

the Castro Adobe. The 1870 agricultural census of our area ("Township 1") stated that Manuel had 2 horses, 2 milk cows and 6 swine. That year he grew 23 tons of hay in El Cerrito. His farm was valued at \$2,000.

In 1872 the Oyarzo family moved to the Chilean community of Oceanview (West Berkeley). Manuel continued to farm for a couple of years until his untimely death on November 23, 1874. On that day Manuel had gone with Peter Lasserot (who had purchased Manuel's farm in Rancho El Sobrante) to the Martinez Courthouse. They had gone there to speak for the ranchers' water rights. He drowned in San Pablo Creek on his way home. The creek was swollen due to a rainstorm and his horse slipped, leading to Manuel's death. His 1874 obituary notes that Manuel returned to his native Chile in 1872 and had then come back to California "with a large collection of valuable seeds of trees and shrubs from the Andes for propagation and introduction here."

Resources: 1850 census of Marin County & 1852 census of Contra Costa County
Contra Costa County Homestead Deeds, page 75; Contra Costa County Deed Book 9, page. 327-329

SF genealogy web site: www.sfgenealogy.com/marin/1850s/1850bios.htm

Contra Costa County 1870 agricultural census

Contra Costa Gazette, 28 Nov 1874, Obituary

Chilenos in the California Gold Rush, 1848-49 by Carlos Lopez U.,

Consulado General de Chile, San Francisco, CA, 1973

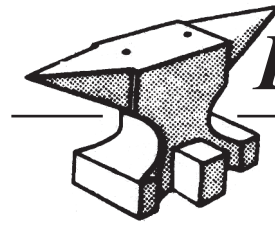
California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences, Volume 47, Number 14,
27 December 1877

In 1975 Mervin Belfils, the dean of El Cerrito historians, wrote:

"The former Lafayette Park, which was situated at the now Peek-A-Boo Trailer Park, was among a large grove of eucalyptus trees, and people from Oakland and San Francisco, on Sunday would take the street car to picnic or dance at the park. Others would come by horse and wagon to the huge dance hall to dance and spend the day."



Eucalyptus at Peek-A-Boo Park, El Cerrito Hist. Society Collection



El Cerrito Historical Society

P O Box 304, El Cerrito, CA 94530

elcerritohistoricalsociety@yahoo.com

Vol. 31
No. 2

The Forge

November 2015

The Official Publication of the El Cerrito Historical Society, Copyright © 2015

***Have you seen
our new model of the Castro Adobe?
Come by the Shadi Room during open hours
to examine this wonderful replica
of the Castro Adobe***

Charlie Moran recently completed this wonderful model for us. We have a good photo archive of the Adobe and this, plus several historical written descriptions of the Adobe, were used to create a very accurate scale model of this important site. The version of the structure that we had built depicts the Adobe as it stood about 1860.

The Adobe site contained three primary buildings: The main home and living space, the chapel, and the barn. The sizes and relationship between the home, the barn, and the chapel are clearly and very accurately depicted by the model. The Shadi Room is open 4:30-6PM the 3rd Thursday and also by appointment.

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a volunteer, non-political, non-profit corporation that has as its purpose the preservation and appreciation of the history of El Cerrito. It does this by providing educational and research opportunities; by collecting of historic photographs, documents, artifacts and cultural objects; by advocating the preservation of historic resources in the city; and by encouraging others to help further these aims. Anyone may join; dues are \$25 (Household member), \$60 (Sponsoring member), and \$300 (Life member).

Eucalyptus Trees in El Cerrito's Early History

by J. Rubio

Recently eucalyptus trees, especially the eucalyptus globulus “blue gum”, has been the topic of conversation and debate. This debate has gone on since the tree was introduced to places outside its original home of Tasmania. Some loved the tree and others despised it.

The so-called blue gum tree was first “discovered” on the northern part of the island of Tasmania and named by botanist Jacques Julien Houton Labillardiere. Billardiere was on the 1791 expedition to find Captain La Perouse and the 200 men who had disappeared after sailing from France in 1786 on an around-the-world trip, including a stop in California.

In 1791 the seeds of this tree were sent back to Paris and other parts of Europe. It soon began to appear in many places around the world: China, India, Algeria, South Africa, and many parts of South America. When gold was discovered in 1848 people came to California from around the world, bringing with them the seeds of plants they valued. Eucalyptus oil was the most antiseptic herbal rem-

In 1907 the architect Sam Newsom was hired by the Castro family to oversee some work done on the inside of the Castro Adobe. One of his drawings shows a row of “gum trees” going along the north and south sides of the property.

In 1930, photos of the front of the Castro Adobe show a large eucalyptus tree standing at the south corner. The size of the tree would indicate that it was more than 50 years old. This would mean the tree was planted around 1880 or perhaps earlier.



Eucalyptus at the Castro Adobe, El Cerrito Historical Society Collection

edy known at that time. It was used to fight influenza, scarlet fever, measles and typhoid. It was also used to prevent swelling and open wound infections.

Some of the first people to arrive in California for the Gold Rush were from Chile, which had a much shorter sailing time to San Francisco than most of the rest of the world. Two years later in 1850 a “Foreign Miner’s Tax Law” had been passed. By this time there were about 15,000 *Chilenos* in California. This law forced many of them to return to Chile. However, many residents in the 1852 census of Contra Costa County were born in Chile and continued to live in the County and the Bay Area.

The eucalyptus globulus was planted in El Cerrito very early on, maybe as early as 1870. Victor Ramon Castro, the son of Francisco Maria Castro (the original grantee of Rancho San Pablo) built the Castro Adobe. It was the first non-native dwelling in El Cerrito. He planted Eucalyptus trees on two sides of the Castro Adobe (now El Cerrito Plaza) for privacy and shade. About the turn of the century a grove was planted as part of a large park that was near today’s intersection of Potrero and San Pablo Avenues. Folks came from all around the Bay Area to relax and enjoy the shade of these tall trees.

One of Victor’s friends, Manuel Oyarzo, was from Chile and settled in El Cerrito for several years around 1869. Part of his story is told here as an example of those early *Chileno* immigrants and their connections to the eucalyptus trees. In 1849 Mr. Oyarzo sailed from Valparaiso, Chile to California in search of gold, as did thousands of other Chileans.

After he left the goldfields he met Victor Castro, whose family lived at their Adobe in what is now El Cerrito. Victor introduced Manuel to the Miranda family in San Rafael, where Manuel lived and worked on the Rancho Arroyo de San Antonio. In 1852 he moved to the Rancho El Pinole where he worked for the Martinez family. (This was the rancho owned by the family of Victor’s first wife, Luisa, who had recently died in childbirth.)

By 1853 Manuel’s wife had joined him in California. They homesteaded 160 acres of land on Victor Castro’s El Sobrante Rancho. While there Manuel and Victor went in as partners to see if there was coal in the surrounding hills. Manuel owned this land until 1869, when he sold it to Peter Lasserot.

In that year Manuel moved his family to a new farm on 200 acres of land close to