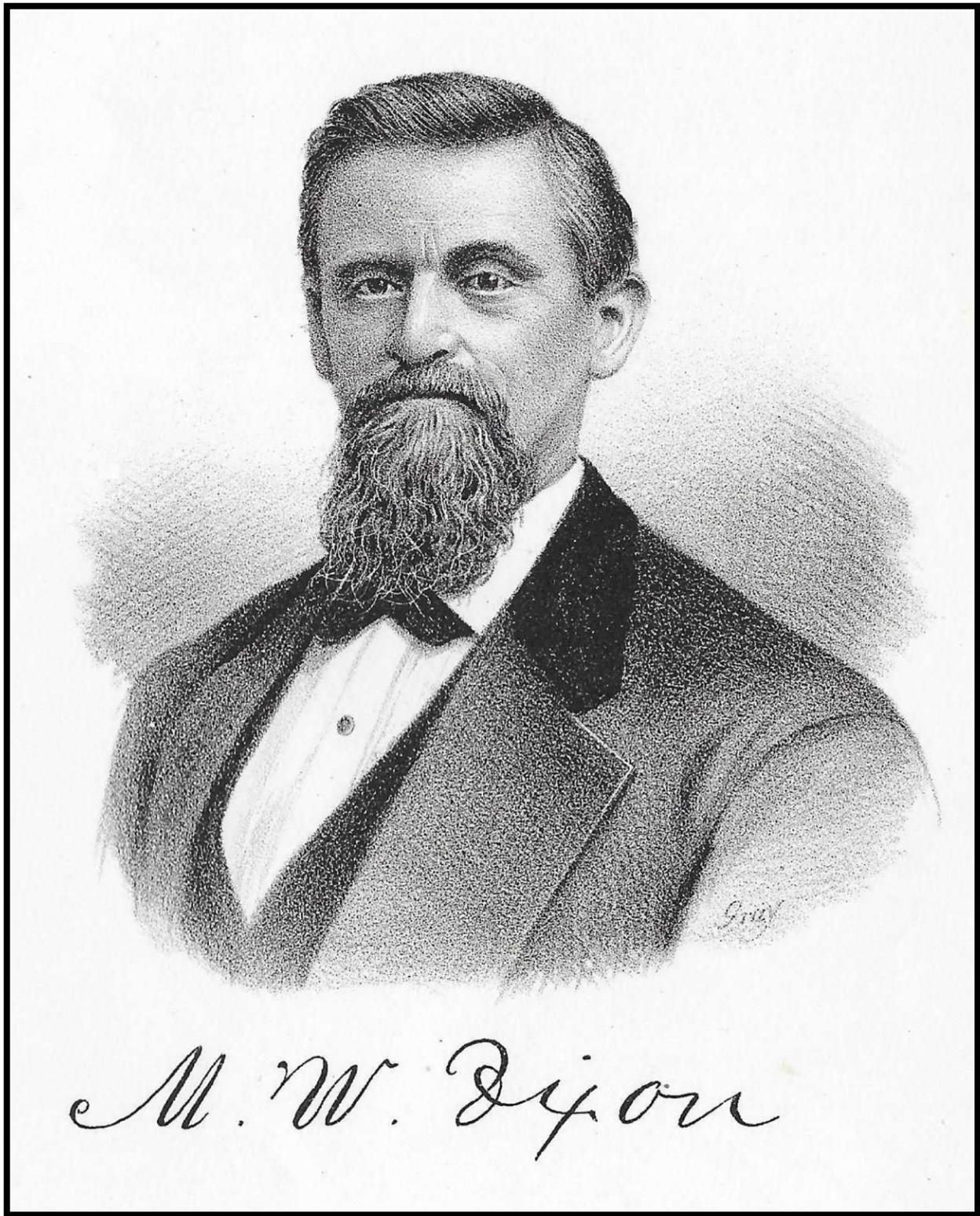


**NOTABLE PEOPLE OF MILPITAS & WARM SPRINGS**  
**Matthew William Dixon: A West Virginian Comes West**



## NOTABLE PEOPLE OF MILPITAS & WARM SPRINGS

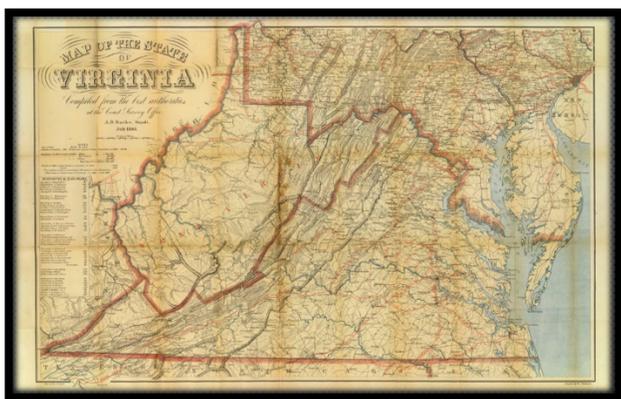
### Matthew William Dixon: A West Virginian Comes West

#### 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?

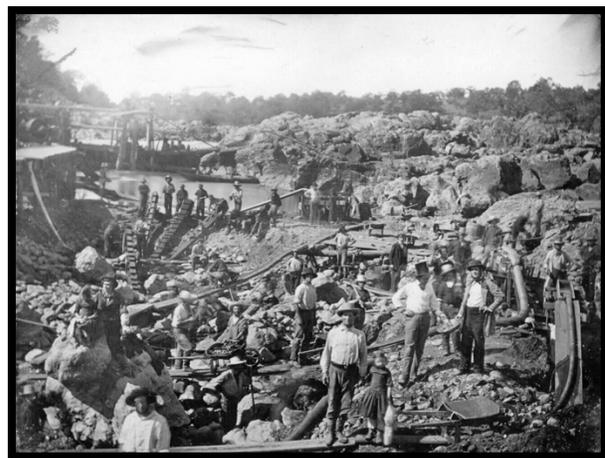
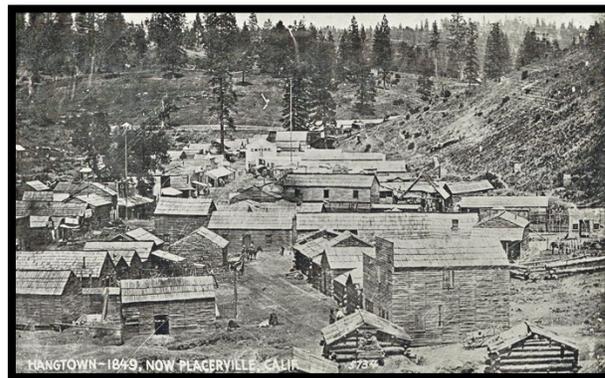
Matthew William Dixon Sr. was born on March 28, 1828 in Kanawha County, Virginia. Thirty five years later, in the midst of the Civil War, numerous northwestern counties withdrew from Virginia to form West Virginia, which joined the Union side of the conflict. Like many others, the Dixon family itself 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.

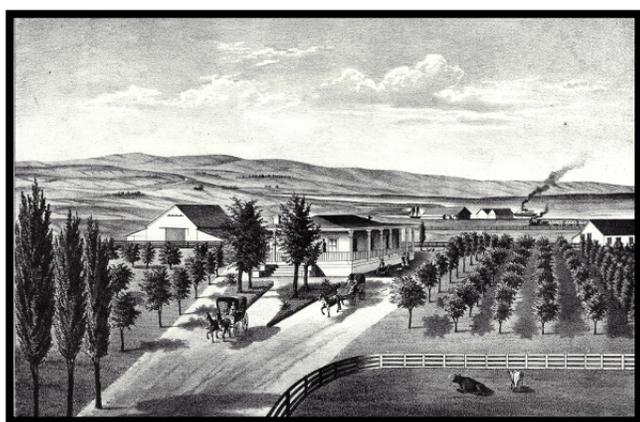
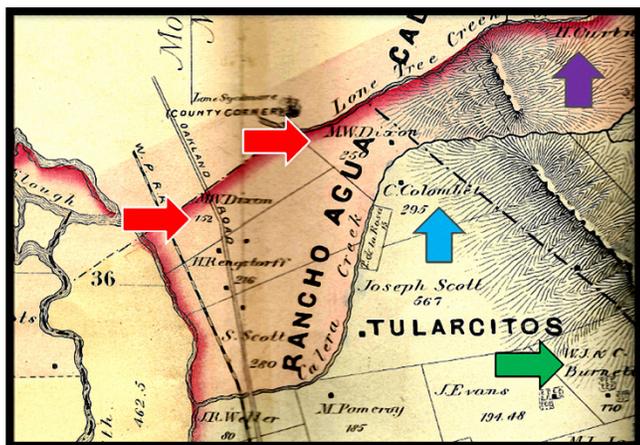


Matthew Dixon engaged in what was a very brief quest for gold, because in November 1849, only four weeks later, he left for Fremont Township (today's Mountain View), where he bought two parcels of land which he farmed until 1865. Further research should reveal the acreage that he purchased and from whom 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 was 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).

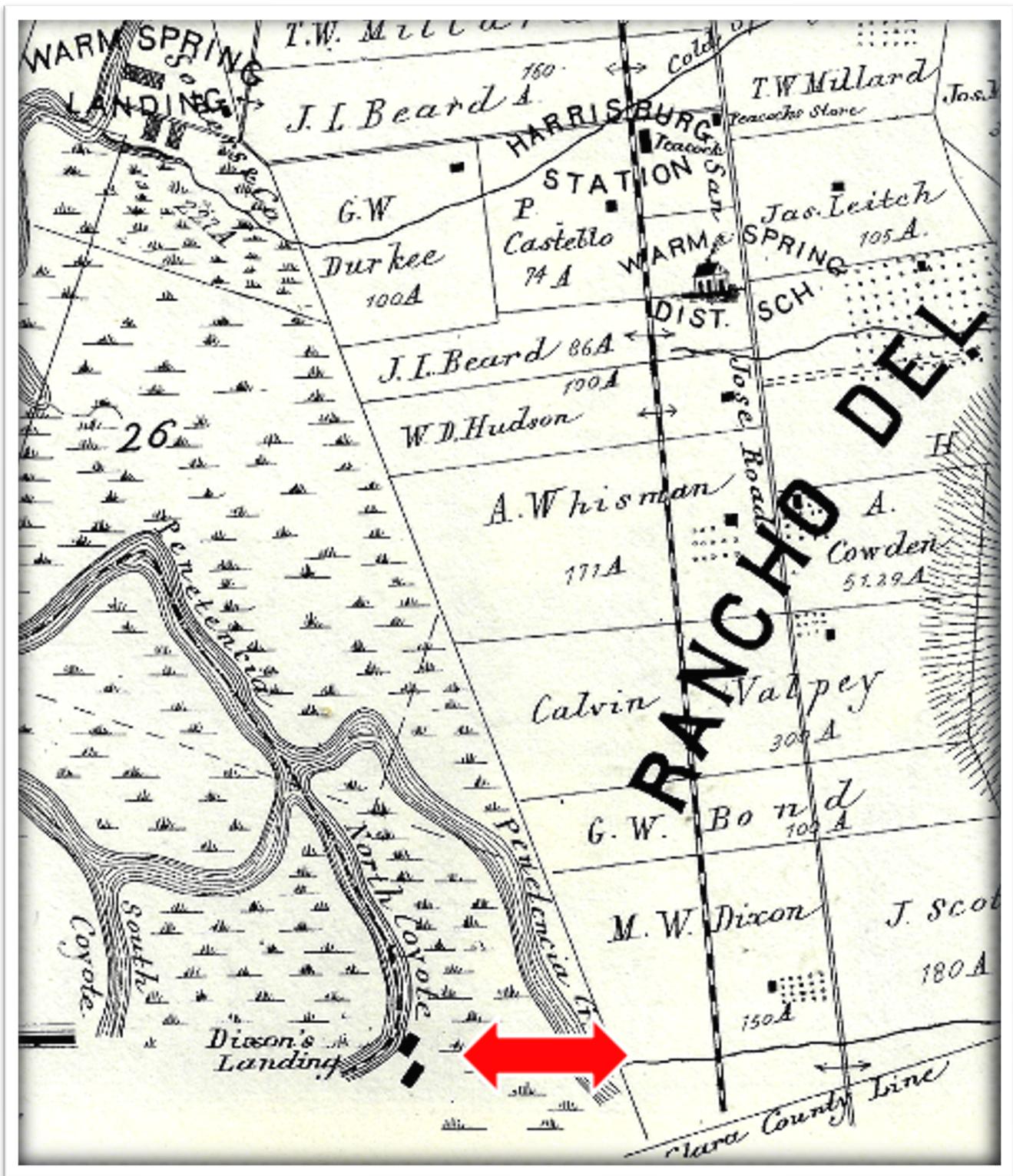
Matthew's house was west of the Oakland Road (now Milpitas Blvd), and extending further west was a lane to two warehouses about where the Fremont Airport (now gone) was located (west of U.S. 880 and just north of Dixon Landing Road leading to Newby Island). The house was shaken off of its foundation 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 scows 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 scows 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.



This detailed plat map (Number 3 in *The Historical Atlas Map of Alameda County, 1878*) shows Matthew Dixon's property in Warm Springs (what originally would have been part of Rancho Agua Caliente). Harrisburg was his postal mail address. Dixon Landing is located on North Coyote Creek and his two warehouses are plainly marked with black rectangles. To the east is the Western Pacific R.R. line coming up from Milpitas Station, and between it and the Oakland Highway is Dixon's house with an orchard or plantings of some sort. To the north of Matthew Dixon are the properties of Captain Calvin Valpey and Andrew Whisman (Matthew's brother-in-law).

Originally written in October 2025 and expanded in November by Joseph Ehardt,  
 Milpitas Historical Society, docent and Director of Educational Outreach