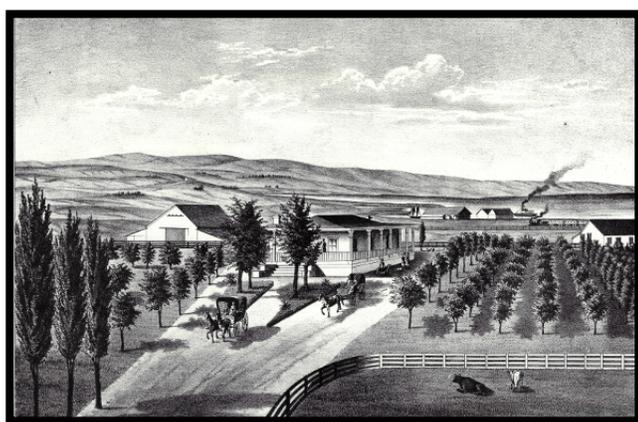
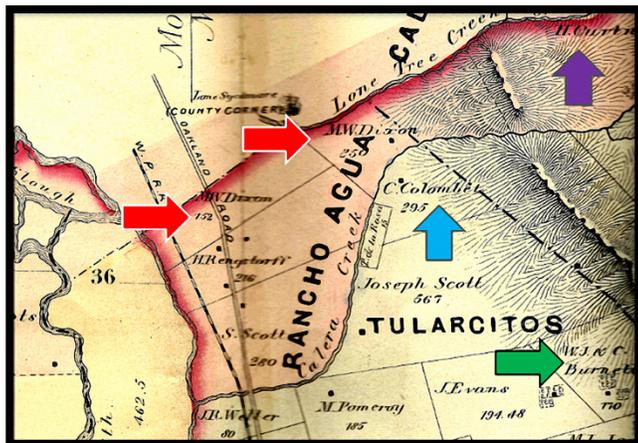


Matthew Dixon engaged in what was a very brief quest for gold, because in November 1849, only four weeks later, he left for Fremont Township (today's Mountain View), where he bought two parcels of land which he farmed until 1865. Further research should reveal the acreage that he purchased and from whom he bought it. That he was able to become a landowner so quickly suggests that he had "mined" enough gold to refocus his future efforts on the livelihood that had supported the Dixons ever since their first arrival in colonial America: dirt farming.

MATTHEW DIXON BUILDS A FUTURE

On July 21, 1852 Matthew married his first wife, Eliza Ann Whisman, with whom he would have three children (Julie Ann, James, and Rachel). As might be expected, his neighbors were his father-in-law, John Wilson Whisman, & brother-in-law, Andrew Whisman, which is a prominent family name for whom a street is named in Mountain View.

Keeping his Mountain View property, in 1861 Matthew purchased more farmland in southern Warm Springs (part of Rancho Agua Caliente that was part of Santa Clara County). Included were two parcels near Coyote and Lone Tree Creeks for 152 acres and 250 acres (marked with red arrows on the plat map). Also of interest are the other owners marked by blue and purple arrows, Clemente Colombet and Henry Curtner, as well as a host of famous Milpitas pioneer names on this map. Notables Captain Calvin Valpey and Andrew Whisman owned property to the north of Matthew. A sketch of his property follows.



His wife Eliza Ann passed away in May 1866 at the young age of 34, after which Matthew (now 38) married his second wife, Rhoda Anabelle Kavanaugh, age 23, with whom he would add four more children (Harriet, Matthew Jr, Virginia, and an adopted son, Michael Gillery).

Matthew's house was west of the Oakland Road (now Milpitas Blvd), and extending further west was a lane to two warehouses about where the Fremont Airport (now gone) was located (west of U.S. 880 and just north of Dixon Landing Road leading to Newby Island). The house was shaken off of its foundation during the 1868 Hayward Earthquake, pinning the long skirts of his mother between the porch and the wall of the house. The earthquake also collapsed one of his warehouses and 5,000 bushels of wheat fell into Coyote Slough on which sailing skows would load their cargo.

Matthew Dixon was elected to the County Board of Supervisors, serving two one-year terms in 1869 and 1870. He followed that with his election to the California State Assembly for two terms, 1874-75 and 1876-77.

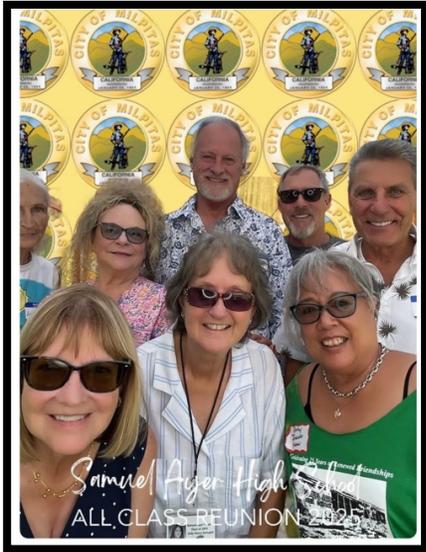
In the early 1900s Matthew moved away from his fruit farm and was residing in Brooklyn Township in Oakland. His farmhouse had since been moved into Milpitas and became the Abel house on Main Street near St. John the Baptist Church. He finally moved to a house in Vallejo where he died on November 17, 1915.

MATTHEW DIXON'S LEGACY

Matthew's creation of Dixon Landing on the Coyote Slough, a shallow-water shipping port where skows competed with the deep-water Port of Alviso, not only led to his own business success but also helped many other growers in Milpitas and the Warm Springs area succeed. He could store their agricultural production in his warehouses when demand was slack and wait for higher prices when demand increased. He also accepted the responsibility of serving in elected public positions to improve the lives of his neighbors and fellow citizens. He indeed led a noteworthy life and it is for these deeds that he is recognized in Milpitas history.

Written by Joseph Ehardt, October 2025

SAMUEL AYER H.S. ALL-CLASS REUNION



OCT 26th, MILPITAS MONSTER SHOW IN NILES



Here Our Society's Contact Information

You can contact the Milpitas Historical Society:

- by mail at 160 N. Main St., Milpitas CA 95035
- by email at tmhs@milpitashistoricalsociety.org
- our website: <http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>
- by land-line at 1-408-262-1776 (Bill)