

BRIEF HISTORY
Bay Area Research & Extension Center (BAREC)
90 Winchester Boulevard, Santa Clara
By Sharon McCray

This is a brief history of the 17.5-acre parcel on Winchester Road in Santa Clara that had three unique organizations on it from 1886 to 2003 (home for feeble-minded children, home for children and orphans of Civil War Veterans, and the University of California Agricultural Research Extension Center). Much of this information has been collected from San Jose Evening News newspaper articles, dating back to the 1940. Deeds and other relevant information have been gleaned from other reliable resources. According to phone books at the California Room in the San Jose Library, Doctor A. E. Osborne owned the original 18 acres. From 1886 to 1919 Dr. Osborne was the administrator for Osborne Hall, a home for feeble-minded children. It was unique to the West Coast with progressive ways to treat children with disabilities. Dr. Osborne stops being listed in the phone book as a physician in 1916 and it was confirmed by the state that they acquired the property from Dr. Osborne in approximately 1919. There are no records available to detail the terms of that acquisition and it is assumed that the property contained a medical facility of some sort. In 1920 Dr. Osborne became a State Senator.

Following is a brief history of the Women's Relief Corp and the role of the land as a hospital.

Women' Relief Corps Home
125 Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road
Santa Clara
1928-1962

In 1866, Civil War veterans of the Union Army and Navy established The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Founded and headed by prominent military, membership peaked in 1890 with more than 400,000 members. The mission was to strengthen the bonds of comradeship, to preserve the memory of their fallen comrades (they secured the adoption of both Flag and Memorial Day) to give aid to soldiers' widows and orphans and to handicapped veterans, and most of all, to fight for pension increases and other benefits.

Auxiliary societies associated the GAR included the Sons of Veterans (1881), the Women's Relief Corp (1883), and the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic (1886). The organization held its last encampment in 1949 and the last GAR member died in 1956.

To meet their mission, the Women's Relief Corps built and operated a hospital for widows and veterans on 5 acres in the Evergreen area of San Jose on Cadwallader Road. The corner stone for this home was set April 6, 1889 and the property dedicated December 28, 1889. The five-acre property housed "inmates" until October 10, 1920, when it burned to the ground. The inmates were housed in private residences until a suitable property could be found. It should be noted that there were only three such homes in the nation. It is reported that a facility in Santa Clara replaced the Evergreen home.

After the fire, the women were eventually moved to another facility on the subject property in Santa Clara. It is believed, from oral accounts, that those structures were demolished in the mid-1950. In 1928's, the building at 125 Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road (90 North Winchester Road) was completed. Designed by University of California Davis Architectural students and constructed of redwood from Sanborn Park in

Saratoga, the building not occupied by University of California researches until 1963. In 2003 the property was returned to the State of California.

From 1928 until 1962, the property housed the remainder of the original Cadwallader “inmates”. In 1947, there remained 43 “old ladies”. On June 11, 1947, the State Assembly, by a poll of 54 to 20, voted to close the Women’s Relief Corps Home. Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon stopped a similar action in 1942 and Assemblyman Thompson of San Jose gave notice that he would ask for reconsideration of the measure. Somehow the facility was saved and continued as a state budget item, with \$39,500 included with California Governor Goodwin J. Knight’s 1956-57 budget.

In May 1954, the hospital was leased to Charles N. and Genevieve (formerly Mrs. Charette) Holderman and the name of the facility was changed to the Holderman Sanitarium. The Holderman’s operated with a lease operating agreement with the State; the property belonged to the Veterans Dept. Governor Warren signed the bill, which permitted the lease in 1954. Mr. Holderman’s father was the son of Col. Nelson M. Holderman, commandant of the California Veterans’ Home in Yountville. As a condition of the lease agreement, 25 new patients could be added to the facility.

Note:

Because of declining in patient numbers (admissions had been closed since 1947), it was considered by the County that they take it over and use it for the care of the aged. Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon stated that the buildings on the site were a bunch of shacks and that the county would probably not be interested in taking over the site for that reason.

In 1951 the home was operated by the Veterans Bureau of California and hosted 23 patients.

In 1958 the State Department of Veterans Affairs began construction of the existing building at 70 North Winchester (.543 acres): the VA currently occupies the building. At various times, Winchester Road is referred to as Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road and curbing near the site, reflects that name.

In 1959, the WRC, Nevada and California convened at the Hotel Saint Claire. The 150 attending members whose goal was to raise money for a museum in Springfield, Illinois.

In 1961 there remained two survivors at the “Holderman Facility” and the Governor’s budget recommendation of \$10,600 to continue their care validates the commitment of the state to this facility and its patients.

In 1962, the final surviving patient, Eva Simpkins, was moved to a newer facility owned by the Holdermans at 340 Lakelake Drive, and on February 3, 1963, the San Jose News reported that the remaining 5 acres of the site would be transferred to the University of California. Miss Simpkins died March 1966. She was 18 when stricken with polio and admitted to the Cadwallader home in 1911. She was bedridden the remainder of her life. Her father was a civil war veteran.

A review of the records at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum indicates that there was a Los Gatos chapter of the WRC. Newspaper clippings from 1931-1932 are all that are available from this collection, along with some photos of different members from various California Chapters.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Bay Area Research and Extension Center
90 North Winchester Road
Santa Clara
1920-2003

After the Agricultural Stations in Mountain View and Willow Glen were closed, the operation moved to the back 13 acres of the property and was known as the Deciduous Fruit Experiment Station. It is reported that they operated through a “gentlemen’s agreement” and were carrying out their research on “borrowed land”.

An undated history, unsigned, states that the Deciduous Fruit Field Station moved to 125 N. Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road in 1920, but did not purchase the land or build on it. It appears that the facility in Mountain View was leased for five years and it was closed in 1926. At the urging of influential farmers a temporary station was opened in 1927 on Settle Avenue in Willow Glen.

The report goes on to say that 13 acres were leased from the WRC in 1928 at the site on Santa Clara-Los Gatos Road. The WRC owned a total of 18 acres.

In 1950, UC was contemplating the closure of the research facility. The rich agricultural community that included 23 growers fought the closure.

A measure to transfer title of the property, to the University of California was before the Assembly Committee on April 22, 1951. It was noted that if UC wishes to discontinue use of the property for agricultural purposes, then title would automatically go to State Dept of Finance.

Alfred W. Amstutz graduated from Campbell High School and promptly went to work at the station where he remained for the next 40 years. During those days both Shasta and Lassen strawberries were developed at the property and others, including Fresno and Tioga followed with better flavor. Research continued with tomatoes, and smog control issues. Because farmers were being blamed for so much pollution because of burning the cuttings from their fruit trees, Amstutz worked with new methods of disposal including chipping and grinding up the plant material.

The demands of the agricultural community prevailed and kept the station open for several decades.

A January 18, 1956 Planning Commission Report stated that UC took title to the property (10 acres) in 1937. There is also a Deed dated March 13, 1963, transferring 5.08 acres to UC, recorded Book 6003, Page 8, Inst. # 2393103. This deed also referenced .543 acres that was not a part of the transaction (existing Veterans building).

In 1975, a deed was recorded transferring .060 acres to the City of Santa Clara for road widening. Book 618, Page 34, Inst. #5102163

In 1983, Tom Kretchun, the superintendent of the facility noted that the focus of the research had shifted to the backyard gardener. The research focused on the needs of the homeowner's and their water usage.

The Bay Area Research and Extension Center closed on January 1, 2002. The promised \$2 million permanent augmentation to the Cooperative Extension that was part of the original deal, was never realized and UCCE received \$1 million for the transfer of the total 17.5 agricultural property. Left behind were 3 greenhouses, a shop, historical home and shop, potting shed, remaining experiments including oak trees, and outbuildings. The pump for the working water well was removed.

Prepared by Sharon McCray for VIVA (Valley Initiative for Values in Agriculture)