

# THE HISTORY OF DECOTO

## CHAPTER 01

### NOVEMBER 1769 THRU 1869

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\* **INTRODUCTION** \*

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*Early Washington Township / Early Decoto Maps*

### **EARLY WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP:**

*Mission San Jose 1846 / Agua Caliente 1839 / Arroyo de la Alameda / Potrero de los Cerritos*

Alta California (Upper California) was under Spanish rule when the first recorded Europeans entered Washington Township in November 1769 under the leadership of Gaspar de Portola. This intrepid group of explorers was the first to record the sight of San Francisco Bay on October 31, 1769 from atop a mountain west of San Mateo.

They could clearly see the San Francisco Bay and the opposite coastline. They called the opposite coast "Contra Costa." A creek ran from east to west across the fertile plain with tree-lined banks. This reminded them of their beloved alamedas back in Spain. An alameda is a tree-lined walk or promenade.

They called this place "the place of the Alameda." The name would stick and the creek (sometimes a raging river) would be called Alameda Creek, and its eventual county name would be "Alameda County."

The Spanish built 20 missions in Alta California. Founded in the Catholic faith, the mission's purpose was to convert the Indians to the Christian faith. The missions also served as religious, cultural, and agricultural centers for the surrounding countryside. The last mission that was built was the San Francisco Solano Mission on the northern end of the Bay. This mission was built mainly to check the influence of the Russians at Fort Ross and keep them moving into the Bay Area.

This was the twenty-first and final mission built in Alta (Upper) California and was built under the authority of the newly formed Mexican Government.

Besides the missions the Spanish also established pueblos and presidios. The pueblos were communal living quarters, which could be considered towns. Pueblo San Jose would eventually become the City of San Jose. Presidios were places where soldiers

were housed and they themselves also sprang up into cities, such as San Diego and San Francisco.

Father Fermin Lasuen founded the Mission San Jose on June 11, 1797. Mission San Jose was to become a prosperous enterprise for the Spanish, however, after the Mexican Independence in 1821 the newly formed Mexican government turned inward to heal the wounds of the civil war and the missions in California suffered from neglect.

This neglect tested the loyalty of the Californios (as California residents were called at the time), and made the end of Mexican rule in California (1848) much easier than it should have been.

The missions were given generous land grants by the Spanish, which the missions used as grazing lands for vast herds of cattle, sheep and horses. The missions also produced large amount of fruits and vegetables for their table.

After the overthrow of the Spanish in 1821, the Mexican in governors California would assign choice land grants to favored individuals for their own personal use. In Washington Township these land grants included:

### **Mission San Jose:**

This land grant, totaling 30,000 acres, was mostly located in Mission San Jose, Irvington, and parts of Centerville and Newark. This land grant was given by Governor Pio Pico to Andrés Pico and Juan Battista Alvarado in 1846. Today this land grant is known as the "ex-Mission San Jose" land grant. The title to this land was in doubt for nearly two decades after the signing of the Treaty of Hidalgo Guadalupe that ended the Mexican-American War in 1848. It was determined that this grant was an attempt by Governor Pico to sequester this large grant in his family. In an 1865 Act of Congress titled "An Act for the Relief of the Occupants of the Lands of the Ex Mission of San Jose in the State of California," the land was surveyed and partitioned into parcels. Claimants could then buy their land back at the rate of \$1.25 per acre. Thus the Mission San Jose was stripped of the original title to the 30,000-acre 1846 land grant and the Mission was left with less than 30 acres of land, that being the property around the Mission.

### **Agua Caliente:**

Governor Juan B. Alvarado grants to Fulgencio Higuera, 9,564-acres in the Warm Springs area in 1839.

### **Arroyo de la Alameda:**

Governor Juan B. Alvarado to Jose de Jesus Vallejo in 1842, which included 17,705 acres, including Niles north of the Alameda Creek, all of Decoto and north to part of Hayward and Mt. Eden, and a portion of Alvarado north of the Alameda Creek.

### **Potrero de Los Cerritos:**

Governor Manuel Micheltorena grants to Juan B. Alvarado and Tomas Pacheco in 1844, 10,610 acres. This grant included parts of Newark, the entire district of Alviso, and all of Alvarado south of the Alameda Creek.

### **EARLY DECOTO MAPS:**

*Diseño de la Arroyo de la Alameda / 1878 Landowners Map from Thompson West / U.S. Geological Society  
Map of Decoto 1899 / U.S. Geological Society Map of Decoto 1959 / Hillview Crest, Fairway Park & El  
Rancho Verde Map*

## **Diseño de la Arroyo de la Alameda:**

This map was created in the year 1842 for the Mexican Land Grant of the Arroyo de la Alameda, a 17,705-acre land grant given to Jose de Jesus Vallejo for lands north of the Alameda Creek. This map was filed on November 17, 1854, in the Northern California Court to seek a patent (ownership recognized by the U.S. Government). This patent was granted to Jose Vallejo on January 1, 1858 giving him full title to all land as shown by this map. In the year 1860, Mr. Vallejo would sell the southeast portion of his rancho to Jonas G. Clark, a San Francisco furniture dealer. This land included what would be all of today's Decoto and part of Niles.



### Map Notations:

*Lindero:* The south boundary line

*Lindero Norte:* The north boundary line.

*Embarcadero:* The old Union City Landing, which at this time was used by the Padres of Mission San Jose to trade with Yankee whalers who would navigate up the Alameda Creek up to the Landing to trade with the Spaniards for goods needed on the ship.

*Estero Grande:* Large estuary.

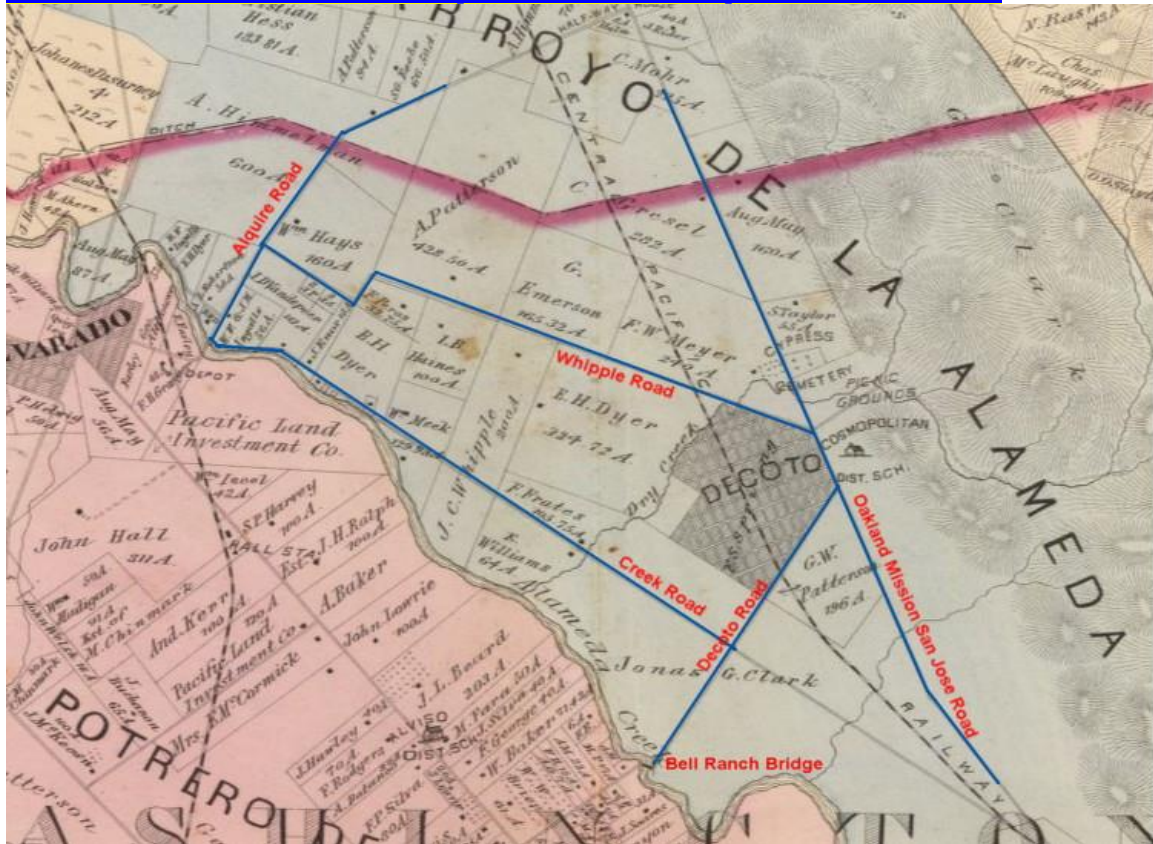
*Arroyo Segundo:* Today's Dry Creek.

*Casas:* A group of homes.

*Camino Real de San Antonio a la Mission de San Jose:*

This is the route taken by the Padres from San Antonio (Oakland today) to the Mission San Jose along the foothills.

## 1878 Landowners Map from Thompson & West:



The town labeled Decoto in this map is not drawn to scale for the time, however the rest of the map appears to be correct and can be relied upon. I have highlighted the roads in blue and their names are in red. Note on this map how much land Jonas G. Clark still owned after selling land to the Decoto brothers, the Central Pacific Railroad, and the local farmers in the Decoto area.

The map shows the Cypress Cemetery and Dry Creek, which is referred to as "Arroyo Segundo" on the Jose Vallejo map of 1842, the Cosmopolitan School District and the Picnic Grounds.

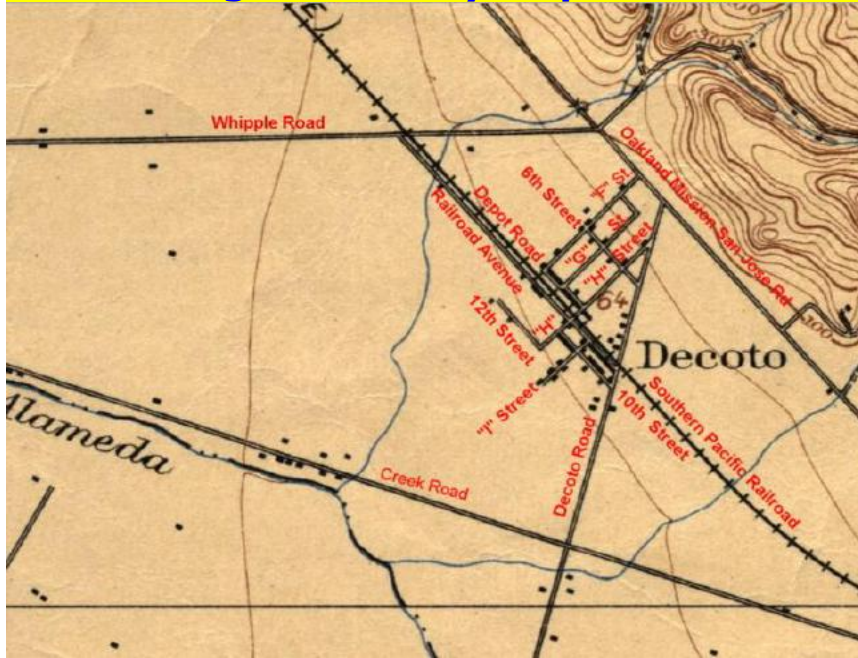
The dark rose-colored line cutting across the lands of A. Patterson and C. Gresel is the Eden-Washington Township boundary line. Note that the township line cuts through the property of Christopher Gresel, placing his ranch in two different townships.

When the Gresel land would eventually become the Fairway Park housing tract this line would separate the children that would attend the La Vista School District north of the line and the Decoto School District south of the line even though both districts were to eventually be within the city limits of Hayward.

The same applied to the May land across the Oakland-Mission San Jose Road to the east, which would eventually become the El Rancho Verde housing tract. El Rancho

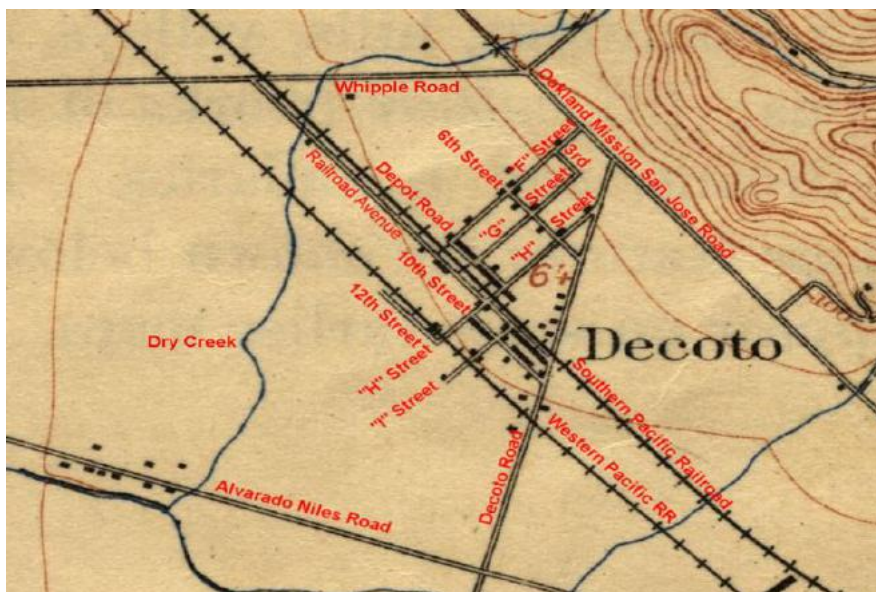
Verde is totally within the City limits of Hayward, but the children's school districts were separated by the township line.

### [U.S. Geological Society Map of Decoto 1899:](#)



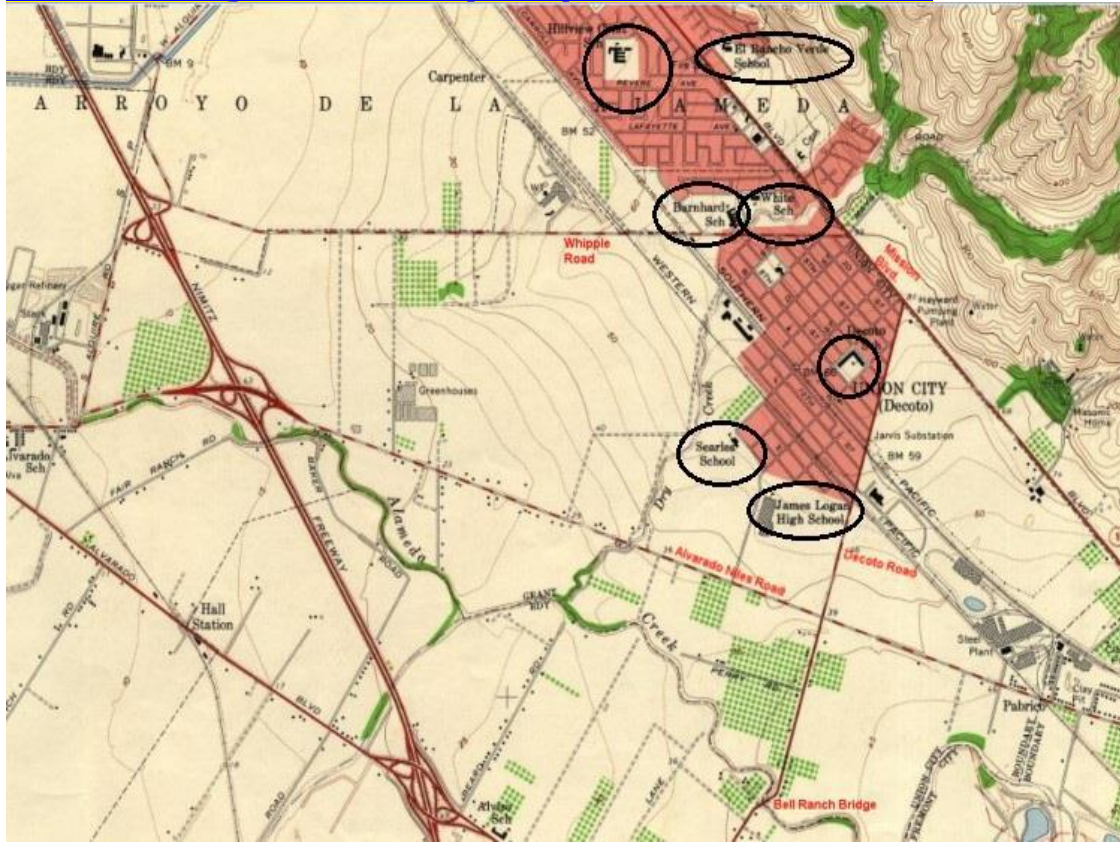
This is the earliest map of Decoto I could find which was a true representation of the town of Decoto. Although the town was laid out in detail in the 1870's this map reflects only some of the original streets of downtown Decoto. These were probably county maintained roads and hence the only streets in Decoto that were reflected on this map.

### [U.S. Geological Society Map of Decoto 1915:](#)



The 1899 map of Decoto was updated in 1915 by the USGS to include the Western Pacific Railroad tracks.

## U.S. Geological Society Map of Decoto 1959:



This is a map of Decoto in 1959 when it became part of Union City. Circled are the seven schools in operation at the time of the incorporation. At the beginning of 1950 Decoto had only one school, the venerable Decoto Grammar School.

Starting at the bottom is James Logan High School, H. C. Searles School, the old Decoto Grammar School, Barnard School, Manuel White School, Hillview Crest School and the El Rancho Verde School. In the lower right portion of this map is the Bell Ranch Bridge, which today is just east of Paseo Padre Parkway and Decoto Road.

The numbered streets ran roughly:

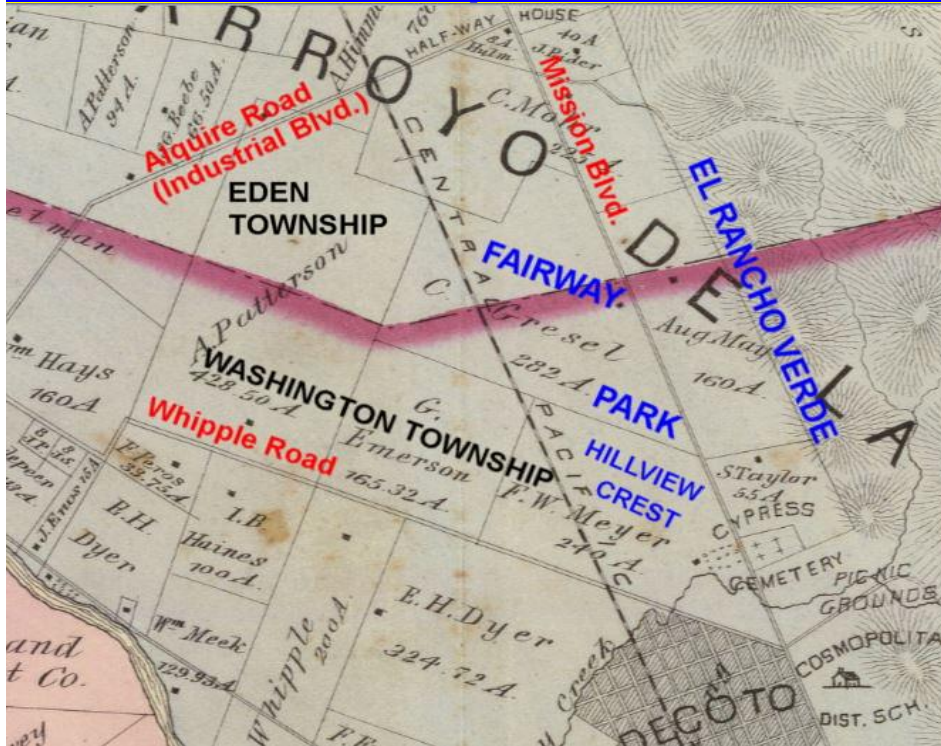
From East to West starting with 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in the East to 15<sup>th</sup> Street in the West near the Searles School. The streets ran north to south from Whipple Road to Decoto Road.

The lettered streets ran roughly:

From North to South with "A" Street near Whipple Road to "J" Street at Decoto Road. The streets ran east from Mission Blvd. West to 15<sup>th</sup> Street near the Searles School. Railroad Avenue ran from Whipple Road to Decoto Road between 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Streets on the West side of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.

Depot Road located on the East side of Southern Pacific tracks between 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Streets for several short lengths (does not go from Whipple to Decoto Roads)

## Hillview Crest, Fairway Park & El Rancho Verde Map:



Map showing Fairway, Hillview & El Rancho Verde property owners in the 1878 Thompson & West Landowners map and how the original property owners were cut almost in half by the township line. Christopher Gresel owned what is today's Fairway Park and August May Sr. owned what is today's El Rancho Verde. Both pieces of property sat in two different townships. F. W. Meyer is shown as the owner of the property of today's Hillview Crest. Mr. Meyer's property was totally within the Washington Township boundary line. All three of these properties (housing tracts) are within the City limits of Hayward although parts are within the Decoto School District.



Thomas Bros. Map showing the Hayward City limits in the rose colored broad outline and how the streets of the three housing tracts fall into their assigned school districts.

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\* **THE BIRTH OF DECOTO** \*  
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*Where did the name Decoto Originate / The Arroyo de la Alameda Land Grant*

**WHERE DID THE NAME DECOTO ORIGINATE:**

*Where did the name Decoto Originate / The Arroyo de la Alameda Land Grant*

**Peter Decoto Says:**

"De Couteau, Not Decoto"

In an item in the Washington Township Register of March 20, 1937, Peter Decoto tells that when his ancestors lived in France, the name was De Couteau, and when Louis 14<sup>th</sup> gave a Canadian grant of land it was still De Couteau, but when his father went to live in Boston the natives there insisted on calling it Decoto and he adopted that spelling.

**Ezra Decoto Jr. Says:**

"Des Coteaus, Not Decoto"

On March 6, 1939, Ezra Decoto Jr. addressed the Rotarians in Hayward. He said he was raised in Decoto from a French-Canadian family. His father's name was Esdras Lefever Des Coteaus, changed by his mother after her arrival here, to read Ezra Decoto. However, two brothers of the father, go by the name Lefever. Said Decoto, "In an English speaking country where people were named Smith, Brown, and Kelly, a fellow had to have a short name that people could pronounce. You know the nations of the earth learned to speak English because the Englishman, a man of money and wide domains, told the other peoples he would trade with them if they spoke his language, but he would not learn theirs. Englishmen are stubborn that way."

Which is correct? I don't know although the spelling De Couteau (or Decoteau) is the one that is generally recognized today.

**The Arroyo de la Alameda Land Grant:**

This grant was given to Jose de Jesus Vallejo who was the brother of General Mariano Vallejo of Sonoma, whose holdings were taken from him at the beginning of the "Bear Flag Revolt" in Sonoma. Don Jose Vallejo built a flourmill in 1853 at the corner of today's Mission Blvd. and Niles Canyon Road. This enterprise gave this area its first name, Vallejo's Mill. Later when the railroad came through this area became known as Niles.

In the early 1850's the area between Mission San Jose and Haywoods was largely uninhabited, although Elias Beard and John Horner did farm extensively on the ex-Mission lands near Niles and Decoto. In the pioneer days the City of Hayward went by several spellings, first it was "Haywoods," to be followed by "Haywards," and finally "Hayward."

Among the pioneers of the Decoto area was James Hawley who farmed the famous Bell Ranch as early as 1852. The Bell Ranch was the southwest quadrant of the Bell Ranch Bridge and Decoto Road. It was named the Bell Ranch because of the large



bell that was used to call to ranch hands for meals. Later Mr. Hawley would relocate to the area adjacent the Alviso Grammar School.

By 1854 the area that was to become known as "Decoto" was slowly populated by more pioneers and among the first was Antone Joseph who had a home located between Decoto and Niles.

Henry Smith (not the Henry Clay Smith of Alvarado) dwelt near Dry Creek, and John Hanna, the foreman for the Jonas G. Clark Ranch had the land that was to later be owned by John C. Whipple. Also located in the Decoto area at this time was Sanford Taylor, F.W. Meyer, George Emmerson, Frank Frates, and Andrew Patterson.

In 1854 Ezra Decoto Sr. came to the Bay Area and started farming about Alameda and later Haywards. In 1860 he was joined by brothers Adolphus and John. Together they purchased 334 acres of land from Jonas G. Clark and built a home on the site that was to become the town of Decoto. In 1867 they sold 284 acres to the railroad, keeping the home and fifty acres to farm. John and Adolphus then moved to other parts of Washington Township to begin their lives. Ezra stayed on the family farm and is generally acknowledged as the namesake of the town of Decoto.

Before the town of Decoto was formed, a few families had bought lots and with the surrounding farmers decided to form a school district. In 1868 the Cosmopolitan School District, which encompassed the lands that were to become the town of Decoto and the Valle Vista district was formed. The schoolhouse was built on land donated by Jonas G. Clark. Prior to this the students in the area had attended the Alvarado Grammar School. The Cosmopolitan School started with 20 pupils. J. T. James was the first teacher of the school in 1869. The Cosmopolitan School District was later divided into three separate school districts, Valle Vista (La Vista), Tennyson and Decoto.

In September 1869, the Western Pacific completed its rail line from Oakland to the mouth of the Niles Canyon and in 1870 the Central Pacific Railroad absorbed the Western Pacific. (A new Western Pacific Railroad was started in 1903, but that one is not to be confused with the original absorbed by the CPRR in 1870) On June 22, 1870, the consolidation of the Central Pacific Railroad of California with the Western Pacific Railroad was completed.

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**\* BIOS OF NOTABLE CIIZENS \***

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*Boarding House / Farmers / Real Estate Speculator*

Listed below are the persons, and businesses known to have been in the Decoto area prior to the year 1870:

**BOARDING HOUSE:**

**Louisa McKinney:**

Louisa McKinney was born in Germany in 1826. Her date of entry into the U.S. is not known. Louisa is shown in the township census of 1860 living with James McKinney who is 25 years old and Louisa is 34 years. Living with the

McKinney's are seven children ages 3 to 14 years old with the last name Boos. Also living with the McKinney's are two laborers (probably roomers). The 1860 census does not give the relationship of Louisa and James McKinney, nor does it give Louisa's marital status.

The 1870 census shows Louisa living with two children, Charles McKinney age 13 and James McKinney age 8. She is shown operating a boarding house with eight Irish railroad laborers as guests. After 1870 nothing is shown for Louisa McKinney.

## **FARMERS:**

*Ezra Decoto / John Decoto / Adolphus Decoto / George Emerson / Christopher Gresel / Israel B. Haines / Frederick W. Meyer / Andrew Patterson / Sanford Taylor / John C. Whipple / Frank Frates / George W. Patterson*

### **Ezra Decoto, Sr.:**

Ezra Decoto Sr. was born in Lower Canada on September 2, 1833 to Charles and Decoto. He stayed at home until he immigrated to Hazardville, Connecticut at the age of fifteen. He worked in a cooper's shop afterwards becoming a foreman. He left for New York on April 15, 1854 via the Isthmus of Panama and he arrived in San Francisco on May 18, 1854 and immediately went to Alameda County where he raised strawberries on the Encinal of Alameda. This 19<sup>th</sup> century explanation means that Ezra located at the place of the encinas in Alameda, or simply at or near an oak grove. Here he also grew potatoes for a period of years.

In 1858 he changed the field of his operations to San Leandro, and embarked in the cultivation of potatoes and grain, which he followed for four years, at which time he removed to Haywards (Haywards was then the name of Hayward), and there farmed until 1867.

Ezra then disposed of this property, and with his brothers Adolphus and John purchased three hundred and thirty-four acres from Jonah C. Clark, where they settled and commenced farming.

The year of the completion of the Western Pacific Railroad (1862-1870) through Alameda Canyon some East Bay financiers decided there was an ideal location for a new town about four miles from the mouth of the canyon between Niles and Haywards (Haywards was then the name for Hayward)

On Saturday, June 11, 1870, articles of incorporation were filed in the County Clerk's Office in San Francisco by the Decoto Land Company of Alameda County. The object was to purchase the ground and lay out the railroad town of Decoto, and plant there 37,000 evergreen trees."

The Decoto brothers had sold 284 acres of land to the Central Pacific Railroad (who had just purchased the Western Pacific RR). The Central Pacific immediately sold the majority of the property to the Decoto Land Company who incorporated on June 11, 1870 as mentioned above. The Central Pacific kept a wide swath of land on either side of their tracks through Decoto for their future use and sale.

Adolphus and John took their part of the sale proceeds and moved to other parts of Washington Township to farm on their own. Ezra Sr. stayed on the Decoto Farm. The brothers had erected the first houses on Decoto proper.

On August 21, 1860 Ezra Decoto Sr. married Miss Janet Lowrie, a native of Stirling, Scotland. They had eight children, seven of whom lived to adulthood. The first born, Charles was born on June 6, 1861 but he died on February 20, 1869 at the age of seven years, eight months and 13 days.

The other children, four girls and three boys were: Lizzie, born April 4, 1863; Mary, born May 8, 1865; Peter, born January 4, 1869; Janet, born February 14, 1871; Alvena, born June 25, 1873; Ezra, born February 6, 1876; Lewis (also Louis), born June 20, 1878.

#### **Mrs. Elizabeth Lowrie:**

Mrs. Elizabeth Lowrie, mother of Ezra Sr., John and Adolphus Decoto passed away in Decoto on November 26, 1898. She was a native of Camsbarn, Sterlinghire, Scotland, and was 84 years of age.

#### **John B. Decoto:**

John B. Decoto, pioneer resident of Alameda County and one of the founders of the town of Decoto, passed away on April 23, 1916 in San Jose at the age of 80 years. With his brother, Ezra Decoto, he came to Alameda County during the early days and took up large tracts of land in Pleasanton Township. John is survived by his widow, Mrs. Lena Decoto, two brothers, Adolphus of Centerville and Ezra Decoto of Decoto.

#### **Adolphus Decoto:**

Adolphus Decoto passed away on November 30, 1921 in Centerville California. He was 96 years old and was one of California's pioneers, having come to this state in 1857. On Coming to California he lived near Emeryville and later at the town of Decoto with his two brothers, John and Ezra Sr. Decoto afterward removed to Centerville to engage in farming. He remained there up to the time of his death.

He was survived by daughters Mrs. Sarah Horner, Mrs. Lena Blacow and Mrs. Samuel B. Vandervoort, and by sons W. L. Decoto and John Decoto, sons. Two other children, Mary Decoto Riser and Adolphus Decoto Jr. are dead, as is Elizabeth Lowrie Decoto, his wife.

#### **Mrs. Janet Lowrie Decoto:**

Mrs. Janet Lowrie Decoto, Alameda County pioneer and wife of Ezra Decoto Sr., passed away on July 5, 1921 at the family home in Decoto.

Mrs. Decoto, who was 80 years old, submitted to an operation just a week earlier. She is survived by her husband, Ezra Decoto, three sons and three daughters. They are: Peter L., Louis A., Mrs. Henry Crosby, Ezra W., Mrs. August May and Mrs. Edward Palmer.

Born in Scotland, Mrs. Decoto was a child of three when her parents came to the United States, establishing their home in Thompsonville, Conn. An older sister, Elizabeth, married Adolphus Decoto. While accompanying the couple to

the west, the romance of the younger sister and Ezra Decoto culminated in their marriage. The family located in Washington Township, where they are numbered with the earliest settlers. Founders of the town called several points in honor of members of the connection. "Lowrie's landing" was called after Mrs. Decoto. She has lived sixty years in this county.

### **George Emerson:**

George Emerson was born in Sweden circa 1829. Date of entry into the U.S. is not known, although one source reported that he was in Alvarado in 1850, this is highly unlikely, as Alvarado did not exist in 1850. George was married to Mary Emerson and they had two children, Charlotte and Adolph.

Early reports give him living in Alvarado, but this is not unusual, as the town of Decoto did not exist until at least 1870. For that matter Niles did not exist either at the time George Emerson first came to Washington Township.

The Alvarado 1860 census has him living with Jesse Beard in Alvarado as a single man. Later George would buy 162 acres of farmland on the north side of Whipple Road just across from the ranch of J.C. Whipple in Decoto.

In April 1884 George Emerson petitioned the Alameda County Board of Supervisors for a review of the actions of the Cosmopolitan School Board of Trustees of Decoto to call for a special election for an \$8,000 levy to raise funds for the school district and to pay an old debt of \$2,000 to build the schoolhouse.

Mr. Emerson pointed out that under the Constitution it is illegal to raise money to pay off an old debt. In Sept. 1884 Judge Hamilton ruled against Emerson and allowed the election to go forward.

In June 1897 George Emerson met with an accident, which was deemed to keep him confined to his bed many weeks. He and a Chinese employee started to town with a load of fruit for shipment, and when just outside the gate, the Chinaman got up from the seat, which was insecurely fastened and the end tipped, throwing Mr. Emerson off. The fall broke his arm at the elbow.

Mr. Emerson lingered on for about a week without improvement and finally succumbed on June 23, 1897 from blood poisoning received from a broken arm.

### **Christopher Gresel:**

Christopher was born in Hanover, Germany on April 27, 1820 where he was raised on a farm. At the age of 22 he bade farewell to his forefathers and his home country and came to the United States. Having neither trade nor resources he made his way from New York City to Buffalo, then to Chicago and finally stopped at Naperville IL where he found work on a farm.

In the spring of 1852 he came to the west coast via the Isthmus and he finally reached San Francisco. He tried his luck at the mines of Nevada and Grass Valley but eventually came to Alvarado where he worked on a farm. He then worked the land where the California Nursery is located today.

In 1858 he bought his present ranch, which was directly across the road from the August May Sr. ranch. Today that land is the present site of Fairway Park and like today about half of the sits in Eden Township and the other Half in Washington Township. His farm totaled 282 acres.

Christopher Gresel married Miss Mary May (no known relation to the other Decoto May family) who was born in Hesse-Cassel Germany in September 1834. They had three children, Christophena (Phena), Minna and Amelia Gresel. Amelia Gresel married Adam Becker of San Francisco.

In politics Mr. Gresel is an Independent, and in religion he is a Lutheran. He is respected for his industrious and well-directed life, his unquestioned integrity, and his devotion to his family and friends.

Christopher Gresel passed away in Oakland at the age of 85 years on May 11, 1908.

Mrs. Maria Gresel passed away on April 27, 1910 at the home of her daughter in Oakland California. She leaves three daughters, Minna Gresel, Christophena Gresel and Mrs. Amelia Becker. She was 75 years old.

Christopher Gresel passed away in Oakland at the age of 85 years on May 11, 1908.

### **Israel B. Haines:**

Israel Biddle Haines was born in Philadelphia on January 6, 1829 to Joseph and Achsah (Biddle) Haines. At age thirteen Israel was making his own way working on a farm for five years after which he returned home and became an apprentice carpenter for nearly five years and then as a journeyman for another two years.

He then left home for Indiana, where he stayed for four months after which he proceeded to St. Louis where he found employment for twenty-six months. Again he returned home to Philadelphia and in April 1855 he set sail for California around the Cape, arriving in San Francisco near the end of August of 1855.

He spent the next seven years in various parts of the Bay Area, the last six years at San Pablo. He then proceeded to Alvarado on October 16, 1862, when he settled in Alvarado, purchased his present farm from Jonas G. Clark of San Francisco and there he made his permanent residence.

Israel married Miss Charlotte L. Thompson on March 9, 1870; a native of Point Pleasant, Clermont County, Ohio, who was born in June 1844 in the same house in which General U. S. Grant first saw the light.

The couple had five children: Edward L., born 1871; Robert T., born May 1873; Joseph B., Born January 1875; Henry S., born April 1878 and Florence May, born September 1879.

The couple took up permanent residence on the south side of Whipple Road adjacent to the Whipple Road dogleg. The western edge of his property was

the dividing line between the Cosmopolitan (Decoto) School District and the Alvarado School District.



The drawing above was commissioned by Mr. Haines and subscribed to the inclusion in the Thompson & West Atlas of Alameda County homes in their Alameda County 1878 edition. It is interesting to note that Mr. Haines ascribes his residence as being in Alvarado rather than Decoto, for at this time (1878) it was still more fashionable to claim to be from Alvarado rather than Decoto.

In October 1890 Israel Haines was a polling official in Alvarado for the local election. Here he served with J.M. Ingalls, Sebastian Franz, Willis Wells, August May and Clarence Granger, all of Alvarado.

However, in July 1900 Israel served as a ballot official for the town of Decoto along with Henry May, John H. Peterson, Joseph H. Smith, John C. Whipple and John H. Hayes, all of Decoto.

Israel also served as a trustee of the Decoto School District in 1890 along with Edward Whipple and Edward Salz. In 1893 he refilled to be reelected to the school board.

#### **Mrs. Charlotte L. Haines:**

Mrs. Charlotte L. Thompson Haines was born in Point Pleasant, Clermont County, Ohio in June 1844.

Mrs. Haines was active in the Ladies Aid Society of both Alvarado and Decoto. Besides doing good work in the religious sector of Decoto Mrs. Haines was also an active member in the Washington Township Women's Club and the Country Club of Washington Township.

Mrs. Haines passed away in 1913 at the age of 69 years.

**Edward L. Haines:**

Edward L. Haines was born in Decoto California in 1871.

Edward graduated from Decoto Grammar School in December 1844 along with Peter Decoto.

In December 1889 Edward received the results of his examination as one of nineteen candidates for a West Point cadetship. Edward placed third in the competition with a score of 90%; unfortunately it was not good enough for an appointment for him. However two weeks later Edward learned that the County Board of Education had granted him a teacher's certificate.

West Point Cadetship:

In 1906 Edward took to living in Miles City, Montana. In January 1909 Edward returned to Alvarado to renew old acquaintances.

The 1920 Decoto Census showed that Edward had joined his brothers Robert and Harry (Henry) in a farming venture in Decoto in a three-way partnership.

The 1930 Decoto census shows that Edward, Harry C. (Henry S.), and Robert T. Haines were all partners in a farming venture and they were all single at this time. They show that the farm was owned and not rented.

On October 31, 1937 Edward L. Haines passed in Hayward. Edward was a native and a resident of the town of Decoto. He was also a member of the Wisteria Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West, Alvarado Chapter.

**Robert T. Haines:**

Robert T. Haines was born in Decoto in May 1873.

In April 1899 the Masonic Home held a dance to celebrate the opening of the new boarding house. Many Decoto young people showed up for the festivities including:

|                       |                     |                         |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Miss Edith Rogers     | Miss Edna Whipple   | Miss Etta Graham        |
| Miss Alice Kelley     | Miss May Kelley     | Miss Isabelle Whipple   |
| Miss Lillie Graesslin | Miss Kate Graesslin | Miss Christina Anderson |
| Miss Zadie Whipple    | Harry C. Searles    | George Peterson         |
| Will Anderson         | Louis Decoto        | T.S. Ferreira           |
| Jim Hellwig           | John Whipple        | Edward Whipple          |
| Robert Haines         | Harry Miller        | H.E. Kelley             |

President H.R. Robinson formed the Decoto Farm Bureau in Decoto in June 1914. Among the members of the Decoto Farm Bureau are: Sigmund Salz, Frank B. Hartman, J.H. Olsen, J.J. Sandholdt, F.W. Meyer, F.B. Williams, V.G. Higgins, R.T. Haines, G.S. Tungate and F. Goularte.

**Frederick William Meyer:**

Frederick William Meyer was born in Bremen, Germany (then called Prussia) on September 28, 1827. He was trained in his early life as an architect, but not finding anything to his liking he took to the sea as a common sailor and at the age of twenty-one he was sailing the high seas as master of a vessel.

He arrived in California in 1849 and went immediately to the gold fields to ply his luck. It was not good and he ended losing all of his savings. He came to Washington Township and opened a mercantile location in Alvarado. But soon he was on the move again and he then opened the first store in the tiny community of Mt. Eden. Making a success of himself in this small town he was made Justice of the Peace.

His success continued and he soon was dealing in the grain trade owning large warehouses. Successful in his undertakings, he accumulated a good deal of property, becoming owner of two hundred and forty acres of land on the north side of Whipple Road at today's Mission Blvd. Today much of this land (250 yards north of Whipple Road) is now called the Hillview Crest subdivision. Here Frederick Meyer farmed and had a small orchard and home directly across the road from the Old Cypress Cemetery. Here he raised his family until the final few years of his life, which he spent on another ranch he owned between Decoto and Niles on the east side of the Decoto to Mission San Jose Road.

October 28, 1856, Captain Meyer married Helen Riecke, who was born in Bremen, Germany in 1834, and was one of his schoolmates in that city. The union produced six children, but only four survived to adulthood. Alvena, who married Carlton C. Crane; Amalia (Mollie) who remained single and lived at home; Frederick William, who lived near Decoto and Alfred who managed the home ranch in Niles.

A public-spirited citizen, Captain Meyer always had the interest of town and county at heart, and was a staunch supporter of the principles of the Republican Party. He was a valued member of the Lutheran Church as was Mrs. Meyer.

F. W. Meyer died at his home near Niles on November 16, 1881 after a long and painful illness.

#### **Mrs. Helen Meyer:**

Mrs. Helen Meyer was active in the local Congregational Church, as was her daughter Alvena. Helen was also a member of the Decoto Guild, and organization dedicated to helping the local Protestant Church. Early in 1902 she was elected one of the directors of the Guild and later the same year she was voted in as President. She was also appointed as a delegate to the Bay Association Convention to be held at Park Congregational Church, Berkeley on September 16, 1902. Mrs. Helen Meyer passed away in 1916, no obituary was located.

#### **Alvena Meyer:**

Alvena Meyer was born circa 1858 in Decoto California to Frederick W. and Helen Meyer.

Circa 1874 Alvena was chosen to be the superintendent of the Decoto Sunday School. The school was presented a small cache of songbooks and Bibles and by the Presbyterian Church of Oakland. From this modest beginning the church known as the Congregational Church in Decoto had its start on December 9, 1893 through the efforts of Rev. F.H. Maar; and through his



efforts also the Christian Endeavor societies of the State raised the funds for erecting a neat building on a lot loaned for church purposes. This, the only "Christian Endeavor Church" in the State, was dedicated September 23, 1898

Circa 1882 Alvena married Carlton C. Crane from Alvarado whose uncle was Addison M. Crane, first Alameda County Judge situated at the county seat at Alvarado.

Because of the importance of these two persons they are given their own bio under the name of "Crane, Carlton C. & Alvena" in this work.

**Amalia (Mollie) Meyer:**

Amalia Meyer was born on October 18, 1859 in Decoto California to Frederick W. and Helen Meyer.

Mollie never married and seemed to spend time between the Decoto ranch and the Niles ranch of her father. Mollie passed away on July 1, 1940.

**Frederick W. Meyer, Jr.:**

Frederick W. Meyer was born in July 1864 in Decoto California to Frederick W. and Helen Meyer. Fred married Anna Whipple, also of Decoto, on September 3, 1886. Anna was born August 1869 in Decoto to Charles and Lottie Whipple. Fred and Anna had five children: A daughter, Charlotte born October 1877 and four sons: Eliot, born December 1890; Harold, born November 1892; Earl, born March 1895 and Fred Jr., born May 1900.

Fred was farming in Decoto according to the 1900 and 1910 Decoto censuses. He shows that he was renting the land he was farming, but I could not determine for sure where the property was located.

Fred was elected to the Decoto Grammar School Board of Trustee in 1899 and in August 1911 he was shown on the Decoto Chamber of Commerce committee to hold a chamber dance in Decoto.

In January 1912, Fred Meyer submitted a written protest against the approval of a liquor license for Drury & Jones of Decoto to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. Also on this protest were the signatures of the following persons, Louie Lagorio, John J. Ponte, Manuel P. Brazil and T. Silva.

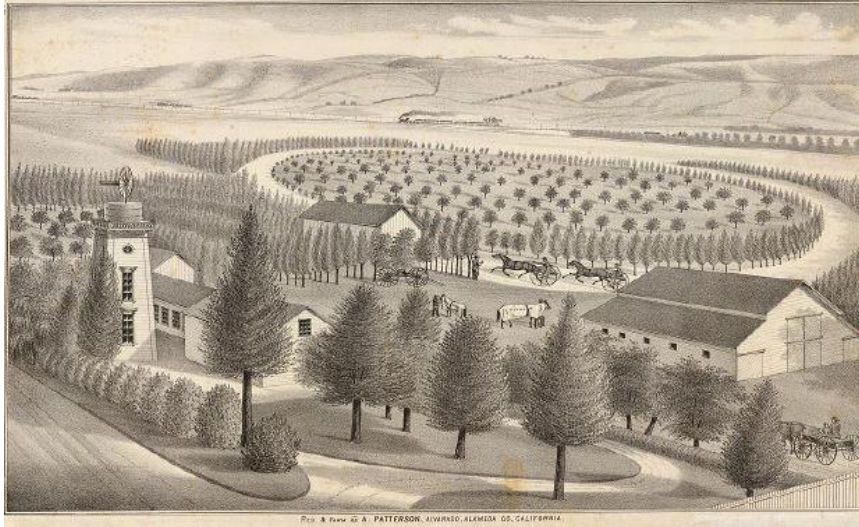
During the period 1900 to 1911 Fred was also the Road Foreman for the Cosmopolitan Road District (Decoto). It was his responsibility to level out ruts and put down fresh gravel to keep the roads in town passable. It appears he did this job at the same time he was farming.

The last article on Fred and Anna in Decoto was on January 1912, after that date they no longer appear in the Decoto rolls. They reappear in the 1920 Census as living in Oakland on 28<sup>th</sup> Street where Fred was employed as a bank clerk. They were still living at the same address in 1930 and Fred was still employed a bank.

Frederick W. Meyer passed away March 25, 1939 at the age of 75. He was a member of the Woodmen of the World, Cypress Camp in Hayward. His wife Anna followed him in death on April 3, 1956 at the age of 87 years.

## **Andrew Patterson:**

Andrew Patterson was born in Ohio in 1829. Nothing is known of his early life and he first appears in Washington Township in the 1860 Census where he is farming in Vallejo Mills (Niles). He claims a net worth of \$12,000 and employs two laborers on his farm. He shows being unmarried.



The 1870 Census shows Andrew in Alvarado, but after checking the chronology of his neighbors I can place Andrew on Whipple Road where he owned 428 acres. His place was on the north side of Whipple Road and the westerly part of his property ended just where the Whipple Road dogleg began. He owned an expanse of land north from Whipple Road all the way north to the old Alquire Road leading to today's Mission Boulevard. The census shows him employing three laborers and a Chinese housekeeper. He shows his net worth as \$40,000, and he still showed as being unmarried. The 1880 Census shows Andrew was still single on Whipple Road employing five laborers and a Chinese cook. Andrew Patterson passed away on November 2, 1895 and was buried at the Decoto Cemetery.

## **Sanford Taylor:**

Sanford Taylor was born in Indiana circa 1814. Sanford and his wife Levina had the following known children: Sarah, Julian, Thomas and George.

Sanford and Levina were in the Decoto census in 1860 and Sanford achieved a bit of notoriety in the Journal of the California Farmer in July 1859 when he set out his ideas on allowing the ground on his farm to lay fallow over the summer before planting his winter wheat on the hillside.

Sanford's ranch was on the eastside of the Hayward to Mission San Jose Road between May Canyon and the property of August May Sr. In 1873 Sanford sold a large plot of property to John C. Whipple for the Cypress Cemetery Association. This left Sanford with 55 acres between the cemetery and August May's property.

Sanford passed away in March 1890. He left his estate to his wife Levina, a son George Taylor and the children of a deceased daughter, Sarah Martin.

### **George Taylor:**

George Taylor continued to live in Decoto and in October 1898 he served as a ballot clerk for the national election along with M. Souza, J.H. Peterson, Michael Kenneally, C.C. Crane and Charles Whipple Jr.

Then in May 1901 George Taylor and family moved to Stockton. They left rather suddenly, no one being aware that they had any intention of leaving. At this time George was 55 years old and his wife Lena was 28. They had two children, Louis aged 3 years and Juanita aged 1 year.

### **John Cleveland Whipple:**

When one thinks of the Whipple's of Decoto their first thought is of John Cleveland Whipple, one the first of the family to set foot in Alameda County. He was the son of Samuel Whipple of New York and Phoebe Cleveland of Maine. John was born Duanesburg, Schenectady, New York on January 25, 1821. John's father moved several times between 1823 and 1840, settling for a time in Pennsylvania then returning to New York in 1840 before finally moving to Clarkson, Monroe County, New York.

The couple had 13 children, twelve who lived to adulthood. They had eight sons: John, William, Job, James, Rufus, Charles, Gardner and Edwin. There were four daughters: Sarah, Annis, Zadie and Eleanor.

Samuel Whipple was born in 1797 and died in 1858, Phoebe Cleveland Whipple was born in 1795 and died in 1878. Both are buried in the West Clarkson Cemetery in Monroe County New York.

By 1850 John Whipple and his brother William had left the family home to live in Middlesex, Yates County, New York. Here they lodged with Orville and Sarah Hobart and pursued the occupation of carpentering, a trade they had learned while living with their parents.

Late in 1852 John Whipple departed for California and arrived in San Francisco on February 5, 1853. He worked as a carpenter in that city for five years. In 1858 he relocated to the San Pablo area where he was engaged a farming partnership with brothers William and Job. In 1862 the three brothers returned to New York state. Job married Phoebe Doty and settled Monroe County New York. He remained there with his wife Phoebe and her son Edward Doty. William was not heard from again until 1910 when a William M. Whipple appeared as an inmate in the Masonic Home. Whether this was William Marsh Whipple cannot be confirmed, however William M. Whipple is buried in the Decoto cemetery with the Whipple family.

On May 13, 1863 John Whipple left New York in the company of Z. Whipple for Aspinwall, PA aboard the steamer Constitution. When John first arrived in Washington Township he served as an agent for Jonas G. Clark on his Decoto property. Mr. Clark was a wealthy furniture dealer from San Francisco who had managed to acquire about all of Don Jesus Vallejo's Rancho Arroyo de la

Alameda (most of the land was in Decoto area south to just north of Vallejo Mills).

Later John Whipple would purchase 200-acres of prime farmland from John Hanna who was the ranch foreman for Jonas G. Clark. Here John C. Whipple would spend the rest of his days farming and helping the struggling little town of Decoto to grow.

The year 1870 finds John C. Whipple as a single man living with his brother Gardner and sister Eleanor who are also both single. That year John Whipple partook in a new farming venture, he raised sugar beets. As a matter of fact he gained some notoriety when an old friend, John H. Ralph Sr. visited his farm and chose a beautiful example of the *beta vulgaris* (sugar beet) and sent it off to the offices of the *Daily Alta* newspaper in San Francisco. The specimen was two feet in length and two feet seven inches in circumference and weighed in at a colossal thirty-six pounds! In the year 1870 John Whipple had planted 50 acres of the new crop for the Alvarado sugar mill.

But growing good beets took water, as did many crops in Washington Township. So in May 1871 farmers in the township became aware of the need to protect this valuable resource, so the farmers of Washington Township banded together with the farmers of Murray Township to form the Washington & Murray Township Water Company to supply pure fresh water to the inhabitants and farmers of the two townships.

The Spring Valley Water Company was seen surveying the Alameda Creek Watershed and the two townships feared the loss of their water rights from the Alameda Creek. The capital stock was \$1,000,000 divided into 50,000 shares of \$20 each. The principal place of business was the town of Centerville in Washington Township. The Trustees were: W.W. Brier, William Whidden, John Whipple, John T. Stevenson, John L. Beard, Howard Overacker, E.H. Dyer, Samuel Marston and B.D.T. Clough. But events that unfolded decades later would prove that the water company was formed too late to save the water for Murray and Washington Townships from the thirst of the Spring Valley Water Company, purveyor of aqua pura to the citizens of San Francisco.

The citizens of Decoto and Alvarado noticed a need for a resting place of their departed brethren. In 1873 The Cypress Cemetery Association was founded on ten acres of land purchased from Sanford Taylor across the Niles-Hayward Road from the F.W. Meyer property.

The trustees named in the formation of the cemetery association were: J.C. Whipple, F.B. Granger, Sr., E. H. Dyer, John Hall, William Hayes and J.M. Ingalls. All named above were citizens of Alvarado save fore Mr. Whipple. The first officers were: William Hayes, President; J.C. Whipple, Vice-President; J.M. Ingalls, Secretary and Treasurer.

The tract was fenced and soon after John Whipple, at his own expense, set cypress trees on three sides of the grounds.

In 1858 Samuel Whipple died in Clarkson New York and the farm was operated by the remaining male children (Rufus, Gardner & Edwin). On 1878

Mrs. Phoebe Whipple passed away and by 1880 John Whipple had opened his home to his brothers and sisters from Monroe County.

Living with him were his sisters Annis, Zadie and Eleanor, all of whom like John Whipple were single. Also living with him was Edwin Whipple, his youngest brother, and Edwin's new bride Emma (Emily).

In anticipation of the arrival of his younger brother John Whipple had cut his home in half moving the front half next door and building on to it in preparation of the arrival of his younger brother. However by this time his brother Gardner had left for the NW, settling in Clackamas County Oregon (just south of the City of Portland).

A large meeting of riparians and parties interested in keeping water in the Alameda Creek met at Centerville in November 1887. J.C. Whipple was elected President, J.C. Wamsley Secretary and W.F. Ingalls Assistant Secretary.

Messrs. J. Rock, J. Stevenson, and J.C. Whipple formed the committee appointed at that time to ascertain the feelings of the community in regard to the actions of the Spring Valley Water Co. in removing water from Alameda Creek for the benefit of the citizens of San Francisco. Feelings were reported as very bitter, and the committee raised about two thousand five hundred dollars with which to obtain the advice of able lawyers on the subject.



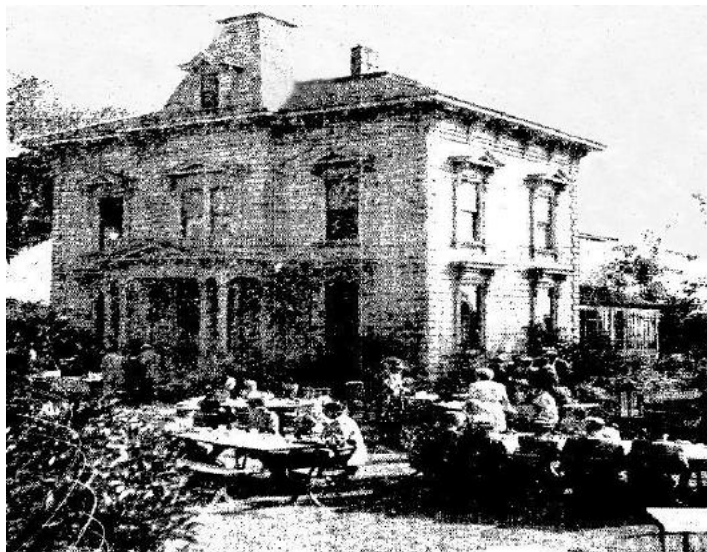
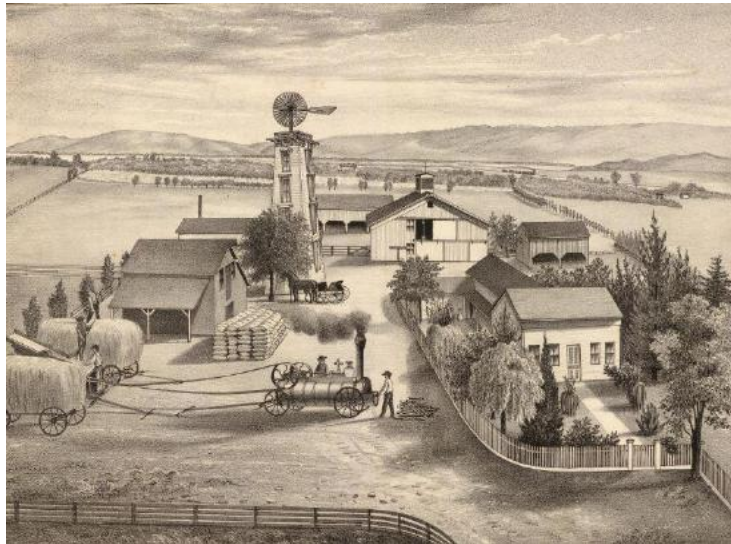
In March 1888 J.C. Whipple sold to J.B. Sherk, 62.11 acres on the county road from Alvarado to Niles (shown in the above map). This piece of property extended from the Alvarado Niles Road south to the banks of the Alameda Creek, which adjoined the land formerly owned by William Meek.

On this property J.B. Sherk raised hops successfully for a period of a few years. The map above (taken from the 1878 Thompson & West Atlas of

Alameda County) shows the location of this parcel of land south of today's Alvarado-Niles Boulevard. This piece of property lies adjacent to today's Hop Ranch Road and this can be taken as the derivation of the name of his road, which still connects to the old Alvarado Niles Road today.

In the year 1880 John Whipple's three single sisters, Annis, Zadie and Eleanor were living in the Whipple home with John. Also in the home were Whipple's youngest brother Edwin and his new bride. In the year 1900 Annis and Zadie had moved into the home occupied by the Edwin Whipple family, while his sister Eleanor was still living with her bachelor brother John Whipple.

Pictured below the 1878 Thompson & West drawing is the John Whipple home in later years, (taken from a newspaper photo from the *Oakland Tribune*). Note how different this home is from the home depicted in the Thompson and West drawing above it. A large amount of rebuilding was done including the building of a second story and a single curiously shaped third story dormer. Also added was a portico with a massive door.



On April 14, 1902 the surviving eight members of the Washington Township Pioneer Society held their annual reunion at Centerville. To be a member one would have been living in Washington Township prior to 1854. Originally there had been 100 members but that has dwindled as the years passed. At this meeting the members still alive were: Thomas W. Millard, John C. Whipple, John Buchanan, Sebastian Franz, Henry Dusterberry, Frank R. Constance, William Berry and C.J. Healy. To the last one of the eight would be entrusted the funds of the society and he will hand over the money to the trustees of the Odd Fellow's Cemetery at Irvington to keep perpetually fresh the grave of Iven Tifoche, the pioneer who organized the society and passed away in 1885.

In August 1905 John Cleveland Whipple passed away at his home. This simple obituary gave notice to the people in Washington Township:

"WHIPPLE – In Decoto, Cal., August 26, 1905, John C. Whipple, a native of New York, aged 84 years, seven months and 1 day."

### **Frank Frates:**

Frank Frates (misspelled as "Frietes, or Freitas" in some histories) was born in the Azores in September 1834. He entered the U.S. in 1853. His wife Anna was born in the Azores in September 1846. She entered the U.S. in 1863. They had 14 children, 10 of which lived until adulthood.

Frank owned 104.74 acres of land on the west side of the old Creek Road that straddled both sides of the Dry Creek. Frank was shown in the Decoto School District of the 1870 census. He was still farming in Decoto in 1900. In August 1900 Mrs. F. (Anna) Frates died in Decoto leaving her husband and ten children. Although I could not find an obituary I did locate a grave in the Centerville Catholic Cemetery for a Frank Frates who died in 1908.

### **George W. Patterson:**

George Patterson is well known for his large ranch on the old Jarvis Road in Newark and his large home in the Eucalyptus forest he called Arden. His Decoto ranch would later become the Zwissig Dairy and the part by the railroad tracks would become the Oakland Paving Brick Co., then the California Brick Co., and finally the Pacific States Steel Company.

### **REAL ESTATE SPECULATOR:**

#### **Jonas Gilmore Clark:**

Jonas Gilmore Clark was born in Hubbardson, MA. He was the son of a farmer and received a common school education. He became a carriage-maker at the age of sixteen, and opened his own carriage shop after five years. He extended his business to the manufacturing and marketing of chairs. He entered the tinware industry after discovering the greater profitability in this business around 1845. Clark married Susan Wright (1816–1904) in 1836; Susan was his childhood friend and neighbor.

Clark sold his hardware business to his brothers, and moved his capital and business to California. Clark achieved great success in his furniture import

and manufacturing business on Washington Street in San Francisco. In 1860 Clark liquidated his businesses because of medical reasons. He then reinvested his fortune in the San Francisco area, particularly in real estate.

A large portion of the real estate holdings he bought was from Don Jose de Jesus Vallejo in the *Arroyo de la Alameda* land grant, which included a large swath of land north of the Alameda Creek at Vallejo Mills (Niles) to the north township line. Here he sold off tracts of land to incoming farmers in the area, including the Decoto brothers. His agent in selling property, for a short time, was John C. Whipple who had just arrived in the area in 1863.

In 1868 Jonas Clark donated land in Decoto for the Cosmopolitan School District. Up until this time students had to go to Alvarado to attend school. When the Decoto Grammar School was built the townspeople deeded back the school property of the previous school to the Clark family.

Jonas Clark then went back east where he continued with his financial successes, eventually founding Clark University in Worcester, MA.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**\* THE RAILROADS STARTED DECOTO \***  
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*The Western Pacific / the Central Pacific / the Decoto Land Co. & Decoto Homestead Co.*

**THE WESTERN PACIFIC:**

The Western Pacific Railroad was formed in December 1862, by a group led by Timothy Dame that included Charles McLaughlin and Peter Donahue. All were associated with the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad. They planned to build a railroad from San Jose north to Vallejo's Mills, then east through Niles Canyon to the Livermore Valley. The railroad would then cross over the Altamont Pass to Stockton, then head north to Sacramento and there would meet with the transcontinental railroad. The Western Pacific would join the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad to San Francisco.

In 1866, the first twenty miles from San Jose had been completed when funding problems halted construction within Niles Canyon. Part of the difficulty was that federal land grants were not available where Mexican land grants had previously been made.

**THE CENTRAL PACIFIC:**

In 1867 the Central Pacific had decided that the route via San Jose to San Francisco was too long and that it would be better to change to a route using ferryboats from the CPRR's Oakland's Pier in Oakland. To reach Oakland a CPRR subsidiary bought the Western Pacific, owned at that time by Charles McLaughlin and William Carr. Construction started again in the spring of 1867 and included a line from Vallejo's Mills toward Oakland. The route included passage through property which would eventually become the town of Decoto.

The first transcontinental train to reach San Francisco Bay arrived at the SF&A RR's Alameda Pier on September 6, 1869 and the passengers took the SF&A RR ferryboat



to San Francisco. Two months later the rail connection to the San Francisco and Oakland Railroad was in place and the transcontinental trains now ran through Oakland to Oakland Pier. In 1870 the Western Pacific Railroad was absorbed into the Central Pacific Railroad. Thus was born the town of Decoto in June 1870.

According to John Sandoval in his *History of Washington Township*:

“When Decoto (Ezra Sr.) learned that the Western Pacific was grading for a railroad through Alameda (Niles) Canyon, he and his brothers, John and Adolphus, combined their resources and purchased 334 acres of land paralleling the county road from Jonas G. Clark. With the railroad right-of-way located adjacent to the land the Decoto brothers...”

### **THE DECOTO LAND CO & DECOTO HOMESTEAD CO.:**

John Sandoval says that the Decoto brothers sold their land to the Decoto Land Company, which is odd because the Decoto Land Company did not incorporate until June 1870. Further research showed that the Decoto Brothers sold 284 acres of their land to the Western Pacific Railroad in 1867. Then in 1870 the Western Pacific sold 304 acres of land (which included the 284 acres of Decoto bros. land) to the Decoto Homestead Association.

Then in approximately March 1871 the Decoto Homestead Association sold this parcel to the Decoto Land Company who filed a Certificate of Incorporation on June 11, 1870 in the Alameda County Court. The company had bought 304 acres of land that had belonged to the Decoto Homestead Association. The Decoto Land Company now owned the entire town that would become Decoto except for a portion down the center, which was ceded to the railroad as a right-of-way.

In the August 11<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Sacramento Daily Union* the Decoto Land Co. described their new purchase as:

“The Decoto Land Company has purchased the new Railroad Town of Decoto, the most eligible site on the line of the Western Pacific Railroad in Alameda Valley. It has beautiful scenery, rich soil, good drainage, fine climate and running water, and is easy of access, being within three quarters of an hour’s ride from the Oakland Wharf.

Beautiful picnic grounds lie adjacent. Reservations have been made for parks, schools, etc. 37,500 evergreen trees are to be planted upon the property during the next rainy season, or 25 trees to every lot.

There are 1,500 shares of \$200 each, payable in 20 monthly installments of \$10 each. Each share represents a lot of 50 X 100 feet. Lots to be distributed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November next. No assessment for any purpose whatever can be levied beyond said \$200.”

At this point it should be noted that the Western Pacific was taken over by the Central Pacific Railroad and later this railroad would be sold to the Southern Pacific. In 1903 a new railroad would come through Decoto and it was called the Western Pacific (which had nothing to do with the original railroad) giving rise to more confusion about railroad names.

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\* **MEMORABLE EVENTS** \*

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**1850:**

**First Structure in Decoto:**

Don Jose de Jesus Vallejo built a storehouse on the banks of the Dry Creek, which was part of the Arroyo de la Alameda land grant he received in 1842. In all Don Jose received a grant of 17,705 acres of land north of the Alameda Creek at Niles Canyon.

**1854:**

**Picnic Grounds at Dry Creek:**

The grounds of the Dry Creek, nestled just below the foothills, was first used as a picnic grounds.

**December 1862:**

**Western Pacific & Western Pacific Railroads:**

The Western Pacific Railroad was formed in December 1862 by a group led by Timothy Dame and included Charles McLaughlin and Peter Donahue. Their plan was associated with the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad, to build a railroad from San Jose north to Vallejo's Mills (the mouth of Niles Canyon, later Niles, now part of Fremont), east through the Niles Canyon, north to Dublin/Pleasanton, east through the Livermore Valley, and over Altamont Pass to Stockton, then north to Sacramento with the plan that the transcontinental railroad would follow the Western Pacific to San Jose and then the San Francisco and San Jose north to San Francisco.

In 1866, the first twenty miles from San Jose had been completed when funding problems halted construction within Niles Canyon. Part of the difficulty was that federal land grants were not available where Mexican land grants had previously been made.

In 1867 the Central Pacific had decided that the route via San Jose to San Francisco was too long and that it would be better to change to a route using ferryboats from the Central Pacific's pier in Oakland. To reach Oakland a Central Pacific subsidiary bought the Western Pacific, owned at that time by Charles McLaughlin and William Carr. Construction started again in the spring of 1867 and included a line from Vallejo's Mills toward Oakland. The route included passage through property which would eventually become the town of Decoto.

Ezra Decoto Sr., and his brothers Adolphus and John, had noticed the Western Pacific's progress in Niles Canyon in 1866 and purchased 334-acres of land between Haywards and Vallejo Mills to farm and also to speculate. Their venture paid off as the Western Pacific would go through the middle of their property.

The Decoto brothers sold 284 acres of their 334 acres of land to the Central Pacific Railroad. The Central Pacific immediately sold the majority of this property to the Decoto Land Company, who incorporated on June 11, 1870, to develop the town site of Decoto. The Central Pacific kept a wide swath of land down the middle of the land they had bought from the Decoto's to lay the tracks of their railroad. They also kept a large swath of land on either side of the tracks for future speculation and prime real estate property. Thus was born the town of Decoto in June 1870.

**1863:**

**Arrival of John C. Whipple:**

John Cleveland Whipple came to Decoto in 1863 and lived to ripe old age as a bachelor. He was the representative of J.G. Clark's vast real holdings near the future town of Decoto. John bought the farm of John Hanna, manager of the lands of J.G. Clark. He built a home immediately, about two miles west of town, but cut it in two about ten years later, moving the front half next door, and building onto it, in preparation for the arrival of his brother Edwin with his bride.

**1867:**

**Arrival of the Decoto's:**

Ezra Decoto, and his brothers John & Adolphus, purchased three hundred and thirty-four acres from Jonas G. Clark where they settled and commenced farming. The brothers farmed here until they sold the two hundred and eighty-four acres to the Western Pacific Railroad. The family kept fifty acres of the property and here Ezra Decoto farmed alone. His brothers John and Adolphus moved on to locate themselves in other parts of Washington Township. In 1873 Ezra purchased one hundred and ten acres near Washington Corners (Irvington) and disposed of that in 1881. Ezra was a School Trustee for the Cosmopolitan School District for ten years.

Ezra married Miss Janet Lowrie, August 21, 1860, a native of Stirling Scotland. They had a family of seven children. Four boys: Charles, born June 6, 1861 (d. February 20, 1869); Lizzie, born April 4, 1863, Mary born May 8, 1865; Peter born January 4, 1869; Janet born February 14, 1871, Alvena born June 25, 1873, Ezra (Jr.) born February 6 1876; and Louis born June 20 1878.

**1869:**

**Charlie Decoto Passes Away:**

The town of Decoto was saddened to learn of the death of Charlie L. Decoto, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Decoto, who passed away February 20, 1869 at the age of 7 years 14 days.