

profile: Centennial Edition for October 18
PARSONS, Henry Fell

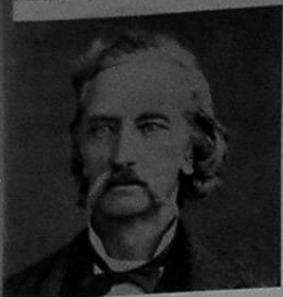


Photo from Rose Rastrom coll., courtesy pub. lib.
 Credited with naming Watsonville a redwood point, the first after Judge Jos. Watson, the latter from the fact that the clipper ship *Carrier Pigeon* went aground there . . . both sailing from an attempt to clearly define certain county records.

Born at Barton Hall, near Manchester, N.H., Oct. 5 '22. He says he came to NY as an infant, his county histories usually say at age 11 for a year, then back to England to school, returned to NY City at age 16 to accept a clerkship in the dry-goods importing office of two older brothers. In '44 naturalized in the metropolis, being an agent for his brothers at Market and Third streets, Philadelphia, and by '48 principal in the wholesale house of Parsons & Moul, Main St., St. Louis, Mo. Date of arrival in Calif. not clearly indicated either on the pioneer rolls or in his statements, of which I possess several, all contradictory; probably on the heels of his sister, Mrs. Dr. John Frederick, and her husband, who arrived in '48.

Made trip with three companions, bringing a daguerrotype outfit under contract with a Philadelphia firm to make views of the scenery along the plains; abandoned when it was found impossible to keep the apparatus in order while transporting it in pack saddles.

By time the gold rush of '49 was producing results Parsons with Rueben Durham had trading post in Carson Valley between Mormon Station and the mouth of Carson canyon; engaged in mining in El Dorado co.

On the pioneer roll his arrival is given as July 4 '50, undoubtedly dating his arrival in Sta Cruz. Surely from this time he was one of the most prominent men of this region.

Parsons hints he came here at that time to engage in mining; perhaps true, for in the formative years, and, indeed, up to modern times a great deal of prospecting for all manner of minerals has from time to time excited the community, but the record would indicate he had little time for prospecting. With James Skeene filed a preemption claim at the mouth of Soquel creek (said to be the first in the county, (which simply is not true) abandoned when shown it was part of a rancho and said by one biographer upon his death to have practiced dentistry during the '50s with an office in '60 next door to the Wells Fargo office on Main (now Front) street, but I assume this has reference to Dr. George Parsons, no relative, (q. v.). In early records it is almost impossible to keep these two men separate, but the conflicts noted above were due, I think, to his biographers.

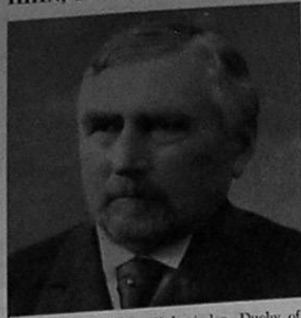
An excellent penman, a talent which few, as now, could then boast, therefore, deputy county clerk in charge of the records and of the assessment roll, being also undersheriff for both Alzina and his successor, L. G. Caldwell, county treasurer '53 resigning the position in '54.

A founder of the Sta Cruz pioneer society, tho' failing to sign the roll for three years, intensely interested in promotion of an order primarily designed to provide for those of their kind unable to care for themselves. In this connection I cannot resist the observation here that these old boys knew how to take care of each other without mortgaging the future of unborn generations to accomplish an act of "social security, or simple kindness, or canine loyalty.

His investments from the first had been wise. At one time he owned not less than 600 acres of Rancho Augustus and some portions of La Carbonera. Here he made the first wine in Sta Cruz county, pointing the way to an agricultural economy that was only destroyed by the goofy act of a state legislature which had ostensibly been elected to preserve that economy. He was instrumental in the promotion of the industrial economy, principally in wood and paper pulp, and contributed largely to the moral development of the community by contributions to the construction of churches, being a vestryman of the Episcopal faith.

There was no task his neighbors asked him to do that he did not perform with fidelity and promptness. He could have had any

HIHN, Frederick Augustus



B Aug. 16 '29 at Holzminden, Duchy of Brunswick, Germany, to Calif. '49, reaching SF Oct. 13. Our last fiesta edition carried an extensive bio. He was by all odds the foremost financier of his adopted town, investing his wealth and capacity for making money in virtually everything that came along from the development of potential coal resources to the construction of railroads. There are all sorts of stories about the means he adopted to acquire a fortune, but he seems to have been much more malignant than malignant, while his conduct was that of a man with a natural gift of converting misfortune into gold.

It was Hihn who opened the Williams tract at the close of the civil war. This therefore had impeded commercial development of the community in the area bounded by Lincoln and Elm streets, Pacific and Chestnut avenues. Shortly afterward he acquired the Inus farm and opened the tract between what is now the school administration property and city hall on two sides, Vine street and Chestnut avenue on the others. In each transaction he put a good price in gold on the barrelhead to back his belief that the town would grow in those directions.

When in 1880 Sedwick J. Lynch (q. v.) died, leaving a large but unproductive estate scattered over Calif., Hihn jumped into the breach, in the performance of a trust reposed in him by his old friend, for 20 years manipulating affairs until he was able to divide nearly a quarter million dollars among the Lynch heirs.

About '94 he took over the office of executor of the estate of another old friend and pioneer, Joseph S. Eastland (q. v.). He had no more than straightened out the affairs of the estate when Mrs. Eastland died and he was required to start over again, directing mining operations in the mother lode, investing his own money to bring his work to a successful conclusion, organizing the Stockton gas & electric co., while fighting off public ownership, conducting himself in every way as the keen, aggressive, decidedly individualistic businessman he was.

Of some help in the promotion of the Salvation Army labor movement at the turn of the century. Appointed to the position by Gov. Gage in 1903, Hihn became one of the principals behind the development of what is today Calif. polytechnic at S Luis Ob., at the same time assisting in securing Big Basin as a state park.

CALL, Maria del Carmen

Aged 14 years, married Feb. 6 '63 Francisco Bernal, aged 32 years. Both were residents of Watsonville, given, also, as the home of Maria's mother, Francisca. Presumably a daughter of Daniel Call, an American carpenter who left the *Atala* at Santa Barbara in 1816, aged 17 years and who, still resident of the Sta B. region in '36 possessed a wife and two children. The record is not clear as to what happened to this family.

DANIELS, Francis

'50, in Sta Cruz. Perhaps wintering from the mines, and perhaps confused with Francis Davis.

HULETT, Obediah

Millwright employed '48 by Jackson Bennett to aid in construction of a sawmill on the San Lorenzo near Newell creek. Working for Isaac Graham from Xmas '49 to spring of '50 when he went to the mines, returning in the fall of the year. Aged 60 years '53.

Bern. To this union were born three daughters and a son, the latter of whom, William B. Parsons, still resides in Sta Cruz; like his father, full of years and full of honors in the milk of human kindness. One grandson is Bill Parsons of Palo Alto, another of that diminishing race of political liberals who believe liberality consists of a hands-out-of-the-other-fellow's-pocket philosophy. He has, I believe at least one child to carry on the family name tho' the child may not be able to maintain the



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