

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Old Berwick House

As I watched the old Edward Berwick house on Ocean View boulevard in Pacific Grove being wrecked a few weeks ago, I looked back to the delightful evenings I had spent in that home with Mr. and Mrs. Berwick. He had built one of the first houses there in 1881, and later the one just mentioned which was opposite the park which bears his name. In this park there is a stone on which is a tablet bearing this inscription: "This tree was planted to the honor of Edward Berwick, our splendid private citizen, by the Neighbors Club, May 12, 1930."

When the interest in pears and pear – growing and shipping was at its height, Mr. Berwick was one of the first growers and shippers in the Carmel valley, so it is proper to go back a bit and relate the life story of this fine old gentleman.

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 would be termed an experimental farm. The pears 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 Neilis tree then 17 years old. It was still in good condition when it was a century old, Mrs. Mabel Mason, daughter of Mr. Berwick told me at that time.

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. Later Mrs. Mason became the manager and lived in the ranch house.

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 lumber and car

strips. The train crew had only to ice the cars while in transit.

As time went on the late Mrs. Mason told me, changes from the Chinese to American packers took place. The fruit houses 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 also is a history of the Peninsula and Monterey County. He was born in London, England, Jan. 25, 1843. He arrived in California July 17, 1865. His first association was with Jeoffry Cullen on the Piojo Rancho of 13,000 acres at San Antonio Mission, an extensive dairy and hog ranch. He also operated on the San Miguelito ranch of 22,000 acres and 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 had a scrap book filled with his writings 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 work federation. Even in the 1870's he was carrying on a campaign in behalf of sanitation. During the 1890's he wrote and spoke in behalf of the 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 savings banks, and was made vice-president of the New York League.

Mr. Berwick became a member of San Francisco Commonwealth Club in 1903 and for nearly thirty 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 the home which has just been torn down.