

The Green Bays At Evergreen

By MARGARET KOCH
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Evergreen Cemetery is one of the oldest Protestant cemeteries in California — not THE oldest, but close.

It lies between Evergreen Street and the hill, tucked away in a pocket of earth that is folded into the surrounding sandstone.

It's a steep little graveyard, it climbs the hill, scattering old marble headstones in unexpected places, hiding them in wild growths of ivy, beneath tangled rose bushes, behind trees.

Trees grow well there on the north slope of the hill. Families have planted firs, cedars and ornamentals among the grave plots to keep their loved ones company.

But the entire hill behind the cemetery is a mass of native trees, some very old, all furnishing a handsome backdrop for the white stones and scattered white fences that surround some plots.

There are redwoods, fine old oaks and the Laurel. The Laurel is also known as the Oregon Myrtle, the Pepper nut, and is best known to Californians as the California Bay tree (*Umbellularia californica*). The fine-grained white wood of this tree is carved and sold as Oregon Myrtle in a variety of bowls and souvenirs.

The use of the tree's pungent leaves goes back in California to early Spanish days when those hardy settlers discovered their seasoning and medicinal qualities. Spaniards dried the leaves, then put them into soups and stews for flavor. They used the fresh-picked leaves for a headache cure — the strong smell was supposed to do the trick, and sometimes they bound the leaves around the forehead of the patient. For stomach aches they fastened fresh leaves around the abdomen and left them there for a day or two.

Bay leaf tea was a common remedy for colds and stomach aches. Later on, the Yankee pioneers combined it with the eye-smarting oil of Bay leaves to make an ointment for rheumatism.

Before the Spaniards and Yankees came to California, the Costanoan Indians were wise in the use of the Bay tree. When their brush houses became infested with fleas, they lined them with branches of the strong-smelling Bay leaves and the fleas promptly departed . . . or so it is said.

The Indians ate the nuts of the Bay tree, roasting them first to destroy their bitter flavor. Right now, at this season, the Bay trees are bearing clusters of tiny greenish-yellow flowers, giving the entire tree a green-gold look. At Evergreen they lend a spice to the air and a curtain of green, just a few feet away from the traffic of a busy freeway. The cemetery was designated a State Point of Interest two years ago, at the instigation of the Evergreen Cemetery Association and the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors.

When Evergreen was established in 1850, the main

road from the San Lorenzo Valley went past the cemetery and up the hill, about where the freeway cuts through today, then down Green Street and into the town of Santa Cruz.

There were about 20 American families living in Santa Cruz then, among them the Cases and Arcans, both prominent pioneer clans and both closely associated with Evergreen.

Mrs. Mary Amney Case founded the town's first secular school in her home on the edge of Neary Lagoon. Her Husband Benjamin Case was president of the first Temperance Society in California, organized in Santa Cruz. Mary and Benjamin are buried in Evergreen.

Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Arcan (sometimes spelled Arcane) survived the ordeal of Death Valley, first in wagons, then on foot as their oxen died one by one. And Mrs. Arcan named the sandy furnace the "Valley of Death" which later was shortened to Death Valley.

The Arcans buried their small daughter Julia in Evergreen. She was the first person to be laid to rest there.

History stalks among the gravestones and trees of Evergreen. A fierce and bumptious man lies there . . . Captain Isaac Graham had a quick trigger finger and a quick eye for a pretty woman.

He left a wife and family in Tennessee to make his fortune trapping fur animals "out West." He left trapping to run a still near Natividad where he cooked up the colorless firewater so dear to the Spaniards. Then he came to Zayante to run the state's first power sawmill for awhile, and to gain control of Zayante Rancho.

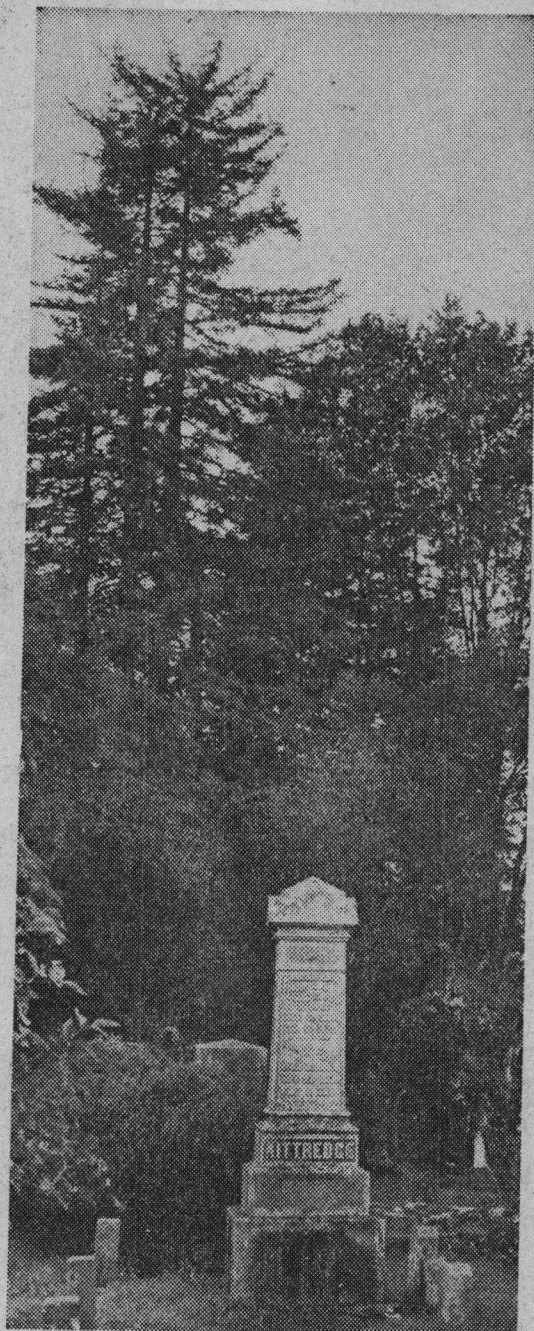
Graham's quick temper and outspoken ways got him involved in Mexican politics and he was sent to Mexico in chains in 1840, aboard a sailing ship. Many men his age (40's) would have died under the tortuous conditions of Mexican jails and ships of those days — and several of his fellow prisoners did.

But not Graham.

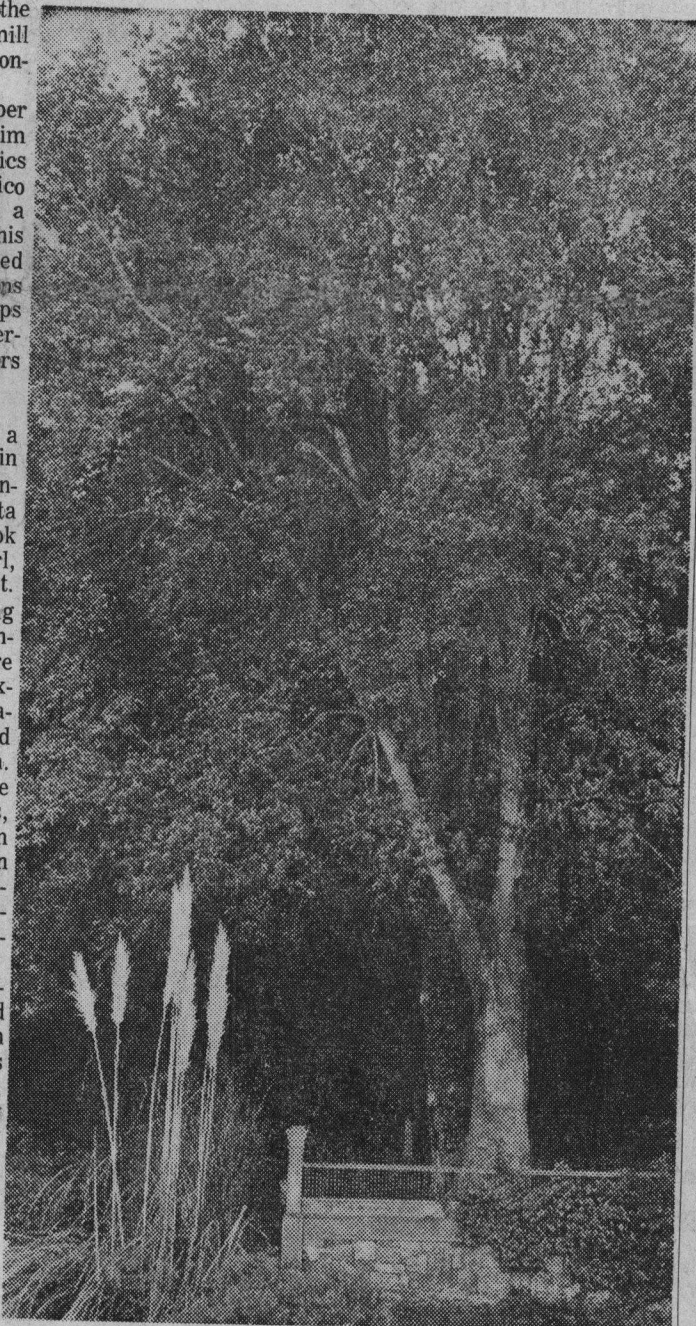
He survived to collect a fat compensation in gold coin from the Mexican government, and to return to Santa Cruz County. In 1845 he took to wife a pretty young girl, Tillatha Catherine Bennett. Then he survived a shooting feud that began when Catherine's brothers, who were defending her honor, exchanged pot shots with Graham's grown sons who had followed him to California.

Catherine fled with the couple's two baby daughters, Graham tracked her down and brought the children back to Santa Cruz. The untidy court battle that followed over custody, made California legal history.

One of Graham's daughters, 14-year-old Annie, died in 1863 and was buried in Evergreen. Eleven months later, the rip-roaring Isaac, who had quieted considerably with age, was laid to rest beside her.



Redwoods, Bays and Oaks form majestic background for the Kittredge family plot. Dr. Francis M. Kittredge built large home on Beach Hill in mid-70's, still standing, and served in lower house of state legislature in 1852. Below, large Bay tree appears to grow from center of grave at Evergreen Cemetery.



On The Club Calendar

Malta Shrine meets at 8 p.m. Monday at Masonic

Temple. The scheduled ceremonial has been cancelled.