

## Henry Beeger

By: John Edmonds

Redwood City Democrat, Thursday, February 24, 1898: "Henry Beeger, the affectionate, attentive husband, the kind indulgent father, the loyal friend, the enterprising public spirited citizen, the generous warm hearted man and the conscientious, painstaking official, is no more. All that was mortal of this good and justly popular man was laid beneath the sod of Union Cemetery on Sunday last, the large funeral cortege attesting the high esteem in which he was held by his



*Henry Beeger*

fellow men."

Another silent but impressive evidence of the strong hold deceased had upon the hearts of his neighbors was the wealth of floral offerings bestowed as tribute to this wonderful man.

When Henry and Mary first arrived in California, they first settled in Oakland and the first tannery was built at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> in East Oakland. His partner in that effort was, Adam Espenlaub. Henry was



*Beeger Tanning Company*

living at 1113 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue at that time. In 1878 he came to Redwood City and in 1880 he established "The Beeger Tannery" at 343 Lathrop Street.



*Mary Wahl Beeger*

Henry Beeger married his wife Mary Wahl in Stuttgart before he left Germany and she stood by him throughout his life, taking over the tannery business when Henry died in 1885. She was still the president of the tannery in 1927 when her sons

Carl C. Beeger and Henry A. Beeger were vice president and secretary treasurer. Henry and Mary had four daughters as well as the two sons; they were Julia, Trudy, Pauline and Lulu. Trudy taught school for 30 years in Redwood City.

The Beeger Tannery on Lathrop Street was a monument to success as it became famous throughout the country and beyond. It was not just the factory itself because there were other tanneries before Henry's; however it was Henry's wonderful personality and his generous friendship to everyone in his path that made the tannery so special. Henry was a dedicated member of the Masonic Order in Redwood City. He was also a member of the International Order of Redmen, the Redwood City Chapter. One of the jobs he enjoyed the most was his voluntary position as fire chief of the Redwood City Fire Department. An organization that is not well understood also claimed Henry as a dedicated member, the organization was called, "Chosen Friends."

Henry was a businessman first and foremost, he had a sense of excellence in the product he produced and he was recognized for his complete and trustworthy honesty. The tanned products were sent all over the world via shipping from Redwood Creek and by railroad. When Henry's death was published, the condolences came from all over the county and the world. He was loved by people everywhere.



*The Beeger Daughters: Julia, Trudy Pauline and Lulu Beeger*

The procession to Union Cemetery was obvious evidence of this love as hundreds of people gathered at the grave site amongst thousands of flowers both from mourners and the beauty of the cemetery roses themselves.

The huge monument on plot #52R is another form of evidence to Henry's esteem. It is the largest single monument in Union Cemetery and it probably is not what Henry would have preferred. He was not a man of vanity and his efforts at perfection in his labors did not extend to himself, although he certainly extended great love to his family and friends.

Henry Beeger did not build the first tannery in Redwood City or, indeed he didn't build the building that he bought on Lathrop Street from George Wentworth and Peter Doyle. The first tannery in Redwood City was built by Joseph Krieg and it was a small building called, "The Redwood City Tannery" and this is the building that Henry purchased and made it a very large building. Wentworth opened a "Wentworth Boot and Shoe Company" using the material tanned in his building and developing it into foot ware. He too was a very successful businessman.

There were a number of other tanneries following Kreig's beginnings and ending with the well remembered "Frank's Tannery."

I found two entries for the Beeger family in the Redwood City standard, both in March 1923, the first, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1923: "Mrs. Mary Beeger has awarded a contract to Harry Arnold, local builder, for the construction of a beautiful home on her property at the corner of Hopkins Avenue and Fulton Street. The house will be two stories and will contain fourteen rooms. All the floors will be finished in



*Henry A. Beeger*



*Dove E. Hart  
Beeger*

hardwood and the stairway will be of mahogany. The cost of the new home when completed will be close to \$20,000. According to terms of the contract the house is to be ready for occupancy by Mrs. Beeger and her family about the first of July. Work was started on the building Monday.

The second on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1923: "City Trustee Henry A. Beeger has purchased a lot at the corner of Hopkins Avenue and Duane Street, Redwood City from Mrs. J.J. Bullock and he will shortly begin the erection of a new residence thereon. The structure will be built in the English Cottage style. The new home will be completed in June, when Trustee Beeger will take as his bride, Miss Dove E. Hart, popular young woman of San Mateo.

Dove E. Hart was a graduate of the University of California and worked for a substantial time as the person in charge of the x-ray and laboratory work at the Mills Memorial Hospital in San Mateo.

The Redwood City Tribune wrote, upon Mrs. Henry A. (Dove) Beeger's death in 1964: "Few persons have done more to make the Redwood City area a better place in which to live than Mrs. Henry A. (Dove) Beeger, who died Tuesday.

Mrs. Beeger, a most gracious person, was primarily identified with Sequoia Hospital, of which she was a founder. She felt the need of a hospital here from the time she moved to Redwood City more than 40 years ago. She assisted in a survey of hospital needs, was a member of the founders committee and had been a member of the hospital board of directors since 1951.

Her tireless work toward the realization of a dream for a hospital in this area won for her the title of Redwood City outstanding citizen of 1946. In recognition of her dedicated service, a park near Sequoia Hospital last year was named "Dove Beeger Park."

Mrs. Beeger, a devoted wife, mother and grandmother, also was active in many other civic affairs.

To have known Mrs. Beeger was to add to the worthwhileness of life. We have lost a trusted friend. Our sympathies are with her family."