

CAPTAIN JOHN GREER (Greensburg)

Captain John Greer came to San Francisco aboard the bark, *Wild Duck*, in 1850, a year and a few months after the discovery of gold. He was welcomed by a forest of masts from abandoned ships, whose crews had fled to the gold fields. This dedicated Irish Presbyterian, who was born on August 22, 1808, at Armagh, Lurgan County, Ireland, came south rather than north, and with a small crew, floated down the bay to the mouth of the San Francisquito Creek, which they sailed as far up as possible.

The travelers came upon an Indian woman who was busy washing clothes in the stream. She volunteered to bring them to her friend, who spoke Spanish. She led them to a small adobe,



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which was the estate of the Soto family. Captain Greer met Maria Louisa Copinger and fell in love with her. Louisa was the widow of John Copinger, who had received the Mexican land grant of the area in the vicinity of today's King's Mountain Road and Woodside Road. The Greer home was on the northwest corner of those two roads. Farther up King's Mountain Road, just past Dr. Tripp's store—John's good friend—you find Greer Avenue, named after John.

Times were difficult in Greensburg during the later 1850s. Making a living was a very challenging problem, especially as the lumber industry was, at best, just beginning. Greer had little or no knowledge about such occupations. When the tax bill on the 5,880 acres became due, the Greer family was unable to pay, and the property was purchased by Benjamin Lathrop. The family moved to the Soto home in Mayfield, but they were able to exercise their equity of redemption in the Greensburg property and reclaim the land through a lawsuit. They moved back to Greensburg in 1869.

John Greer served as Justice of the Peace for Greensburg, which was growing every month, although not by much. It never did become much more than a number of houses and shacks with families and children. Greer loved the children, and so he decided to start a school for them. The school grew, and a board of trustees was established and, of course, John was on the board. Another need was a library, so John Greer and Andrew Teague started the first library in San Mateo County in what is now Woodside. That town grew around the little town of Greensburg, which then ceased to exist as a town.

Some of the older youth enjoyed the pastime of going up to Whiskey Hill and watching the antics of the drunks, as they staggered toward their horses , often unable to untie them from the hitching rack. This bothered Greer, as he was a staunch anti-alcoholic. He did what he thought best for the community and built a Temperance Hall, where the children could find activities that were more productive. He then donated land for a larger school for the growing population. He also donated land on the northwest corner of Canada and Edgewood roads for a school for the students of West Union. (See the West Union essay in this book.)

When Greer died on February 13, 1885, he could not be buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Menlo Park with the rest of his family since he was still a Presbyterian. Holy Cross was consecrated by Archbishop Joseph Alemany in 1883 and was closed to all but Catholics.

In the process of finding a final resting place for Greer, the decision was made to bury him in Union Cemetery. However, when they learned that the ground was only consecrated to six feet deep, they had John is buried in Union Cemetery in plot 156, very close to the front gate, and he is buried nine feet deep. A very nice red rose on the plot celebrates this wonderful man. He was 76 years old when he passed.