

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Berwick Orchard

When the interest in pears and pear growing and shipping is at its height, it seems fitting that history should go back a bit and relate the life story of one of the first growers and shippers of the Carmel Valley—Mr. Edward Berwick, the father of Mrs. Mabel B. Mason, the present owner of the Berwick Orchard.

Mr. Berwick came to the valley in 1869 and bought 100 acres of fertile land, where for over half a century he engaged intensively in dairying, gardening and fruit growing. He made his property a model country place which in some countries might have been termed an experimental farm. The pears which he developed became famous for their quality—he was a real pioneer of the Carmel Valley pear packers.

When Mr. Berwick first came to the Valley he named his ranch "Carmel Gardens." On the place was a Winter Nelis tree then seventeen years old. It is still in perfect condition, reports Mrs. Mason, even though it is almost a century old. In 1886 the apple and pear trees he planted were producing for Del Monte Hotel guests. Soon he was shipping to San Francisco and Los Angeles markets. These markets demanded wrapped and packed fruit which Mr. Berwick had done by Chinese help, under the Berwick brand. Before 1900 Mr. Berwick's son, Ted Berwick, took over the management of the orchard and shipped to New York under the family brand, which is still used. He tried the English markets for apples two years but the prices did not satisfy him.

After packing at home in the Valley, the fruit was hauled to the Southern Pacific depot by two very large lumber wagons, drawn by six and eight horses. There they were loaded into reefers and braced with good lumber and car strips. The train crew had only to ice the cars while in transit.

As time went on, Mrs. Mason told us, changes from the Chinese to American packers took place. The fruit house had to be enlarged as the business grew, and a modern electric washer, sorting table, and carrier to the packing bins and labeler, was added. And of course the horses were replaced by a modern truck when they became available in the market.

The story of the life of Mr. Berwick on the Monterey Peninsula is also a history of the Peninsula and Monterey County. He was born in London, England, January 25, 1843. He arrived the California July 17, 1865. His first association was with Joeffry Cullen on the Piojo rancho of 13,000 acres at San Antonio Mission, and extensive dairy and hog ranch. He also operated on the San Miguelito ranch of 22,000 acres and the Santa Rita ranch of 750 acres. During those years he was an extensive producer of cheese, butter, hogs and beef cattle.

Mr. Berwick was known as the "Father of Parcel Post" and his daughter has a scrap book filled with his writing urging the adoption of the proposed project of sending parcels through the mail.

As early as 1885 Berwick was lecturing on Chautauqua platforms in California in behalf of World Federation. Even in the 1870's he was carrying on a campaign in behalf of an Isthmian Canal and in 1895 he was chairman of a committee of California Fruit growers to promote the construction of such a canal. In 1893 he became the first president of the California Postal Progress League, fighting for parcel post and postal saving banks, and was made vice-president of the New York League.

Mr. Berwick became a member of the San Francisco Commonwealth Club in 1903 and for nearly 30 years he was a member of the California Academy of Sciences.

Many years ago Mr. Berwick taught school in the Carmel Valley where he had an average attendance of seven pupils. He built one of the first houses in Pacific Grove in 1881, and later another home on Ocean View boulevard, opposite the park which bears his name. In this park there is a stone on which is a tablet bearing the inscription: "This tree was planted to honor Edward Berwick, our splendid private citizen, by the Neighbors Club, May 12, 1930."

It will be interesting to continue this life story of Edward Berwick with a Diary review of his fight for parcel post.