

# THE HISTORY OF DECOTO

## CHAPTER 04

### NOVEMBER 1890 THRU 1899

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The better part of this decade saw Decoto win the race for the Masonic Home in northern California. Perched atop a knoll on the foothills in eastern Washington Township, the new Masonic Home would present an impressive edifice for all of the valley below to view. Much of the decade was dedicated to the planning, building, dedicating and celebrating the new structure for the benefit of Masonic Orphans' and Widows'.

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\* **BIOS OF NOTABLE PERSONS** \*

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*Barber / Merchants / Newspaper / Notary Public / Postmasters / Railroad / Saloon Keeper / School Teachers & Trustees / Warehousemen*

#### **BARBER:**

#### **Manuel Brown:**

Manuel Brown was born in Massachusetts in April 1872. His wife Margaret (Maggie) Destella Brown was born in Portugal in February 1878. Maggie entered the U.S. in 1880. Manuel and Maggie were married in Decoto by Father D. Governo of Centerville on May 4, 1895. They had a daughter who was born in September 1898, but she acquired diphtheria in November 1902 and perished. They also had a son Alfred who was born in 1901.

In December 1895 Manuel Brown's barbershop was located in a building owned by Ed Salz. A fire swept through the building destroying the general merchandise store of Frank Ribera and the barbershop of Manuel Brown. Both businesses lost everything.

In March 1914 thieves entered the barbershop of Manuel Brown and stole \$25 worth of razors and barber equipment. They also entered the saloon of Frank Goularte and took several dollars' worth of case goods.

On January 3, 1940, Manuel Brown passed away in Decoto, leaving his dear wife Margaret and his son Alfred. Manuel and Maggie lived at 603 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Decoto.

### **Dr. Ilo R. Aikin, Superintendent:**

### **Mrs. Ora Aiken, Matron:**

Dr. I. Aikin was born in Michigan in May 1871. His wife Ora was born in California in August 1876. They had a daughter Edna born in 1895. In June 1899 Dr. Aiken and Ora Aiken came to the Masonic Widows and Orphans Home in Decoto. The first orphans admitted were received June 20, 1899. The little ones were George Arthur Needle and Cyrus Fay Needle, the 12 and 9-year-old sons of the late A.P. Needle, who was a well-known lawyer in San Francisco. Arrangements were being made to admit six more before the close of the week.

A Sabbath School was organized at the Masonic Home in August 1899, which was under the supervision of Mrs. Aikin and Mrs. Kempthorn, with Miss Zadie Whipple as the organist.

Besides being in charge of the Masonic Home, Dr. Aikin was also in private practice in the Decoto Area. There were many instances where Dr. Aikin served the general Decoto community.

Several charges and accusations were brought against the management of the Masonic Home in December 1903. Charges had been made against Dr. Aikin, which reached the ears of the trustees. An investigation disclosed the fact that only one charge could be placed against him, and that was that he had administered corporal punishment upon some boys at the home. After thoroughly looking into the matter, the trustees authorized Dr. Aikin to administer corporal punishment upon the unruly boys, but asked him to keep a record of such punishment and report the facts to the board at the next session.

Dr. Aikin left in June 1904 for an extensive trip through Mexico and the southern States, and a visit to the St. Louis Fair. He expected to be gone for about six weeks. Two months after his return from his vacation Dr. Aikin gave his resignation to the Board of the Masonic Home. He and his wife have had charge of the institute ever since it was founded. Dr. Aikin severed his connection on November 1, 1904.

The Aikin's decided to reside in Hayward and in November 1904 Mr. Aikin opened his office. The couple would later separate and in August 1907 Dr. Aikin received his final decree of divorce from Mrs. Ora Aikin. Within five minutes he was in the office of the county clerk filling out the blank for a license to marry Anna Wellin of New York City. Dr. Aikin and Anna had a son Ilo Aikin, Jr.

### **MERCHANTS:**

*William B. & Sarah E. King / Tony S. Freitas / Frank Ribera*

### **William B. & Sarah E. King:**

William B. King was born in Ireland in January 1837. He entered the U.S. in 1852. Sarah E. King was born in New York in March 1841. The King's had four children, but only one was listed as surviving to adulthood.

In 1870 William King was operating a restaurant in the Niles-Mission San Jose area. Then in 1880 he was operating a restaurant in the Centerville.

The first mention of William in Decoto is in December 1895 when a fire razed a part of Decoto. The general store of Frank Ribera was burned to the ground at 4:00 am. Mr. King's store, which was next door, was saved by a hard fight. The buildings were owned by E. Salz. Manuel Brown's barbershop, in the same building, was a total loss. At first it was thought the fire was set by a firebug as an attempt was made three months ago to burn the place by saturating it with oil. The loss was about \$2,000 and the insurance \$1,200.

Mr. King resumed his career as a Decoto merchant in 1896. At that time he was appointed as a registrar for the town along with John H. Hayes, Peter Juhl and Edwin Whipple. On June 27, 1896, Mrs. Sarah E. King, wife of William King, was appointed Postmistress at Decoto replacing Thomas W. Lee who had resigned.

On October 9, 1901, William King passed away. He was 64 years of age. He left his wife Sarah who was the Postmistress of Decoto and she also took over his general store.

A change in the ownership of Decoto's only general merchandise store took place in March 1902 when Mrs. Sarah E. King sold her general store to George R. Young. On April 22, 1902 George Young took over the Decoto Post Office from Mrs. Sarah King. George Young had been conducting a small dry goods and notions store in Decoto for several months.

Mrs. Sarah E. King, widow of the late William King, died at Decoto Sunday, February 23, 1908.

### **Tony S. Ferreira:**

Tony S. Ferreira was born in California in March 1862. His wife Margaret was born in Missouri in June 1864. They had eight children born between 1882 and 1904. They had two sons: Raymond and Cyrus, and six daughters, Lottie, Ella, Hettie, Ethel, Mildred and Margaret.

Tony operated a general store in Decoto in the early 1890's. However his store, which also housed the Decoto Post Office, was totally destroyed in July 1891 when the Ed Salz' warehouse went up in flames. The following month Tony Ferreira and family moved to Oakland.

But Tony came back to Decoto in April 1895, and he was named as the Notary Public for the town of Decoto. In February 1897 Tony was granted a license to sell liquor in Decoto. But a year later, in March 1898, he sold his saloon to Harry Fortune. Harry Fortune had run the picnic grounds in Niles Canyon so he was well known in Decoto and Niles.

In 1910 Tony was a clerk in the Decoto warehouse. Besides working for the warehouse, Tony served the town of Decoto as a ballot inspector on local

elections. Tony was also active in the first Decoto Chamber of Commerce in 1911 serving on the Board of Directors. Tony served on the Chamber committee trying to secure streetlights for the town from the county Board of Supervisors.

In July 1910 Tony threw his hat into the ring for Justice of the Peace for Washington Township. In a newspaper article of July 1911 the *Oakland Tribune* refers to Tony Fereira as "Judge T.S. Fereira," so Tony was elected as a Justice of the Peace for Washington Township. In November 1911 the Fereira family moved back to Oakland, but Judge Fereira would remain in Decoto.

On June 4, 1913 Judge T.S. Fereira passed away in Oakland at the age of 51 years.

### **Frank Ribera:**

No bio info was found for Frank Ribera and the information about him is in 1895 when his general store was discovered on fire in August. It was a clear attempt of arson by a firebug.

Four months later in December 1895 the general merchandise store of Frank Ribera was burned at 4 o'clock this morning. The store of William B. King, which adjoined was saved by a hard fight. The building was owned by Edward Salz. The barbershop in the same building, which was owned by Manuel Brown, lost all. The fire was thought to have been set by a firebug as an attempt was made in August to burn the place by saturating it with oil. The loss is about \$2,000 and the insurance \$1,200.

Nothing else could be found for Frank Ribera.

### **NEWSPAPER:**

#### **The Decoto Star:**

In October 1892 *The Sausalito News* reported that the smallest newspaper (in size) that was published in Alameda County was *The Decoto Star*, they were in receipt of No. 2 Volume 1. The editor of the newspaper was Mr. H.E. Keller.

The *Decoto Star*, which was published at Decoto, Calif., grew considerably in its short life. When the newspaper first started it measured 4 inches by 6 inches. The editor, H.E. Kelley, said he was having a high old time in that one horse town publishing his paper. His newspaper has grown now to be 6½ by 10½ inches (in size). Keller said, "Sunday a man called at our office to whip the editor. Tuesday a woman in Niles commenced suit against us for libel. Thursday the people of Centerville began a boycott against us. We don't know what's down on the program for next week."

### **NOTOARY PUBLIC:**

#### **Tony S. Fereira:**

**See "Merchants" above**

## **POSTMASTERS:**

*Mrs. Sarah E. King / Thomas W. Lee / Eugene Kelly*

Listed below are the Postmasters from Decoto as per the listing on Ancestry.com.

James N.C. Hine	January 9, 1871	June 2, 1875
Andrew Jackson Hare	June 3, 1875	June 10, 1884
Edward Salz	June 11, 1884	March 1, 1889
Manuel H. Lewis, Jr.	March 2, 1889	July 13, 1891
Thomas W. Lee	July 14, 1891	June 26, 1896
Sarah E. King	June 27, 1896	July 13, 1898

### **Mrs. Sarah E. King:**

**See bio of "Wm B King" in Merchants Above**

### **Thomas W. Lee:**

Thomas Lee was named Postmaster for Decoto to replace Manuel H. Lewis, Jr. on July 14, 1891. Thomas Lee gave up the Postmaster position in Decoto on June 26, 1896 in favor of Mrs. Sarah King. I also found an article that in May 1896 Mr. Thomas W. Lee married Mrs. Eveline Lee, both being from Decoto. After this date nothing else can be found for Mr. Lee.

### **Eugene Kelly, Ass't Postmaster:**

From *The San Francisco Call* of September 29, 1894:

Eugene Kelly, recently assistant Postmaster at Decoto, Alameda County, was indicted by the Federal Grand Jury yesterday for robbing the mail. The assistant, who is only 22 years old, was subsequently arraigned before Judge Morrow, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to three months imprisonment at hard labor at San Quentin.

A much heavier sentence would have doubtless been imposed if the court had known all the facts of the case. The prisoner appeared with his aged grandfather, who is the Postmaster at Decoto, at the close of the session when few were present. United States Attorney Knight entered with him and urged the judge to deal leniently with the prisoner because his relatives were highly respectable people, keenly conscious of the disgrace the youth had brought upon them, and for the further reason that it was the culprit's first offense.

Kelly's grandfather, a venerable old man, sat with downcast eyes while his young relative pleaded for mercy. The prisoner confessed that on April 11 last he was given a registered letter containing \$3,030 to forward to the Assistant United States Treasurer in this city. Unmindful of the law against picking and stealing, he opened the envelope and pocketed the contents.

"I intended to return the money," Kelly remarked, in subdued tones.

"Most young men who steal intend to return the money," his honor replied.

Kelly told the judge that his mother dead and that he lived with his grandfather, who paid him from \$3 to \$5 a month for his services in the Post Office.

The old gentleman sobbed when sentence was passed upon the offender, but Kelly showed no symptoms of mental depression. After the prisoner had been taken from the courtroom the full extent of his guilt was made known. When he stole the registered letter he forged a receipt for it, and thus prevented the detection of his crime when it was committed. It was also made known that some time after this theft he stole \$160 from the office and destroyed the proof of his guilt.

## **RAILROAD:**

*Mrs. Julia M. Nichols / David C. Kelly*

### **Mrs. Julia M. Nichols:**

Mrs. Julia M. Nichols is shown as being the railroad station agent for the S.P. Railroad for Decoto in February 1889. At that time she was suing her husband, Horace G. Nichols, for a divorce on the grounds of cruelty. Also, Mr. Nichols had deserted Mrs. Nichols and was thought be living in New Mexico.

In June 1889 Mrs. Nichols gave a dance in the new Southern Pacific Depot where she was the agent for the railroad. Dancing, games and music were the order of the evening. Supper was served about midnight and dancing continued until the wee hours of the morning. Decoto residents in attendance were: Mr. & Mrs. Ezra Decoto, Mr. & Mrs. T.S. Fereira, Charles Whipple, the Misses Lulu and Clara Whipple, August May Jr., Henry May, the Misses Jennie and Alvena Decoto and H. Graesslin.

Mrs. Nichols was transferred to the East Oakland Station. Mrs. Nichols was replaced by D.C. Kelly. No further bio info could be found for Mr. or Mrs. Nichols.

### **David C. Kelly (or Kelley):**

David Kelly was born in Pennsylvania in 1847. His wife is shown as Mrs. E.M. Kelly in the 1880 census where the couple was living in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. David worked there as a telegraph operator. Between the 1880 census and the arrival of the Kelly family in Decoto in August 1891 nothing is known. Mr. Kelly was made station agent for the Southern Pacific in 1891. By this time David was a widower and he arrived with his four children: Herbert (18), Mary (15), Frank (14), and Alise (9) aka Alice.

David, and his mother-in-law Eveline Lee, purchased a lot beginning at the intersection of the county road (Decoto Road, which was known as Bell Ranch Road at this time) with SW 11<sup>th</sup> St., Decoto Tract, and other land for \$4,000.

David Kelly passed away on December 27, 1906 leaving Herbert E., Frank L. and Alice E. Kelley, and Mrs. J.C. Ellsworth. David was a native of Pennsylvania, aged 59 years.

## **SALOON KEEPER:**

### **Morton C. Juhl:**

Morton Juhl was born in Germany in 1839. He entered the U.S. in 1869. His wife in the 1880 census was named Mary and was born in Denmark in 1837. His wife in the 1900 census was named Inge and was born in Germany 1836. She entered the U.S. in 1874. They had seven children, four of which reached adulthood: Charles, Edward, Peter and Annie. Two children are buried with Morton and Inge in the Mt. Eden cemetery, Mette born in 1862 and Christian born in 1860, both perished in 1879 of unknown causes.

In 1880 Morton gives his occupation as farmer, but in 1900 he was a saloonkeeper in Decoto. In 1910 he is living with his daughter Annie and son-in-law Louis Erickson in Oakland where he was retired. Inge passed away in 1910 and Morton died in 1917.

### **Edward Juhl:**

Edward Juhl was born in California in April 1875 to Morton and Mary Juhl. He married Annie Jurgensen of Hayward in February 1899. In October 1900 Ed made an application to sell liquors in Decoto. He was dealing in liquor in Decoto until at least 1906 when he reapplied for a liquor license. In 1910 he was located on "D" Street in Hayward where he gave his occupation as a saloonkeeper. He died in June 1951 in Oakland. His brother Peter worked at the Alvarado Water Works for many years. Edward's death notice indicated that he had operated a clubroom in Hayward for many years.

### **Harry Fortune:**

Harry Fortune was born in Massachusetts in March 1850. In the 1890's we find Mr. Fortune operating the picnic grounds in the Niles Canyon. While in Decoto Mr. Fortune shows that he was not married.

In March 1898, Mr. Fortune comes to Decoto where he buys the saloon of T.S. Ferreira. The following month Harry built a sidewalk from his place to the Post Office and put up a hitching rail near the station, both much needed improvements. Then in April 1900 Harry Fortune had his saloon painted inside and out.

Then in November 1900 several residents of Decoto petitioned the County Board of Supervisors to close Harry Fortune's Saloon. The signors of the petition stated that we:

"The undersigned, residents of Decoto, respectfully represent that a saloon in this town kept by one Harry Fortune is a disorderly and disreputable place, a shame and a disgrace to the virtuous women residing here and an outrage on decency and modesty. "We therefore pray your honorable body to revoke the license of the said Fortune that this 'sinkhole of iniquity' may be closed up."

Three weeks later a group of residents of Decoto appeared before the Board of Supervisors in favor of keeping Harry Fortune's Saloon open. The citizen's petition stated:

Gentlemen:

"The undersigned, citizens and residents of Decoto, in the County of Alameda, State of California, respectfully protest against the revocation of the permit and license heretofore granted by your honorable body to Harry Fortune, authorizing and entitling him to sell spirituous, malt and fermented liquors, and to carry on and conduct a saloon in the town of Decoto in this county. We hereby certify and declare that Harry Fortune is a reputable, law-abiding citizen, and is in every respect competent to conduct a saloon and place where liquors are sold, and that his saloon and place of business in Decoto is now and have been heretofore properly conducted by him and is now and has heretofore been an orderly place."

"We therefore recommend in your honorable body that his permit and license be not revoked, and that he be permitted by your honorable body to carry on and conduct his business without interruption, for the reason that said place of business in Decoto is now and has always been a quiet, orderly and respectable place.

Signed by: Mrs. Minnie Ibberson, Mrs. T.S. Ferreira, M.J. Souza, William Ferra, Mrs. Jose Duarte, Mrs. M. Cary, J.H. Smith, J.T. Hulbert, Mrs. F. M. White, Mrs. E.P. Thorndyke, John Carr, T.S. Ferreira, George Small, Charles C. Whipple, Ed Juhl, G. Neilson, N. Wilbur Neimes, R.T. Moses, Joe Davast, and Joe Luna."

But apparently Harry fortune had had enough; for In July 1901 he sold his saloon to Thomas Ibberson. Fortune said, at the time, that he did not yet know where he would go when he leaves.

### **Albert Silva:**

Albert Silva was born in the Azores in December 1862. He gives date of arrival into the U.S. as either 1879 or 1890. His wife Annie Silva was born in California in September 1870. The Silva's were married in 1894. They had five children, four of which reached adulthood. On October 31, 1907, Miss Allie Silva, daughter of Albert and Annie Silva of Decoto died at the age of twelve. The Silva's had four other children: Clarence born in 1896, Gertrude born in 1898, Roy born in 1900 and Alberta born in 1902.

In the year 1900 Albert gave his occupation as a barber, but in 1895 he had applied for a liquor license through Alameda County. In 1898 Albert held a turkey shoot and raffle on Christmas Day in the Whipple field. This first showed Albert's entrepreneurial skills as he moved a good part of his saloon into a tent and had liquid and solid refreshments on hand all day. His turkey shoot even brought in guests from neighboring towns to participate.

Just before the turn of the new century Albert extended the porch all the way around his saloon and then a year later he had the inside and outside of his establishment repainted.

At this same time Albert had been conducting a sort of livery stable for the accommodation of traveling men and others. However in April 1901 he disposed of all his horses and rigs, giving the business up. He considered that



the endeavor is more trouble than it is worth, especially in a town the size of Decoto.

Ever the progressive sort Albert installed six gas lamps in his saloon in May 1901. They were furnished by the Barton Light Company of San Leandro. Both Albert and his patrons were quite well satisfied with the new light and wondered why it is that they had not put them in before. Ed Whipple, R. Volmer and Henry May have also purchased two similar lamps for each of their homes after they had seen how they had worked.

Then in September 1902 Albert started on a new endeavor. He had a fine new hall put up on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and "I" Streets in Decoto. The new hall was large and was fitted up with a stage and drop curtain for theatrical shows. The hall was occupied almost nightly since its completion. On November 1, 1902, it opened with a show put on by a medicine company that occupied the hall for one week and presented good shows. Other entertainments presented at the time was a baby contest, followed the next night by a ladies nail-driving contest, which drew a large crowds and created much excitement.

The new hall was officially dedicated on February 14, 1903, when Albert threw a grand opening ball, complete with decorations he had purchased in San Francisco for the event. Music was furnished by Mojica's Orchestra of San Francisco.

Other entertainments of major import during 1903 was a play put on by the Decoto School children consisting of songs, drill, and the comic operetta, "A Merry Company" or "Cadets Picnic." A dance followed.

A month later a barbecue and dance was given at the hall. The boy's band played in the afternoon and the San Leandro band played at night. The fee was 25 cents with the ladies getting in for free.

Two weeks later the fourth annual ball given by the Young Men of Decoto took place Silva's Hall. There was a large attendance and the night passed quietly. It was noted the most successful of these parties ever given.

One week later it was announced that on September 12<sup>th</sup> Decoto Council, No. 61, U.P.P.E.C., would give a social dance in Silva's Hall.

In October 1903 Al Silva gave a dance and barbecue in his hall. It was largely attended and a sumptuous supper was served.

One year after its grand opening ball a valentine party was given at Silva's Hall by the young men's band of Newark. It was largely attended and a fine supper was served.

But the hall was used more than just dances, they also had live performances from traveling medicine shows and traveling groups like Lyman Paul Armstrong, who styled himself as the "Globe Trotter," and who gave a fine stereopticon entertainment show in 1904 with part of the proceeds going to the public school fund. The slide views were primarily on the Yellowstone National Park and St. Louis Exposition and were very fine and quite a novelty in 1904.

In 1909 the Dunbar Novelty Company gave a show for two nights in Silva's Hall. The numbers were quite good and much applause was given a little four-year-old girl vocalist, Doris Dunbar. The last performance closed with a dance, the band boys furnishing the music. Later in the year the Beatty Brothers gave a performance in a full house. Miss Mildred Rose, a soprano, sang several solos, and illustrated songs were also rendered.

The hall was also used for civic events such as polling place for local, statewide and federal elections.

Albert ever the entrepreneur, in 1910 he opened Silva's Resort in Decoto. He advertised in the San Francisco Call in June 1910 that A. Silva's Resort was open in Decoto with special dinners for automobilists and the traveling public. Albert was quick to see the coming importance of the automobile and the traveling public.

In 1911 Albert began acting as a buyer for the San Leandro cannery. He purchased 32 tons of cherries at prices ranging from 5 to 6 cents a pound and then resold them to the cannery. Later that year he purchased 80 tons of apricots for sale to the cannery.

In 1912 he advertised that he had a rooming house for rent in Decoto. It was fully furnished with a fine paying record according to the ad Albert placed.

In 1911 the progressive citizens of Decoto met in a body and organized a Chamber of Commerce. They elected the following officers: Henry May, President; Fred Meyers, Vice-President; and C.E. Jasmine, Secretary and Treasurer. The Board of Directors was composed of:

Henry May	Fred Meyers	T.S. Fereira
F.J. Caldeira	H.C. Searles	F. Rabello
Albert Silva	John L. Olson	F. Goularte
Charles Nesmith		

The organization determined to encourage the location of a cannery in Decoto, to secure better facilities for the shipments of products and to obtain adequate lighting for the roads through town.

Besides the Decoto Chamber of Commerce, Albert also took part in December 1913 with the Washington Township Water Campaign Committee to protect our local supply of water from the clutches of the Spring Valley Water Company.

On May 26, 1916 Albert Silva returned home from a three months' stay in Albuquerque, New Mexico, entirely restored in health, and looked as well as he ever did in his life. He was quite enthusiastic about the wonderful curative effects of the Albuquerque climate. That city was known the world over as a health resort for tubercular people. Mr. Silva spent his time in the Albuquerque Sanatorium, the first sanatorium built there for the care of people with tuberculosis. Mr. Silva says that the common conception of the sanatorium being a place of worry, sickness and depression is all wrong, and that they patients are a jolly, intelligent lot of people, the majority of whom are as healthy looking as can be found anywhere.

Albert Silva passed away on December 1, 1917. He was 58 years old.

**Tony S. Ferreira:**

**See bio in "Merchants" above**

## **SCHOOL TEACHERS & TRUSTEES:**

*Merton J. Congdon / E.S. Snyder / Arthur Mock / Miss Mary Jenkins / Paul Martin / John H. Peterson / Carlton C. Crane*

**Merton J. Congdon, Principal:**

The Decoto School started out 1890 with the resignation of Merton J. Congdon as principal in January. Mr. Congdon left the school to take over the chair of mathematics at the Washington College in Irvington.

**Mr. E. S. Snyder, Principal:**

Mr. E. S. Snyder, formerly of the Alameda Schools, replaced Merton J. Congdon as Principal of the Decoto School in January 1890. In November of 1890 Mr. Snyder left the Decoto School for the position of principal in the Turlock School District. Mr. A. Mock of Humboldt County was elected to replace Mr. Snyder with Miss Lena Carter as his assistant.

**Mr. Arthur Mock, Principal:**

Arthur Mock was born in California in 1857. His wife Eva L. was also born in California in the year 1864. The Mock's were married in 1890. They had two children by the year 1900, Margery and Archie.

Arthur Mock was single and teaching in Humboldt County in 1880. In December 1890 Arthur Mock was elected to replace Mr. Snyder with Miss Lena Carter as his assistant. Mr. Snyder had left the Decoto School to take a position in Tulare County. Seven months later Mr. Mock was elected principal of the Mission San Jose School with Ms. Mary Jenkins replacing Mr. Mock at Decoto.

**Miss Mary Jenkins, Principal:**

Miss Mary Jenkins was born in Indiana in September 1871. In June 1891 Miss Jenkins was elected to replace Mr. Mock who had departed to take the position of principal of the Mission San Jose School. Miss Jenkins remained at the Decoto School until December 1895 when she departed for the Oakland School system. In 1900 she was living with her mother in Oakland.

**Mr. Paul Martin, Principal:**

Paul Martin was born in Indiana in 1867. His wife Effie was born in Illinois in 1871. They were married in 1891 and had two children, Gertrude and George.

Paul was elected as Principal of the Decoto School in 1898. He taught for three years before leaving for the Oakland School system in 1901.

**John H. Peterson, Trustee:**

John was born in Denmark in July 1845. He appears to have entered the U.S. in 1846. His wife Clara was born in California in May 1855. They were married in 1872 and had four children: William, Grace, Jeanette, Gertrude and George. John was farmer in Decoto and also served many terms on the Decoto ballot official team. The children were well known in Decoto society while growing up, taking part in many Decoto gatherings and social activities.

In 1898 John was elected as one of the Decoto School Board of Trustees.

Funeral services were held for John Hansen Peterson of Decoto in January 1929. John was a pioneer in Decoto history and his funeral was attended by a large number of old-time friends, acquaintances and relatives. He was the husband of Clara T. Peterson and father of George A. and William E. Peterson, Mrs. O.F. Trask and Mrs. H.F. Lyle. Pallbearers were Henry C. Searles, John L. Olson, Robert Haines, Harry Haines, Peter Decoto and John Whipple. Mr. Peterson was 83 years old and a native of Denmark.

### **Carlton C. Crane, Trustee:**

Carlton C. Crane was elected as a Decoto Grammar School Trustee in June 1898.

Carlton C. Crane was born in Alvarado in August 1859 to Albert E. & Louisa Crane. Albert Crane was the brother of Addison M. Crane, first Alameda County Judge at Alvarado in 1853. In 1880 Carlton was living in San Francisco with his brother Harry H. Crane. At this time Carlton was an agent for the New York Central Railroad office in San Francisco.

In 1882 Carlton married Miss Alvena Meyer, daughter of Frederick W. Meyer of Decoto. They had two children, Helen, born in 1884 and Cyrus born in 1898. In October 1891 Carlton visited Decoto with his wife and child and at this time Carlton was employed by the Vanderbilt lines of railroad.

By 1896 Carlton, Alvena and Helen Crane had settled into the town of Decoto. Two years later he was voted to a seat on the Decoto School Board.

Mrs. Alvena Crane became quite a social organizer in Decoto, acting as an excellent fundraiser for such clubs as the Ladies Guild of Decoto and the Decoto Drama Club. Mrs. Crane also became a member of Country Club of Washington Township after the turn of the new century and she was also welcomed by the prestigious Ebell Society of Oakland as an honored guest.

Carlton had a fine orchard just outside the town of Decoto. Carlton rented the orchard out to a farmer who harvested the apricots and paid rent to Mr. Crane. The family referred to the little ranch as "Carlton Orchard" and had built up a fine country home, for Carlton's business was still in San Francisco with the railroad. He would winter in the city and then relocate to Decoto in the summer to his "summer home."

In October 1903 the Crane's departed for the winter to Oakland where they would live on Filbert Street. *The Oakland Tribune* wrote of their return to Decoto in May 1904:

"Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Crane, and Miss Helen Crane, have closed their home on Filbert Street and have gone to "Carlton Orchards" for the summer. It is a very quaint, comfortable summer home at Decoto, and the Crane's entertain there very hospitably all through the summer. Miss Helen Crane (their daughter) is a very charming girl, with a most delightful voice, which has been carefully cultivated."

For the winter of 1904 the Crane's closed up their summer home in Decoto and departed for their winter place, which this year would be the California Hotel in San Francisco.

The Crane's visited Decoto during the summer of 1905, but spent most of the time in San Francisco. The new Western Pacific Railroad would cut through C.C. Crane's place a mile beyond Decoto and cross the Southern Pacific Track at that point. From there it would parallel the Southern Pacific track into Oakland.

At the end of September 1905 Miss Helen Crane arrived home from the East after a very pleasant summer spent on the Atlantic seaboard and in Canada. Miss Helen Crane was planning to go abroad for the winter with a party of Eastern friends.

*The Oakland Tribune* wrote of the perils of the Crane's in San Francisco during the 1906 SF earthquake:

"Among those who had harrowing experiences in the late fire were the Carlton Cranes. Mr. Crane was the manager of the California Hotel, and the family did not imagine there was any danger, as the hotel was considered far out of the fire line. Suddenly the fire was upon them and the family, often being hemmed in by the fire and in deadly peril, they managed to escape.

In the awful night when San Francisco was burning, they made their escape in a Pope-Toledo machine, the driver bringing eight people safely to "Carlton Orchard," the home of the Cranes at Decoto. They arrived at half after two in the morning, more dead than alive, but grateful beyond measure to Providence that had saved them from the terrible death, which had menaced them. They saved nothing of all the valuable things, which they had at the hotel, paintings, rare old rugs, beautiful china, clothes, jewelry, all are gone.

The Cranes had the most wonderful collection of Chinese works of art in San Francisco. The collection represented the work of years. But they do not regret the loss, since the lives of the family were spared and they are all together. Mr. Crane has taken an office in the Macdonough block.

Every day the Cranes came to San Francisco in their automobile, bringing to the patients in St. Thomas's Hospital the things they needed, such as eggs, butter and cream.

Miss Helen Crane was the bravest little woman in the world, in the face of great emergencies. The men called her "brave Helen Crane."

On January 19, 1910, Miss Helen Crane of Decoto was selected to sing the role of Carmen in the Kirmess (Kirmess definition: a low country festival usually for charity) to be held in Oakland. The selection of Miss Crane was regarded by the Kirmess projectors as a particularly happy choice, as she is of a splendid type of dusky Spanish beauty, possessing a voice of remarkable sweetness and range and has the histrionic ability, which the part requires.

The advance sales of tickets for the Kirmess, which opened February 2, 1910, at the Piedmont Pavilion, exceeded more than 2,000 for the first day and the boxes would be filled with a large representation of society people.

The big pageant was one of the most gorgeously appointed affairs even given in Oakland, the costumes in their brilliancy ranging from the early medieval to the latest cry of the fashion centers of Paris and New York.

A number of out of town parties were arranged, many planning to come from San Francisco. Mr. and Mrs. C.C. Crane, whose daughter, Miss Helen Crane, is to sing and dance the role of Carmen in "La Carmencita," will have a special train to carry them and a large number of friends from their home in Decoto to witness the opening night.

*The Oakland Tribune* Society page of February 3<sup>rd</sup> has the following article about the performance of Miss Helen Crane:

"A swirling medley of color, gleaming lights, silken-clad women and scented flowers, the Kirmess, Oakland's charity frolic, opened at Piedmont Pavilion last night. Society, 2,000 strong, place the final indispensable stamp of approval upon the gorgeous spectacle, and an audience culled from the elite of half a state filled the boxes and tiers and overflowing into the aisles and palm-screened corners, filled the gigantic auditorium with storms of applause.



Miss Helen Crane as "Carmen"

At the conclusion of the formal program a voting contest for the most popular dance of the evening was instituted and after some two hours good natured rivalry on the part of the friends and relatives of the young performers, the palm of excellence was awarded "La Carmencita," a graceful Spanish number, which had for its scintillating little star, Miss Helen Crane, the beautiful and talented daughter of Carlton Crane.

In addition to rare personal charm and grace, Miss Crane is possessed of a magnificent voice, despite the rather unsatisfactory acoustics offered by the pavilion last night, her voice filled the great structure to its furthest with a volume of golden melody.

Possessed of superior dramatic ability, Miss Crane's rendition of the role of Carmen, the Sevillian cigarette girl, in her quarrel scene with Don Jose, was the one particular achievement of the whole meritorious program."

*The Oakland Tribune* wrote a follow up article on Miss Crane on February 5<sup>th</sup>:

"Helen Crane has a beautiful voice that has been trained for advanced concert work. She is an exceedingly good actress as well, and her Carmen was a splendid study in dramatic art.

Her beautiful, well-trained voice led the chorus in the Carmen dance, which ended in a superb climax in the splendid Toreador song. Miss Crane surprised everyone and her beautiful singing and really good acting made for the success, which crowned the Carmen dance.

Miss Crane's costume must have been copied from some rare picture or else the wonderful embroidered shawl must have been an heirloom in some Spanish family.

Mr. and Mrs. Crane, with their son Carlton and daughter, make their home in Decoto and many friends from that section of the county came to the Kirmess to hear Miss Crane's Carmen."

Miss Helen Crane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Carlton Crane of Decoto, who is popular in Oakland and other Bay cities, not alone on account of her social position, but because of her talents as a singer and dancer, has joined the Orpheum circuit\* and will make her debut at Denver this week.

At the Kirmess given in Oakland two years ago, Miss Crane's singing and dancing in the character of Carmen were notable for their faithful adherence to grand opera traditions. At that time her friends predicted that she would make a success upon the stage.

\*Orpheum Circuit: The Orpheum Circuit was a chain of vaudeville and movie theaters. It was founded in 1886 and operated through 1927 when it was merged with the Keith-Albee theater chain, ultimately becoming part of the Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO).

The Cranes are among the most prominent people about the Bay cities, particularly in Oakland, where they have spent much of their time. The Carlton Crane and family are planning to close their home in Decoto and they will leave very soon for a trip around the world. "Carlton Orchards," the fine apricot orchard, has been the scene of much entertaining in the past, and their friends are going to greatly miss Mr. & Mrs. Crane. They are planning to go east and to Europe, and they expect to be away at least a year.

After 1914 little or nothing is found about the Cranes until January 15, 1938 when *The Hayward Daily Review* printed the following article:

"Many Hayward acquaintances of Mrs. Alvena (Meyer) Crane, well known in Southern Alameda County, will be sorry to learn of her death, which occurred last week at her home in San Jose. Mrs. Crane was the widow of the late Carlton C. Crane, pioneer railroad man who for 56 years was passenger agent of the New York Central Railroad.

Mrs. Crane was the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Meyer, pioneer residents of Decoto. Mr. Meyer operated a general merchandise store in Mt. Eden in the 60's. In 1866 he sold his business to Henry Petermann Sr., of San Francisco. Mr. Meyer and his family moved to Decoto and later to Irvington, where he became a large landowner. Mrs. Crane still owns a large apricot orchard in Decoto.

She leaves to mourn her two sisters, Mrs. Helen Crane Guyman and Miss Amalia Meyer of San Jose and a brother, Frederick Meyer of Oakland."

## **WAREHOUSEMAN:**

*Ferdinand Salz / Lowry, Stellar & Volmer (Rudolph Volmer) / Lowry, Volmer & Perry (Rudolph Volmer)*

### **Ferdinand Salz:**

Ferdinand Salz was born in Austria in April 1867. He entered the U.S. in 1880. His wife, Marietta Salz, was born Canada (British) in July 1859. She entered the U.S. in 1860. They were married in 1893, but as of 1920 had no surviving children.

In 1890 Ferdinand was employed at the Salz Warehouse in Decoto. In that year he purchased the Salz Warehouse in Centerville. In 1896 he purchased a lot in Decoto from Edward and Tillie Salz. In that same year he was operating a general store in Decoto.

But by the year 1900 he was back in Centerville working at the Salz warehouse as a clerk. By the year 1910 he had left Washington Township and relocated in San Mateo where he was a commission merchant.

### **Rudolph Volmer:**

#### **Lowry, Stellar & Volmer:**

Rudolph Volmer was born in Indiana in 1861. On December 13, 1893 he married Miss Luella (Lulu) Whipple, daughter of Charles Whipple of Decoto. Luella was born in Decoto in 1867. By 1900 they had two sons, William and Rudolph.

In July 1890 Rudolph Volmer, in partnership with Mssrs. Lowry & Stellar, commenced the erection of a hay warehouse and feed mill in Decoto. The partners installed the most modern equipment in their warehouse including a new Monarch separator that could clean 1,000 bushels per hour, an average of 300 tons per day.

On August 8, 1894, the warehouse of Lowry, Stellar & Volmer was totally destroyed by fire.

### **Rudolph Volmer:** **See also bio under "Rudolph Volmer" above.**

#### **Lowry, Volmer & Perry's Warehouse:**

The warehouse of Lowry, Stellar & Volmer was completely destroyed by fire on August 8, 1894. Nothing further was found on this business venture until October 1898 when the warehouse of Lowry, Volmer & Perry was mentioned



in an article. In July 1899 their warehouse is referred to as the "Decoto Iron Warehouse" having a big force of men employed loading cars with barley for shipment. About six or eight cars a day was going out. Straw at the rate of two to five cars a day is also going out.

In October 1900 their warehouse was the polling place in Decoto for voting. Ballot officials were listed as T.S. Fereira, John Carr, J.H. Peterson, M. Kenneally, R. Volmer, Joseph Smith, John Whipple and George Taylor.

With a crash that was heard for a mile around, the great Volmer Warehouse at Decoto burst open on Saturday night, September 30, 1901, and buried the railroad track in grain. It was found necessary to dig a way through the loose grain in order to permit the passage of regular trains.

The wrecking of the warehouse was one of the most peculiar, as well as disastrous events that have happened in the lower part of the county. R. Volmer & Co. had filled the warehouse to the very roof with grain, which they had purchased from the farmers around Washington Township. The inability of the farmers to get their grain to a market in San Francisco, or to the shipping at Port Costa, made the purchase of grain a profitable investment. Volmer & Co. had been making large purchases for several weeks and they stored their purchases in their warehouse at Decoto.

In some way the underpinning of the warehouse gave way on Saturday night. When the drop came the warehouse burst wide open, and the grain was spread over the country for hundreds of feet.

The loss will fall entirely upon the Volmer Co., for they purchased the grain outright and owned the contents of the warehouse. The loss will amount to about \$5,000.

The warehouse business of Lowry, Perry & Volmer at Decoto and Irvington were purchased by Edward Salz in March 1903. The actual transfer did not take place until June 1903. With this deal Salz would gain control of all the warehouses of Decoto, Irvington and Centerville.

In June 1903 Volmer & Perry moved to San Francisco and opened up a new business on Pine Street. The Volmer family also relocated to San Francisco.

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\* **MASONIC HOME** \*  
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In the fall of 1892 the Lodge of Free & Accepted Masonry of California appointed a committee to look into the building of a Mason's Home for Widows & Orphans (which will be referred to as simply "The Masonic Home" hereafter) in Northern California. Many sites were in consideration as the Mason's received many offers, some of which were given with added inducements to locate in their area.

Many had to be excluded because one of the main points was that the location be within easy reach of the City of Oakland. In February 1893 the committee announced

that they had reached a decision and would locate the Masonic Home in Decoto, California.

The location chosen was an ideal one in their eyes, and was admirably adapted for the site of the home. The home would be located on a knoll overlooking Washington Township, which would give the structure excellent drainage and a beautiful view of the farmland and the Bay below. The environment was delightfully picturesque with an excellent climate free from the fog. The water supply was of the best quality and was deemed inexhaustible.

The committee had settled their choice on a piece of land known as the "Bailey Tract." The 268 acres had cost the Mason's \$33,500 and was within one hour's ride from San Francisco, Stockton, Oakland and San Jose. Besides the home the Mason's also intended to cultivate olives, figs, and different kinds of fruit so that in time the property would become self-supporting.

In September 1893 the Mason's had chosen best design from the fifteen that had been submitted by leading architects of the day. The one chosen was submitted by architect W.S. Lille. The building was in the Queen Anne style of architecture, and consisted of a central tower flanked by two projecting wings and addition. The main building was of three clear stories and a basement. In the wings, however, there was a fourth story made by the triangular top. A magnificent porch at the entrance led into a large hall, out of which a nobly designed staircase leads to the upper stories.



The material of the building was red brick with stone facings. The length was about 160 feet, and the depth about 67 feet. The estimated cost was estimated to be about \$65,000. On the tower about half way up would be a statue of George Washington, who in his day was a grand master of the Masons. The building was of sufficient size to comfortably house 100 orphans and 25 widows, large enough in fact to cover the needs of the orphans and widows of Masons for many a long day to come.

The basement was eight feet in height and was fitted with a gymnasium and recreation room for the orphans. On the first floor will be administration offices and a dormitory for the children. The second story was divided to make room for twenty-five widows, the arrangements being such that a widow with children would be enabled to keep her children with her. The third story will consist of dormitories for the children.

Two years passed before the building of the home was restarted due to the difficulty of raising the large amount of money necessary to build the home and the replacement of the funds that had been embezzled. Work on the Masonic Home at Decoto finally began in June 1896 when the contract for the grading of the site was begun so that the cornerstone could be laid in the fall of 1896.

Two local men played a prominent part in the building of the Masonic Home:



EDWIN WHIPPLE



FARLEY GRANGER, JR.

The first car of material for the Masonic Home arrived in Decoto August 24, 1896, from the east and was hauled direct to the site of the home. Received at the Decoto train station was two inch iron pipe for the water supply, which was immediately laid from a natural spring one mile away. The work of grading for the site of the building was rapidly nearing completion and it was expected the cornerstone would be laid in October.

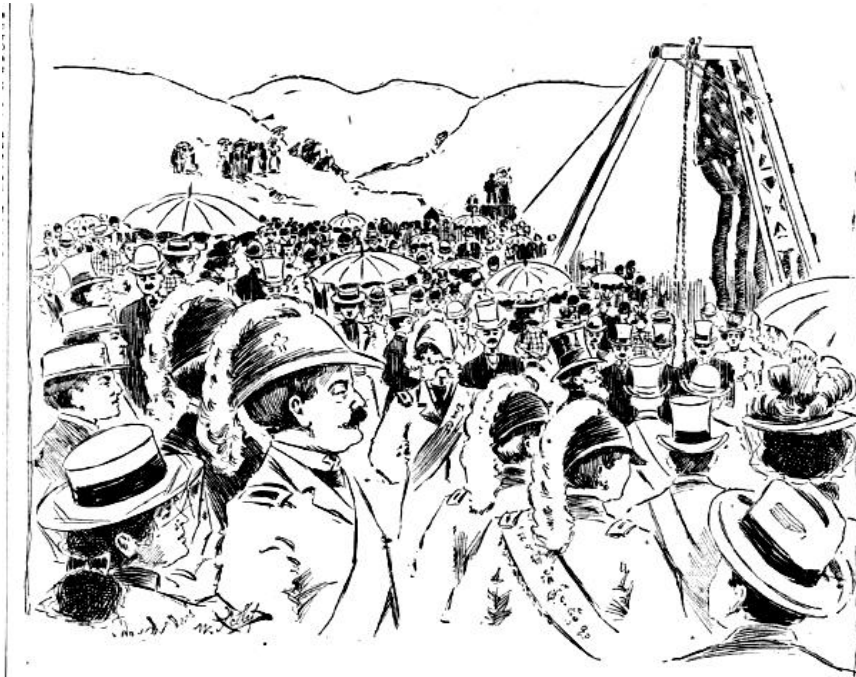
The date for the laying the cornerstone was October 14, 1896. The events that took place that day were fourfold:

The first was an impressive parade from the Masonic Temple down Market Street in San Francisco. In the parade were between 3,000 and 4,000 persons, bands of music, waving banners and flags, glittering swords, nodding plumes, costly and elegant regalia, thousands of wearers of the "lambskin" apron, in short all manner of paraphernalia, equipment, and outward glory of the great order of Masonic brotherhood.

The second event was the parade at Decoto, which was not a repetition albeit the organizations taking part were the same. But the surroundings were as different and characteristic as to endow this second parade with characteristic and unique interest.

The third event was the actual laying of the cornerstone, which was viewed by thousands who had not seen the parade in San Francisco, but who had come in from

all over Alameda and Santa Clara counties in special trains, in carriages, on horseback, and on bicycles, taking any and all available means of conveyance to reach the scene of such widespread interest.



Scene at the Moment When the Cornerstone of the Masonic Home Was Lowered Into Position by Authority of the Officers of the Grand Lodge, F and A. M., of California, at Decoto, Yesterday.

Then came the fourth event, when the members of the craft being called from rest to refreshment devoted their attention solely to a barbecue, which had been prepared by Brother Farley B. Granger Jr. of the Alameda Lodge at Centerville. Swords rattled under the greenwood tree in a grove surrounding the Decoto public school. Spoons and forks jingled and barbecued steers smoked on long tables, the generous length of which was calculated to accommodate 1,000 Masons and friends at one sitting.

Decoto had seen the largest crowd of people, which she had ever beheld during her existence when the people on board special trains disembarked. They swarmed over the landscape mingling with the throng from previous trains, which had preceded them earlier in the morning. Trains arrived from San Francisco, Sacramento and San Jose.

Again delays caused the progress to cease at the building of the home. Finally in March 1898 construction was set to begin by the letting of the contract to erect the building that had been scheduled for the completion by October 1, 1896. The sum of \$33,600 was to be spent on putting up the structure.

Everything was in readiness for actual work to go ahead on the Masonic Home. The boarding house was completed and a family, who were to do the cooking for the men, was in possession. Load after load of lumber was hauled to the site. Things were at a standstill as far as actual work is concerned until E. B. Stone, who has the contract to haul the stone, commenced on the work.

The boarding house on the Masonic Home hill was the scene of a gay dancing party on March 19, 1898. The building has just been completed and Fred Hurlburt, who was in charge of construction at the Masonic Home site, wishing to become better acquainted with Decoto young people cordially invited them to have a good time. At midnight, coffee, cake and sandwiches were served. Among those present were:

Mr. & Mrs. Rainey	Miss Edith Rogers	Miss Edna Whipple
Miss Alice Kelley	Miss May Kelley	Miss Lillie Graesslin
Miss Kate Graesslin	Miss Etta Graham	Miss Christina Anderson
Miss Isabella Whipple	Miss Zadie Whipple	Mr. Fred Hurlburt
Mr. Harry C. Searles	Mr. George Peterson	Mr. Will Anderson
Mr. Louis Decoto	Mr. T. S. Fereira	Mr. Jim Hellwig
Mr. Johnnie Whipple	Mr. Edward Whipple	Mr. Bob Haines
Mr. Harry Miller	Mr. H. E. Kelley	

By the end of the first of April 1898 work was rapidly going forward at the construction site. A large force of men was at work and it was expected that the first floor would be laid in about two weeks.

By July 1898 the walls of the main building of were up and the slate roof was being laid. The foundation for the second building, which is to be used as a dining room, engine room, laundry and sleeping quarters, was nearly finished and work was soon to be commenced on the brick walls. Electricians were wiring the building for electric lights, and plumbers are putting in water and gas pipes. The dedication would take place some time in October.

Finally all was ready for the dedication of the Masonic Home. The date chosen was October 13, 1898, nearly two years to the day since the laying of the cornerstone. That day there were 10,000 people in the little town of Decoto, but on the following day more than 15,000 were expected to throng to view the dedication and the spectacle that the ceremony will bring.



Upon their arrival the procession would be formed and would march through a large field to the hill, a half-mile distant, where the ceremonies were to be conducted. The big building has been completed and everything about the premises has been made spick and span for the occasion.

As done previously with the laying of the cornerstone there was an impressive parade down Market Street in San Francisco to the ferry, then the throng boarded the train for Decoto at Oakland and when they arrived the parade reformed at the station in Decoto and then marched across the level field to the magnificent home on a hill about a mile west of Decoto.

The parade from Decoto was led by Grand Marshal Edwards and staff, which would be followed by members of the Grand Lodge followed by members of the various lodges and the Golden Gate Commandery of the Knights Templar, with their plumed hats and glittering regalia. They marched up the winding road to the big building, where ranks were broken and a semi-circle was formed around the massive front steps, upon which were grouped the speakers and grand officers.

The ceremonies began with the singing of "America" by the crowd, then followed by an address by Charles L. Patton, who as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Home, would turn the building over to the Grand Lodge officers. Rabbi Vogelsanger and Senator Perkins followed with speeches of some length and then amid the strains of the band the ceremonies were concluded.

After the ceremonies hundreds of people were allowed to swarm through the big structure from cellar to attic and view the architectural beauty of the Home.

The Home became fully operational on June 18, 1899 when the first two orphans, George Arthur and Cyrus Fay Needles, the 9 and 12 year-old sons of the late A. P. Needles were admitted by Dr. & Mrs. Aiken, superintendent and matron of the home respectively. Arrangements were made to admit six more before the close of the week.

The final act of the Masonic Home in 1899 was the organization of a Sabbath School under the supervision of Mrs. Aiken and Mrs. Kempthorn, with Miss Zadie Whipple who was the organist.

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**\* SOCIAL, CIVIC, & RELIGIOUS ORGS \***

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*Jury Duty / Ladies Guild / Native Daughters of the Golden West (Alvarado) / Native Sons of the Golden West (Alvarado) / Red Cross / Religious Services / Road District / Voting Precinct*

**Jury Duty:**  
**February 1897:**

The following persons are to appear for jury duty for Alameda County from Decoto, J. E. Badger and John Carr.

**January 1898:**

The Board of Supervisors has chosen the following persons from Decoto for jury duty in Superior Court for Alameda County. They are: Henry May and George Taylor.

**Ladies Guild:**

The Decoto Ladies' Guild now ha nineteen members in December 1897 and much interest are manifested at the weekly meetings of the society.

The Ladies' Guild of Decoto held bazaar and entertainment on December 29, 1897. It was a great success, both socially and financially, and the ladies were about \$100 better off, which amount goes into the church fund for the finishing off of the inside of the church building. The farce they presented, "Our Folks," was excellent, those taking part acting their parts true to life. The booths were well patronized and carefully presided over by the young ladies. Those in charge of the booths were the Misses May and Alice Kelley, Emma Ritter, Grace Peterson, Inez Whipple and Helen Crane.

The Decoto Ladies Guild held a very successful bazaar at the home of Mrs. Edwin Whipple Tuesday afternoon, December 12, 1899. Despite the bad weather there was a very large attendance, and all had a pleasant time. Over \$100 was netted as a result of the ladies efforts on behalf of the church. The many beautiful articles exhibited were all sold, and orders were received for further supplies. The ladies desire to express their thanks to the friends from Alvarado, Centerville and Niles, who aided in making the bazaar a financial as well as a social success.

### **NDGW, ALVARADO:**

A Parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West was instituted in Alvarado on October 28, 1890. It is known as Olivina Parlor, No. 61, and had twenty-one charter members. Among the charter members from Decoto were the Misses: Jennie Decoto, Mary Decoto, Lulu Whipple and Clara Whipple.

Miss Christine Anderson of Decoto was sent as a delegate to Stockton from the Olivina Parlor, Alvarado N.D.G.W. in June 1899.

### **NSGW, ALVARADO:**

#### **January 1890:**

Peter L. Decoto was elected First Vice President of the Wisteria Parlor (Alvarado) of the Native Sons of the Golden West. Also named as officers from Decoto for the coming term were Henry May, Recording Secretary and Edward L. Haines, Outside Sentinel.

### **RED CROSS:**

The Red Cross Society of Decoto joined the adjacent towns to give an entertainment and dance on the evening of June 24, 1898, at the schoolhouse in Decoto.

### **RELIGIOUS SERVICES:**

In the fall of 1895 a Congregational Church was organized at Decoto with several members. At the beginning of December of 1895 the little congregation was still flourishing. In December 1895 the Rev. E.S. Williams of Oakland stirred up matters by his address, and a committee composed of Decoto residents was appointed to feel the pulse of the community at large in regard to raising enough money to erect a small but handsome and substantial building suitable for present needs. It was stated that Mrs. Patterson, widow of George Patterson the pioneer farmer who died recently, has offered to donate lots upon which the building may be erected.

The Rev. F.H. Maar, who has been the Congregational pastor in Niles for seven years accepted a call to Redwood City and left on July 12, 1896. He had organized the local church and had worked hard ever since in building it up. He also built a pretty church

at Mission San Jose and has occupied the pulpit regularly for nearly six years. He also organized a church at Decoto, preaching there every other Sunday. Within three months they had completed a new and neat church edifice. He was a general favorite with all, and along with his other church work has time to do much Christian Endeavor work.

The winter meeting of the Bay Conference of the Congregational Churches was held January 12, 1897, at the Congregational Church on Bartlett Street in San Francisco. The churches of San Francisco, Alameda and Marin counties were represented. Representing the Decoto Congregational Church were the Rev. E.C. Hale and Mrs. Carlton C. Crane.

The dedication of the Decoto Church took place on Friday evening, September 23, 1898. A cordial invitation was extended to all.

The winter rally of the Mizpah Union of the Christian Endeavor was held at Centerville last Friday evening, November 17, 1899. There was a good attendance and the program proved interesting and profitable. The uniform topics suggested by the United Society were followed in part. The main address of the evening was on "Missions," given by Dr. A.P. Peck of North China, and it was exceptionally fine. The Decoto and Alvarado Christian Endeavor Societies have been obliged to disband for the present, but all the other societies in the Union are flourishing.

### **ROAD DISTRICT:**

The Board of Supervisors approved a road district for the town of Decoto in April 1896. Supervisor Church moved that Edwin Whipple be appointed Road Foreman of the Decoto Road District. The motion was seconded and carried. Edwin Whipple, the Decoto Road Foreman, reported that for the three months ending August 31, 1898, there were total expenditures of \$860 for the Decoto Road District.

### **VOTING PRECINCT:**

The citizens of Decoto petitioned the Board of Supervisors in February 1896 to create a voting precinct for the citizens of Decoto. It set forth that the voters of the Decoto district were put to great inconvenience in voting having to go to Niles or Alvarado to cast their ballots. They asked the board to remedy the difficulty by establishing a voting precinct including Decoto. The application was granted, and the county surveyor was instructed to survey the precinct. Named as registrars for the new district were John H. Hayes, William King, Peter Juhl, and Edwin Whipple.

There were only two of the seventy-three registered voters of the Decoto precinct who failed to place their opinions on record in November 1896 election of National issues. While Decoto is a strong Republican precinct, the vote for the Democratic candidate for Supervisor ran away ahead of his opponent, owing to some rumors that were started during the day.

The County Board of Supervisors has allowed the payment of \$10 each to the following in the Decoto voting precinct in December 1896:

John C. Whipple	M. Kenneally	Carlton C. Crane	Anthony H. Bush
Rudolph Volmer	Henry May	Joseph F. Rose	Joseph H. Smith

The voting officials for the November 1898 elections in Decoto were:  
Inspectors: M. Souza, J.H. Peterson



Judges: Michael Kenneally, C.C. Crane  
Ballot Clerks: G.K. Taylor, C. Whipple Jr.  
Polling Place: Lowry, Volmer & Perry's Warehouse

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\* **PETER, LOUIS & EZRA DECOTO** \*  
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Ezra Sr. & Janet Decoto had four sons, Charles: b. 1861; Peter b. 1869; Ezra Jr b. 1876; and Louis b. 1878. Charles passed away at the age of seven years.

**EZRA DECOTO, JR.:**

Ezra Decoto Jr. was born in Decoto California on February 6, 1876 to Ezra Sr. & Janet Lowrie Decoto. Ezra graduated from Decoto Grammar School and then attended Washington Union High School in Centerville in 1894. Those who graduated with Ezra in 1894 were, Charles & Joseph Jarvis, Olive Lamb, Clarence Martenstein, Manuel Quadros, Laura Thane and James R. Whipple.

In 1899 the Associated Students of the University of California nominated Ezra Decoto Jr. to manage the university's track team. The following year the Cal track team returned from an extensive eastern road trip with a surplus of money despite the heavy expenses of the trip.

In June 1901 Ezra was named Graduate Manager for the coming year. As Graduate Manager Ezra was now in charge of all athletic affairs at the University of California. Being Graduate Manager in the 1901 is akin to being athletic Director for the school today.

The biggest athletic contest for the year 1901 is the same as it today, and even back then it was called the Big Game. Of course it is annual football match between Cal & Stanford, and it came with all the same fervor we still see today.

As Graduate Manager Ezra would receive challenges from many different schools for a myriad of sports, including not only football and baseball, but also track and rowing. In January 1902 the University of Washington wanted to schedule a meet in Berkeley in the spring. The northern university would like to send down sixteen men who will also try to meet Stanford and Santa Clara College.

Ezra had found romance on the campus at Cal and on June 12, 1902, he married Miss Neva Todd Jarvis from Oakland in a ceremony held in Oakland. Neva was the daughter of Howard and Maria R. Jarvis. During the early days her father was a lumber, grain and shipping magnate of Southern Alameda County. Neva was born at Jarvis Landing near Newark California and attended Newark Grammar School and Washington Union High School. She then attended Cal Berkeley where she graduated in 1902.

In October 1902 Ezra opened a law office in Oakland and would conduct the affairs of the student body in conjunction with his law practice. But he still retained his duties at Cal as Graduate Manager of sports for the university. As

his practice grew Ezra found that he had to resign his position as head of the Night School Department for the Oakland School System.

In 1904 Ezra was in a lively fight for the office of Graduate Manager with Audubon Woolsey. Decoto had now served in the office for three years, and would present his sterling record to entitle him to another two years. Decoto was a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity and the Golden Bear Senior Society. Ezra won another two years when he defeated Woolsey 417 to 409.

Ezra got to work and lined up an ambitious football schedule for the year that included Oregon, Nevada, Stanford and Washington. For home games Ezra had 250 loads of sandy loam hauled onto the California Field with the ultimate purpose of having it become a turf field. The above number of loads would cover the grounds to a depth of three or four inches. The plan was to plant Australian rye grass later on. This would make California's field the best football field on the Pacific Coast.

In 1905 many students (and alums) became angry with Ezra when he refused to give them bunches of complimentary tickets to ball games. Some began to question his ability and talked of change.

Ezra Decoto then took on the job of being a probation officer in Alameda County in 1904. This was an unpaid position at this time. But Ezra had a sponsor in the form of The Oakland Club. In January 1905 he gave a report before the club showing his accomplishments during the past 18 months. He had eleven youths over 18 years of age and thirty-four boys of lesser years of age. Of these three have been rearrested and were awaiting decisions in their cases. The rest of the probation officer's charges were employed or at school and may be classed as law abiding.

Although there was no salary paid from government coffers for Decoto's services The Oakland Club has paid Decoto a \$50 a month stipend for his good work. The members of the Oakland Club find Decoto's reformatory work worthy of being promoted.

Decoto even went so far as to take interest in a young man's case and agreed to take him to the Decoto family ranch at Decoto and put him to work and has promised to give him steady employment, far from the temptations of crowded cities.

In 1906 Ezra was still engaged in his own law practice with J.B. Richardson in Oakland, despite his many duties in the civic arena. In December 1906 it was announced that Ezra would be appointed as a Prosecuting Attorney in one of the Oakland Police Courts. A few weeks after the announcement Abe P. Leach resigned his position as Prosecuting Attorney of Police Court No. 1 and that he would be succeeded by Ezra Decoto.

Ezra Decoto, Prosecuting Attorney and former Probation Officer, was chosen District Attorney of Alameda County on April 15, 1918, by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to succeed W.H. Hynes, who resigned. The choice was unanimous, his induction into office being accomplished on motion of Supervisor John F. Mullins, who paid tribute to Hynes and Decoto in his nominating address.

In April 1920 Oliver D. Hamlin Jr., deputy district attorney for the City of Oakland announced his resignation to leave the public employ and pursue a private law practice. Ezra Decoto would fill this vacancy with the appointment of Earl G. Warren, who was attached to the staff of the city attorney Oakland. If the name of Earl Warren rings a bell it is because he would later go on to be District Attorney for Alameda County, Governor of California and Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The Warren Commission Report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy came out of Warren's court.

In January 1923 Alameda County District Attorney Ezra Decoto invoked the State Abatement Law against the notorious part of Alvarado known as "Little Tijuana." Decoto said the resorts (saloons, dance halls, and gambling halls) that lined Smith Street in Alvarado had been the scenes of shootings, stabbings, and fights innumerable. Chinese bandits, who make it their headquarters, had fired on a marshal and a deputy sheriff. Operations of Mexican gambling devices and contraband diversions had also been complained of.

On January 12, 1925, Earl G. Warren was named, unanimously, by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to replace Ezra Decoto Jr., who had just handed in his resignation that morning. Ezra would go on to be a member of the Railroad Commission of California, a forerunner to the Public Utilities Commission.

Ezra was elected President of the State Railroad Commission on January 3, 1927, following the adoption of a new rule regarding the presidency. It was agreed by the commission, meeting in San Francisco that each member in the future would serve as president for a term of one year. The seniority rule was followed in electing Decoto.

On September 30, 1930 Ezra Decoto announced his desire to resign his post on the State Railroad Commission to pursue a career in law in the private practice field. On December 10, 1930 he announced that December 31, 1930, would be his last day on the Railroad Commission.

Now in private practice Ezra could pursue something that he loved and excelled in, public speaking. Ezra was in demand as a speaker because of his delivery and rapier wit. Some examples of his speaking engagements:

In February 1933 before the Lake Merritt Breakfast Club held in the Lake Merritt Hotel, Decoto discussed a subject of importance to sportsmen and told the pros and cons of "striped bass in Lake Merritt."

Ezra Decoto gave a talk to the members of the Oakland Rotarian Club on September 6, 1934, in the Ivory Court of the Hotel Oakland. The subject was, "Early Romantic History of Alameda County."

Ezra Decoto spoke before the Decoto Chamber of Commerce on June 5, 1935 in the fire hall and spoke of his boyhood days in Decoto recalling events and pranks of several present members of the chamber. He stressed the point that farmers of those days, especially those who raised watermelons, were

liberal to youth, bringing in the picture Supervisor Ralph Richmond, Harry Searles, Henry May, Peter Decoto and Judge Joseph A. Silva of Niles.

Ezra addressed the Hayward Rotarians on March 5, 1939. Ezra Decoto told of the early history of the county, of the time when Alvarado was the first county seat. And of the time when young couples eloped to the old church at Agua Caliente, now changed to its English derivative, Warm Springs. Mr. Decoto, who was a tall, graceful man, spoke charmingly, as might be expected of a brilliant lawyer, and he held his audience spellbound.

Ezra Decoto Sr. was one of a half dozen children. Not having had an education, the old father was determined that the children should have good college educations. Ezra, the youngest child, came along when family finances were running low, but the father supplemented what funds the boy could earn, and Ezra went through college.

Ezra Decoto gave a talk on March 8, 1939, before the San Leandro Rotary Club entitled, "A Buggy Ride through Alameda County in the '80s."

Ezra W. Decoto, 67, was sworn in as a judge of Alameda County Superior Court November 13, 1943, to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Judge Lincoln S. Church (son of A.M. Church of Alvarado), who occupied the bench for 25 years.

The oath was administered to Decoto by Presiding Judge T.W. Harris in his courtroom in the County Courthouse. Decoto was assigned to the juvenile court, he would begin his duties on Monday, November 29, 1943. He sat informally with Superior Court Judge Frank M. Ogden, who has been in charge of the juvenile court for five years and who will go into the civil department.

Decoto was appointed to the bench by Gov. Earl Warren on October 29<sup>th</sup> and the appointment was approved by the State Bar Association November 10<sup>th</sup>.

Warren himself received his first job in the county district attorney's office from Decoto, who was district attorney from 1918 until his resignation in 1925 to serve as State Railroad Commissioner. Warren was elected by the Board of Supervisors to succeed Decoto.

Colorful tales from this area's early history was told by Judge Ezra Decoto at a luncheon program on February 9, 1947, given by the Ebell Society. "Alameda County in the Horse and Buggy Days of 1854" was the subject of Judge Decoto's talk. Born in Decoto, Mr. Decoto gleaned many of his tales from family reminiscences. He is now Superior Judge in the Juvenile Division.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Ezra W. Decoto Jr. was taken to Oakland Hospital on April 6, 1948, after being stricken on April 5<sup>th</sup> at work. He was 72. Death came at 1:45 a.m. from an acute heart attack. He had entered the hospital at 4 p.m. April 5<sup>th</sup>.

He had been in ill health since last fall and had returned only recently from a two-week rest at Palm Springs. He was hearing a civil suit yesterday when he complained of a "burning pain in his chest." He went home at noon.

Decoto was the former District Attorney of Alameda County, former president of the State Railroad Commission (forerunner to the State Public Utilities Commission), and was active all of his life in local (Oakland) affairs. Decoto was named to the Alameda County Superior Court in November of 1948 by his long-time friend, Governor Earl Warren.

He was the son of Ezra Sr. and Janet Lowrie Decoto, Alameda County pioneers and founders of the community of Decoto. He attended the Decoto Grammar School and graduated from Washington Union High School in Centerville, Calif. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1900 and the Hastings School of Law in 1902.

Honorary pallbearers would include Governor Warren, District Attorney J. Frank Coakley, J. Marcus Hardin (a former law partner of Decoto), and the 11 judges of the Superior Court.

Judge Decoto is survived by his widow, Mrs. Gladys Grayson Decoto (Mrs. Neva Decoto, Ezra's first wife died in February 1931); two daughters, Mrs. Janet Nordahl and Mrs. Mary Lou Jessup, and four grandchildren. He leaves two sisters; Mrs. August May Jr. of Alvarado, and Mrs. Henry Crosby of Oakland, two brothers; Peter Decoto of Decoto and Louis A. Decoto of Piedmont.

Ezra was a member of the Oakland Lodge No. 171 of Elks where he served as the Esteemed Leading Knight. He was also a member of the Live Oak Lodge, No. 61, of the Free & Accepted Masons of Oakland. In 1928 Ezra served as the Illustrious Potentate of the Aahmes Shrine Temple in Oakland.

#### **Remembrances of Ezra W. Decoto Jr.:**

Shortly after Ezra's death an acquaintance wrote this article (May 2, 1948) for the *Oakland Tribune* KNAVE section. It reveals what happened in a football game played on New Year's Day in 1896. It reveals a bit of the man that Ezra Decoto was:

"A little over a half-century ago two aggregates of youths played a game of football on a freshly-plowed field on the edge of Hayward. That football game had several features of enduring interest. One of the contesting teams, Oscar Morgan tells me, was made up of farm boys, all big, husky and hard to handle. They were there for one purpose, which was to rub into the plowed clods the noses of those lads who were opposing them.

The opposing players were always either prone or supine, the general results were the same, as they watched the Decoto horde race, almost unmolested, up and down the field.

The Hayward captain had been chosen in a somewhat unusual way. He had recently been transferred from the big city of Santa Cruz, compared to Hayward it really was a big town in those days. He knew nothing at all about football, but he was willing to learn. So, the Hayward players took it for granted that because he came from a school much bigger than theirs he must necessarily know more about football than they did.

The Decoto boys seemed to think that if they kept that Hayward captain out of the play his team would be seriously crippled. So, they saw to it that he was kept out of the play. He was swarmed under. As soon as he would try to get up from his clod-of-the-moment he would be submarined again by some Decoto dinosaur.

He had a rugged afternoon, and that is an understatement. Let's talk about the weather and the long dry spell. Adding machines were not known in those days, and only an adding machine could have taken care of the points made by those Decoto boys who seemed to have the quaint idea that they were at a track meet instead of a football game.

When the carnage was over that captain, who had read that it was good form for the loser to congratulate the winner wobbled across the field and shook hands with the slim youth who was the manager of that inhibition-less Decoto outfit.

I think there wasn't an overplus of ardor in that handshake. I ought to know, because I was that foolish youth who had made himself a shining target by accepting the captaincy of that team. The Decoto boy, now in the full maturity of a fine manhood, died just a few days ago. His name was Ezra Decoto. These lines are being written merely in the hope that among those countless people of all kinds by whom Ezra was so well beloved there will come a renewed glow of fond memory, a renewed surge of affection for the man who, with dignity and with honor, officially served his people so long and so well.

These lines can do him no good because he is not here to read them. But to those who were proud to call him friend for many, many years they may carry some heartening message.

Not long ago he came out to see me and we had a long visit together. I introduced him to two or three people who happened to be there at the time. Later they said: "He has the kindest face and the gentlest manner I have ever known." And that was a fine and deserved tribute.

While he was district attorney he resigned from that office. Explaining to a friend the reason for that resignation he said, "I have grown tired of trying to send people, men and women, to the penitentiary. I have no theories about some other forms of punishment for evil characters in the best interest of society as a whole, but I have had enough of the business of digging up evidence and marshaling reasons why they should be confined behind steel bars for indefinite periods. There are other men much better suited to a task like that than I am. That is why I resigned..." And anyone who knew him well could understand why he would feel that way.

Ezra was a marvelous storyteller, especially when Portuguese people were his central characters. He had seen much of them at close range as a boy in Decoto and his dialect was perfect. Audiences always shouted for more after he finished and sat down.

Ezra; and a man named Frank Lemos who was tall with an almost squeaky voice, who had studied to be a priest and ended by being a lawyer; Johnnie Rose, a Hayward lad who had become a successful attorney; and Dr. Dean who, long, long, ago was Hayward's leading doctor, when any of those four took the spotlight and told Portuguese yarns there never any doubt that the belly-laughs would come from all the listeners.

But Ezra could convulse his listeners with those inimitable tales, and then turn around and discuss serious, weighty question and hold the close attention of all who heard him."

Much has been written of Ezra Decoto's wit, especially when it comes to impersonating the Portuguese dialect. Here is a perfect of that when Ezra got the better of an old friend, Lincoln S. Church, an Oakland lawyer and later a long-time Oakland Superior Court Judge. Lincoln Church was the son of A.M. Church of Alvarado whose store was the first county seat in 1853. So enjoy this February 6, 1918 article from the *Oakland Tribune*:

"Attorney Lincoln S. Church is not a particularly profane man. Yet if you wish to hear a certain vehemence and originality in "cussing" it is only necessary to ask him if he know "Antone Gomes."

Gomes is one Ezra Decoto, District Deputy Attorney and sometime Exalted Ruler of the Elks, and the possessor of a genial laugh and irrepressible humor. One day while Church was waiting to try a case in Police Judge Mortimer Smith's court, Decoto went into an adjoining room and had Church called to the telephone. Decoto is able to simulate an inimitable Portuguese accent. Here is the conversation:

"Hello...this Mist' Church? This Antone Gomes...Yes Antone Gomes, you know me, Mist' Church. Yes, I want you to make court for \$6,000 for me. Come down and see me...yes."

"Well, I'm pretty busy this afternoon, I can't come and see you now. Who did you say this was?"

"Oh Mist' Church, you know me, Antone Gomes, Gomes...Antone Gomes..."

"Oh, yes," Church answered doubtfully, He then had to listen to a long rigmarole about a cow and a horse and a barn and \$6,000, finally ending in a request to come to see him. Church asked for directions to the place, and Decoto had a beautiful time giving these directions. It took about twenty minutes and contained minute explanation of each step of the way. Some of it follows:

"You go out other side Hayward about two miles...you know that big red house...stand near road about quarter mile off the road...you know...turn to the left and go up a little hill. You know that pig ranch up by that hill...yes...well you don't stop there, that Joe Souza place. You go right on down hill, cross little creek, turn to right and go up big hill. Way up top on hill you find little white chicken-house. That's where I live...goodbye"

When Decoto came back into the room Church was still sitting with the telephone receiver in one hand and running his other hand through his hair.

"you know me, Mist' Church," said Decoto..."Antone Gomes."

It was then that Decoto learned the extent of Church's vocabulary. It is only necessary to ask Church about Antone Gomes now to bring forth a new and startling line of invective."

## **LOUIS A. DECOTO:**

Louis A. Decoto was born in Decoto on June 20, 1878 to Ezra Decoto Sr. and Janet Decoto. He attended Decoto Grammar School and Washington Union High School, graduating in 1897. He then attended the University of California at Berkeley where he graduated in May 1902 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry and Geology.

Young Louis Decoto enjoyed sports, particularly the early type of rough & tough football played in the late 1800's. One game of note was a game played on January 1, 1896, between the Decoto boy's team and the Hayward High School football team. Early on in the game it became apparent that the Decoto boys outclassed the Hayward High in all facets of the game, winning handily 18 - 0. The quarterback on the Decoto team was Louis Decoto.

When Louis went to Cal Berkeley he played football on the Cal Bear varsity squad. In a football game played on the Cal Berkeley field on September 28, 1901, the Golden Bears and the Reliance Athletic Club played to a scoreless tie. Louis Decoto was featured at quarterback in the second half.

After graduation Louis Decoto and James Whipple came back to play an alumni football game against the Cal varsity team in October 1903. Decoto and Whipple were part of the '99 California team that defeated Stanford 22-0.

Prior to his graduation Louis had interned at various places learning his future field of endeavor. In June 1900 he was in Mt. St. Helena with the mining and engineering class of the university. In April to May 1901 Louis went to Oroville to work in a mine during his vacation from the school.

In November 1904 Louis left for a mining job in Brazil but he appears to come back to California by May 1905.

In July 1911 Louis was married in Colon, Columbia to Miss Henrietta Wade who was the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. C.F. Wade of Merced California. Miss Wade graduated with class of '04 from Cal Berkeley and was a member of Delta Delta Delta Sorority.

Information about the Decoto's is sparse for the next nineteen years except for July 1919 when the Decoto's were living in the Lake District of Oakland. The 1930 census shows the Decoto's living in Oakland with their 14 year old daughter Jean.



Early in the 1930's Louis is found in New Guinea following a gold strike. The *Oakland Tribune* ran this article on the adventures of Louis Decoto in New Guinea:

"Tales of cannibalism and adventure in New Guinea were brought here today by a group of mining men who have introduced modern gold-mining methods into the jungle and mountain lands of the territory.

The prospectors are Frank W. Griffin and Frank R. Short, directors of the Bulolo Gold Dredging, Ltd., Louis Decoto and Lou Joubert, mining engineers.

"A few months ago two of our men were captured by the wild men down there and we later learned that they were eaten," Griffin said. We have succeeded in recruiting about 500 of the natives and teaching them how to mine for gold. But it's a hard task to keep them from "going native" without warning.

The mining group uses an airplane to transport heavy machinery into the wilderness, and also for transporting out the gold to the coast.

Griffin said that football has been introduced among the natives to give them an opportunity to vent their pent-up emotions against each other. They play a rough game, he explained, but get a huge thrill out of it."

One year later the *Oakland Tribune* ran another article featuring Louis Decoto and his adventures gold mining in the primitive land of New Guinea:

"Towering cliffs, swamps and tangled vegetation over and through which roads can never be built, and savage bands, which specialize in head hunting are only insignificant handicaps for Yankee engineers where there are mines to be developed.

Louis A. Decoto, brother of Ezra Decoto, former railroad commissioner and district attorney of Alameda County, has returned to Decoto, his boyhood home with tales of adventure that read like a novel. Straight from the jungles of New Guinea to the green and verdant fields of southern Alameda County, came Decoto and now he is renewing the friendships of former years. The mining engineer, whose exploits formed the subject of a series of articles in one of the nation's leading weekly magazines recently, tells many interesting stories of his experiences in the tropical jungles.

It was easy enough to bring the gold out in airplanes, but the first job was to procure gold. Heavy machinery had to be transported to the mines and stamp mills erected before the ore would release its precious metal. Civil engineers directed the natives in clearing areas in the jungle, which could be used for landing fields.

Mechanical engineers had to design new types of machinery, which could be transported part by part in planes and assembled at the mines. Aeronautical engineers had to design new types of airplanes,

which would carry heavy loads over lofty peaks and into which could be placed pieces of machinery and parts, which could not be loaded into the conventional plane. While this was going on, mining engineers were tracing veins of ore and planning for operations."

In May 1934 the Louis Decoto family set out for another adventure their first stop, Manila in the Philippines. Here Louis Decoto would remain in the islands attending to mining interest he has there.

Mrs. Decoto and daughter Jean would continue on a trip around the world. With a "supplementary education" in view, Miss Jean Decoto, a Piedmont society girl and sophomore at the University of California would set sail from Manila for the continuation of their trip on the Dollar Liner President Wilson.

The family would be leaving their comfortable home at 307 Sea View Avenue, Piedmont.

Louis Decoto returned to the Bay Area in February 1936 and gave a speech before the Women's athletic Club of Oakland, discussing his "Explorations into Philippine Jungles," illustrated with motion pictures taken by him during his residence in the Philippines of almost two years. Mr. Decoto was credited with having made numerous trips into the interiors of countries on his mining surveys, going through almost impenetrable jungles and into communities where no white man had been before.

When Mr. Decoto left here almost two years ago for the Philippines he was accompanied by his wife and daughter, Miss Jean Decoto, a University of California student. They parted at Manila when the mining engineer began his journey into the interior and Mrs. Decoto and her daughter left on a tour of the world.

On March 14, 1942, Miss Jean Decoto married Mr. John Lenahan of Berkeley at the home of bride's parents. Mr. Lenahan was a resident of Berkeley.

## **PETER DECOTO:**

Peter Decoto was born in Decoto on January 4, 1869, to Ezra Decoto Sr. and Janet Decoto. He attended Decoto Grammar School and graduated in December 1884 with Edward Haines. Peter Decoto was a very friendly person and loved to associate with others, but the town of Decoto had few organizations that catered to this type of activity. Because of this Peter was drawn to Alvarado.

On March 26, 1888, the Alvarado Social Club was organized with O.J. Emery, president; Miss Nellie Beebe, Vice President; Miss Mollie Crossett, Secretary; and Peter Decoto, Treasurer. The Board of Directors were John Liquori (Mr. Eden), H.P. Dyer and Oscar Nauert.

On May 17, 1888, Peter Decoto became a charter member of the Wisteria Parlor, Native Sons of the Golden West No.127 in Alvarado. Among the charter members besides Peter Decoto were: Farley B. Granger Jr. and Hugh T. Dyer. In 1890 the Native Sons of Alvarado boasted three members from

Decoto serving an official capacity of the parlor, they were: Peter Decoto, Vice President; Henry May, recording Secretary; and Edward Haines, Outside Sentinel.

In April of 1895 Peter Decoto partook on a great Alaskan adventure. He boarded a ship in San Francisco for Alaska and the Alaskan gold fields on the Kenai Peninsula. Thus started a multi-year adventure for Peter that took him to the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska and then in 1897 he went to the gold fields of Dawson in the Yukon Territory.

The story of Peter's adventure follows this biography of Peter. Because of the length of this writing I decided to append to the end of this bio.

Peter returned to Decoto after spending time in the Klondike, but after a period time at home Peter got the wanderlust again and in February 1902 he again left for Alaska, but not until a farewell dancing party was given him in the Decoto Hall. A large number of young people, as well as a sprinkling of their elders, made up the merry party. At midnight light refreshments consisting of coffee and cakes were passed around by the ladies. It was a thoroughly enjoyable affair.

Peter returned in September 1905 and the following month he left for Los Angeles where he planned to reside in the future. One year later his mother left Decoto to visit Peter in Los Angeles.

In 1910 Peter Decoto was in the retail grocery business in the City of Los Angeles with his Alaskan partner Guy Rawlins (Rollins) and his wife. In 1920 Peter was back on the family farm in Decoto with his mother and father where he was running the family farm.

Besides operating the family farm Peter took a great interest in the town of Decoto. He joined the Decoto Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber decided to sponsor a Boy Scout Troop, and in May 1924 Peter was named Scout Master for the children with Harry Haines as Ass't Scout Master. The Chamber committee for the Scouts included: Harry Searles (chairman), Herbert Harrold, A.N. Benson, J.L. Olson, Antone Amaral, Manuel Caldeira, Henry May, Raymond McNulty, M.L. Avilla and Enos Pimentel.

In July 1926 Peter was unanimously elected president of the Chamber of Commerce at the semi-annual election meeting in the grammar school auditorium. Peter, who has been Vice-President of the commercial organization for the last six months, succeeded Will Hurst. Walter Walker, Chief of the Decoto Volunteer Fire Department, was chosen Vice-President, while O.B. Merrick and J.L. Olson were reelected Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

One of the things that Peter Decoto championed was for the erection of street signs, which were placed at various intersections. Persons residing in the community for years learned the identity of the streets they live on for the first time through the civic organization's decision to erect the signs. This can be explained by the fact that there was no home delivery of mail, you either had a post office box number or got your mail at the General Delivery window at the Post Office.

Peter Decoto was named as a member of a committee that was challenged in September 1926 to explore the possibility of a sanitary system for the town of Decoto. At this time household and manufacturing waste was handled by cesspools or dumping into Alameda Creek. The chief reason for organizing a sewer system was the expected rise in manufacturing effluent by the proposed enlargement of the K. Hovden Packing Company's Decoto Cannery. Local businessmen believed that \$50,000 would easily cover the cost of the system, inasmuch as it would not be necessary to install a disposal tank as in the case of other Washington Township communities. It was planned to pipe the refuse directly into the Bay. If it was found advisable to install a disposal tank, a special committee would be chosen to confer with the county Board of Supervisors regarding the calling of a bond issue to finance the cost of construction.

In October 1926 Peter decided to address an affront to the town of Decoto by Rand-McNally and the California Automobile Association and their local road maps. It seems that the town of Decoto was not listed on their maps. The town wanted a place on the map. Complaining that Decoto was eliminated in practically all maps and charts designed within the past few years, the Decoto Chamber of Commerce planned a drive for recognition at its next meeting according to President Peter L. Decoto. Communications would probably be addressed to the California Automobile Association, Rand-McNally, and others who have failed to give Decoto its proper identification on road maps, Decoto said.

In May 1927, Peter Decoto began serving his third term as president of the local Chamber of Commerce. He was re-elected along with other officers who were: Walter Walker, Vice-President; J.L. Olson, Treasurer; and R. Bendel, Secretary.

In February 1928 the *Oakland* paid a tribute to Peter and his family in the following article:

"Step right up and meet Pete Decoto, of Decoto! You'll like him, everyone does. Back in the Stone Age or somewhere back there, the present site of the thriving town of Decoto was the Decoto Ranch. Pete was about the first white child to be born in that section and he is still going strong, still living in the house in which he was born.

"Ezra, his brother, went into the public service sector but Pete decided to make his fortune ranching, gold mining and well boring. His intentions were good when he invaded the Klondike to muck for gold, but after 11 years of it he got out just in time to keep from going broke. He found gold was made from the produce of the rich agricultural soil on the old ranch and not around Dawson.

He has seen a lot of the world, but he satisfied with the town that bears his family name. He was it grow from a small village into a thriving town with seven thriving industries, exclusive of the agriculture and poultry raising.

Not being content to watch the natural development of the community, he has been untiring in his efforts to build it up. In his travels he keeps his eyes open for ideas that may be worked out here. He is president of the Decoto Chamber of Commerce and is an aggressive leader.

Although he has no boys of his own, having preferred to remain a bachelor, Pete is vitally interested in the youth of his community. He helped organize the Decoto troop of Boy Scouts and has been its scoutmaster ever since. The boys idolize him. Their devotion to him has enabled him to develop the troop into one of the liveliest Scout organizations in southern Alameda County. The secret of his popularity among the boys is that he has remained a boy in spirit and gets as much fun out of the troop hikes as the scouts themselves.

To members of the chamber of commerce he is a walking library of information. He visited Arizona and Mexico last summer and upon his return was able to reel off information about land values and tax rates in all sections that he visited.

The house in which he lives was built in 1867. He was born in it two years later. This qualifies him for membership in the Native Sons of the Golden West and he has been a long time member of the Wisteria Parlor of Alvarado. He is also an active member of the Maple Camp, Woodmen of the World of Centerville. He has been a member of these organizations since he was 18 years old."

In January 1929 a drive spearheaded by Roland Bendel, Decoto Fire Chief and Peter Decoto, Chamber President to have the California State Housing Inspector given jurisdiction over the unincorporated towns in Alameda County. The action was brought on by the removal from Hayward to Decoto of shacks that were condemned by the housing inspector as unfit for human habitation. The buildings were so small that they can be transported to Decoto on trucks.

Residents of Mexican, Porto Rican and Filipino origins in Niles, Centerville, Decoto and Alvarado habitually lived in crowded and unsanitary dwellings have become a menace to the health of others in the communities, Peter Decoto pointed out.

A petition asking the county Board of Supervisors to pass an ordinance creating a housing zone, under which undesirable and unsanitary residences may be condemned or their owners obliged to install modern sanitary apparatus.

The action was being taken by the Chamber of Commerce to prevent shacks, which have been condemned as unfit for human occupancy by the health authorities in Hayward from being moved into Decoto. Bendel pointed out that as many as eight of these shacks have been located on a single lot in Decoto, with no provisions made for sanitation.

In January 1930 Peter Decoto took the Decoto Boy Scouts to the Sierras where they could enjoy a winter outing in the mountains during a winter month. This outing is being held as a reward for the Scouts who attain high

averages in attendance and accomplishments. Peter Decoto provides this treat for the boys each year at his own expense.

Later in 1930 Peter was again elected President of the Decoto Chamber of Commerce. Others elected were: William Hurst, Vice President; J.L. Olson, Treasurer; and Roland Bendel, Secretary.

The year 1931 Peter Decoto and the Chamber tackled the telephone problem. The town of Decoto did not have 24-hour telephone service. The Decoto exchange was located in a grocery store that closes at night, making it impossible to call the fire station in case of fire, residents having to go to the center of town to sound the fire bell.

The year 1935 saw Peter Decoto lead the fight as President of the Decoto Chamber of Commerce to replace the old Bell Ranch Bridge with a modern new structure and to straighten the road leading to the bridge to correct the dangerous angle of the old to the approaching road. The bridge was in a dangerous condition declared Frank Thomas President of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. It was narrow, set at an angle to the road, and dangerous for traffic, especially for school buses and heavy trucks.

Also on the agenda of things to accomplish by the Chamber was street lighting for the residents of Decoto. Walking on the streets of Decoto after dark could be dangerous from a traffic standpoint and also benefits those who commit crimes against citizens.

Also in 1935 Peter Decoto and Frank J. Thomas, presidents, respectively, of the Senior and Junior Chambers of Commerce, started petitions to determine the wishes of this community regarding a sewerage system. Plans for the system were explained to the citizens attending a mass meeting held by Harold F. Gray, engineer of the Mosquito Abatement District. They involve the laying of several miles of sewer pipelines through Decoto streets, leading to a sewage treatment plant proposed to be established on property now owned by August May Jr. two miles west of the post office. The estimated cost was \$115,000, of which \$70,000 would be borrowed from or granted by the federal government, with the community to be bonded for \$45,000.

The eight acres required for the treating farm was expected to cost \$4,000. After the sewage is treated, it would be let into Alameda Creek. Discussion of possibility of contamination of wells was ended by Mr. Gray's assertion that the treated water would entirely purified after seepage through four feet of soil.

Maintenance of the treating plant, Mr. Gray estimated would cost \$3,600 annually. Joseph Pearce, cannery operator here, offered to provide 40 per cent of the maintenance. His cannery uses about 50,000 gallons of water daily for washing of produce.

After this Peter Decoto lessened his civic activities although he remained on the Decoto Chamber of Commerce as treasurer until 1953, and of course, he was still Scoutmaster of the Decoto Boy Scouts. In January 1942 Peter Decoto received an award from the Boy Scouts for his 15 years of dedicated service to the Scout Troop.

Another passion that Peter had was for the Wisteria Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West. In August 1941 the parlor was contemplating merging with the Centerville Parlor. The Alvarado Parlor was one of the oldest in the State of California, having been organized in 1888. Decoto has always been well represented in the Alvarado Parlor. There are two charter members still active in the Parlor, Peter L. Decoto and E.M. Foley of Alvarado. Also in the Alvarado Parlor from Decoto at this time were Harry S. Haines (1903), and Herbert J. Harrold (1936).

On July 6, 1955, Peter Lowrie Decoto died in an Oakland hospital at the age of 86. He left one surviving brother, Louis A. Decoto of Piedmont. Mr. Decoto was born at Decoto and lived there until three years ago when he moved into the home of his sister, Mrs. Jeanette Decoto May of Alvarado. He was a farmer and was the perennial president and treasurer of the Decoto Chamber of Commerce. Peter remained a bachelor throughout his life

## **THE ADVENTURE OF PETER DECOTO:**

Peter Decoto told the adventure of Peter Decoto to Ruth D. Chute of the Hayward Daily Review in 1931.

### **The Adventure of Peter Decoto - Part I:**

(BY: Ruth D. Chute)

**(Editor's Note:** This is Part One of Five parts. Unfortunately the first three paragraphs of Part One is missing about one third of the left hand part of the column and I cannot transcribe this article word for word, but I will endeavor to give the best transcription of what I can make out. The fifth paragraph of my transcription starts word for word. Anthony L. Gualco)

"Gold discovered in Alaska!"

When these magic words were broadcast by Pacific coast newspapers more than 35 years ago, Peter Decoto, member of a prominent pioneer family here, was one of the first to heed the call.

Robert Lowrie, Mr. Decoto's uncle was one of the first of the Alaska pioneers. In 1884, nearly 13 years before the famous discovery in the Klondike, he headed with 30 other California miners to mine silver at Galavin, near Nome.

A party of Argonauts including (?) Michaelson of Hayward, (?) Walton and the Late Judge Benjamin Mickle, both of Centerville; John Lowrie, cousin of the leader; (?) Thompson, Jim Hawley and (?) of Newark and Centerville. They loaded a boat with provisions and left San Francisco for their claim. Reaching it safely they filled the hold of the boat with ore, and leaving behind Robert Lowrie, Michaelson, Thompson and Walton, to work the mine, set sail for home. The little schooner was never heard from, and her fate remains one of the unsolved mysteries of the Arctic.

Even before his uncle went to Alaska, young Decoto, one of a family of seven brothers and sisters, had become deeply interested in mining. Prospectors and placer miners were continually drifting from the Sierras to the coast settlements, showing nuggets and specimens of ore flecked with gold.

Consequently, when the newspaper carried the message that the yellow metal had been found in the newly acquired territory, he was eager to join in the stampede that followed.

He was then 25 years old, 5 feet eight and one-half inches tall, and tipped the scales at 155 pounds. He had saved \$600. This was considered sufficient to pay his fare and purchase an outfit, with food and other supplies to last two years. It included overshoes, woolen underwear, rubber boots, pick, gold pan, shovel, whipsaw, axe, a tent, and sheet iron stove.

Engaging passage on the barkentine Marian of San Francisco, owned by D.C. Land, gun and bird store man of that city and owner of a cannery in Alaska, the youthful adventurer, after bidding goodbye to his parents, brothers and sisters, left San Francisco in April, 1895.

The first "rush" to Alaska was then on, though the excitement had not yet spread to the other coast. Some of the stampeders chartered vessels. Most were fortunate to have money enough left over after purchasing outfits to pay for their passage. Little was known of Alaska in those days. There were no regular steamship routes and sailing schedules. These not come until after the big rush in '98, and previous to that time it was the common method to engage passage to Juneau, and from there make one's way.

The Marian was bound for Cook's Inlet, about 800 miles north of Sitka. After touching at Ladd's station, there Land's cannery was located; the Marian was to land gold seekers on the Kenai Peninsula. There gold had been found on Mills and Bear Creeks, and hundreds of miners were on the stampede to the scene of the excitement.

Accompanying Decoto was a young, hardy youth named Kingsley Smith of San Jose. Though lacking an outfit, he had managed to scrape up enough money to pay his fare. He had left his wife behind but hoped to soon return with a fortune. The two young Argonauts formed a partnership.

The barkentine was scheduled to arrive at her destination in 10 days, but soon after she left the Golden Gate a storm came up which drove her south to the equator, and after six weeks of buffeting, the adventurers found themselves opposite of San Francisco.

A second gale forced the windjammer to turn tail and run, and when the storm had abated the ship was in the South Pacific, 400 miles off the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). After a run of many days, the weary seafarers sighted the mouth of the Columbia River, and then Seattle, at which point adverse winds again drove the vessel off course to within sight of Japan. Here favorable winds set in which bore the ship directly toward Alaska.

As the days had passed into weeks, and hardtack, water and rice became the fare, there been sinister talk of mutiny. But now that the ship was headed for her goal, this talk eased. Many had been seasick. There had been squabbles and a few fistfights among the passengers. There was one passenger, in particular, who was quarrelsome and essayed the role of bully, electing to "pick" on a miner known as "Sharkey," a man of less than half his size.



All went well with the bully, until the little man, tired of being made the butt of the big man's jokes, seized him and threw him headlong to the deck. Back in the "States" Sharkey had been a professional wrestler. There was no more trouble with the bully after that.

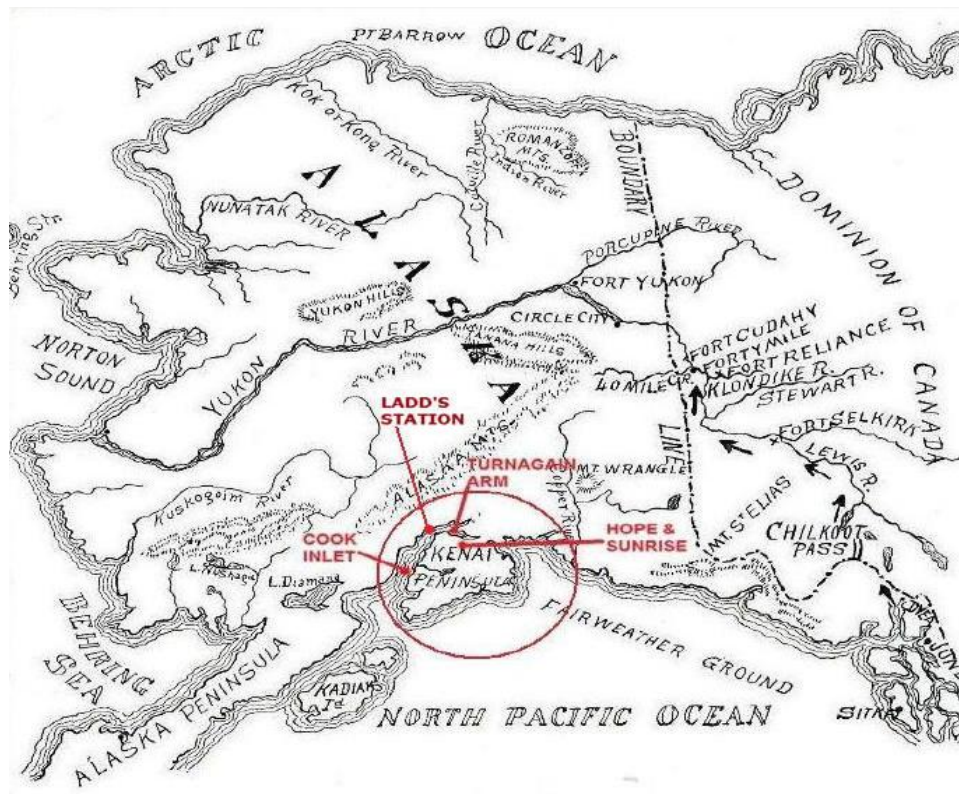
As the ship neared Alaska, the captain offered a prize of five pounds of tobacco to the first to sight land. From early dawn now all on board scanned the sea the promised shores, and at last, when the Alaskan coast was sighted the captain was forced to bring into play his utmost skill to save the ship from running ashore.

It was believed that land would be sighted from abeam. With a mist hanging low over the water, the coast was not seen until the vessel was almost on the rocks. But though shipwreck had been narrowly averted, the sight of the purplish towering peaks in the distance was a glad sight, especially so after 61 days at sea.

*The Hayward Daily Review, January 2, 1931*

### The Adventure of Peter Decoto - Part II:

As if to test the mettle of those who participated in the first rush to the Alaskan gold fields, a violent earthquake shook the region soon after the miners landed, according to Peter Decoto, former Alaskan, who during his 11 years as a "sourdough" was a packer, pilot at the famous White Horse rapids, and a miner. Twice he "struck it rich."



Arriving in Cook's Inlet in June, 1895, after a 90-day passage on the barkentine Marian of San Francisco, Mr. Decoto and his partner, Kingsley

Smith of San Jose, were among the first of hundreds of stampedeers to set foot on the Kenai Peninsula, where gold had been discovered.

Traveling with the tide, which in Alaskan waters attains a maximum of 60 feet, the barkentine entered the mouth of the Resurrection River. Putting down her anchors and settling on the mud as the tide receded, and then on with the rising waters, by degrees the vessel was worked upstream.

The barkentine came to anchor in a natural basin. Ahead lay by a little settlement, consisting of about a dozen log houses, with a few boats drawn up on the beach. Waiting until the tide was favorable, for here the incoming tides or bore, was marked with waves 6 to 12 feet high, the miners disembarked in the ship's boats, with their outfits.

The first work was to build cabins. Winter comes early in the Arctic. Each man had by then selected a partner. Straight trees were felled, cut to required length and "notched" on the ends. In a few days more than 15 cabins with sod-covered roofs and rough stone chimneys had been added to the settlement.

The scene of the gold excitement was some miles inland. Once the precious provisions were under roof, the men prepared to leave for the mines. As they set out, down an already worn trail, each man carried a pack and was armed with a rifle or revolver. Some had regulation knapsacks; others packed like the Indians, with a harness and "head strap," while a few used extra pairs of overalls for packing purposes.

Decoto and Kingsley were among the first to take the trail. "We had proceeded about half a mile," said Mr. Decoto, "and had halted in pack harness, with the packs resting on conveniently located tree stumps, when there came a low, ominous sound which, quickly ascended until it was like the road of speeding train."

"Earthquake," I shouted to my partner. The ground shook so we could hardly keep our packs on the stumps. We had been talking to a miner who had been chopping wood nearby. I said 'had been,' for the moment the ground began to shake the fellow threw down his ax, ran to his tent and plunged inside.

"Then we saw some comedy. Hardly had the fellow ducked into the tent, when his partner, who had been reading a magazine inside, ran out and tried to run up the trail. The man inside tied up the flaps of the tent. As for the stampeder, he quickly discovered he couldn't keep his feet, so he just sat down, white-faced and scared."

"The quake lasted for fully 10 minutes. There was no going to the mines that day. When the shaking had ceased, Kingsley and I retraced our steps to the settlement to see if our cabin was standing. We found the cabins intact but most of the miners in a panic. The gold craze was forgotten. Outfits were sold for what they would bring, and more than half the miners left on the departing barkentine."

Decoto and Kingsley were not so easily discouraged, however, and in a few days made a fresh start for the "diggings," but not before the two had

purchased three outfits of the departing miners, at \$70 for outfits that had cost \$100 each. They now had provisions and other supplies to last them through several winters.

A few miles of packing soon convinced those who had elected to stay that the clothing and other gear they had purchased in the "States" was not practical for Arctic use. Bartering with the Indians, they received in trade, for tea, tobacco and other luxuries, "muk-luks," caribou fur coats, muskrat caps and fur mittens, all of which they put away for winter use. Decoto traded a pound of tobacco and five pounds of sugar for a squirrel coat, which was made up of more than 150 squirrel skins. Though fragile, it meant warmth in the coldest winter.

"Chechako," a word of Indian derivation, meaning tenderfoot, was already in general usage in the country. Though all possessed firearms, there were few "bad men" among the miners, and a spirit of friendliness and comradeship prevailed. Theft was almost unheard of, and to pilfer another man's pack meant the choice of exile or a well-placed bullet.

The "excitement" was on Mills and Bear Creeks, where the newly arrived gold seekers made haste to stake off claims and construct "cradles," or sluice boxes preparatory to mining operations. In the event that sluices were to be used, the work also involved the building of dams and digging of ditches. Most of the miners "prospected" before staking off claims. A claim was considered good if it would "pan" 10 cents to shovel full.

"Lumber for the cradles and sluice boxes had to be whipsawed from green timber, hard work for 'chechakos.' When completed, the boxes were about 10 feet long, 14 inches wide, with 10-inch sides, and so made that one would fit into the end of the other. In the bottoms of the boxes were installed 'riffles' for catching the gold."

Decoto and Kingsley joined a company of six and leased a claim on Resurrection Creek. The men worked practically all summer to get to bedrock, and when they "cleaned up" for their summer's work they realized a total of \$42 in gold dust, or \$7 apiece. They were discouraged, to the say the least. But many others, who had come to the new land with the expectation of "picking gold from the trees," had fared no better.

That summer 5,000 miners were in the Kenai Peninsula, but before winter 4,000 had returned to the "States" and by next summer half of those had left. The first Alaskan gold rush had all but proved a fiasco.

*The Hayward Daily Review, January 7, 1931*

### **The Adventure of Peter Decoto - Part III:**

The Chilkoot Pass Trail!

Except the western surge of emigrants across the plains, no other incident in American history can compare with the trek of the miner over the Chilkoot Pass during the Alaskan gold rush, believes Peter Decoto, who was a packer over the historic trail during the Klondike stampede.

Participating in the first rush to the Kenai peninsula only to find disappointment when, after a summer's work, the "cleanup" from a placer claim netted him only \$7, Decoto did not, like the majority, return to the "States," but stayed in the hope that he would yet "strike it rich."

Smith, Decoto's partner, "got cold feet," and Decoto selected a new partner, a young, wiry fellow named Guy Rawlins. Rawlins and his partner, the latter a big, fat man, had "split up" over whipsawing, one claiming that the other was not doing his share of work. Decoto and Rawlins, accompanied by Smith, who was awaiting an opportunity to return to California, leased a claim on Canyon Creek, a branch of Six-Mile. In three weeks they took out \$5,000 in dust.

Though the claim was good, water could not be led to it. As a consequence, they soon gave up their lease and purchased a half interest in a claim on Mills Flat from a man named Gladhouse and his partner, Jack Frost of San Jose. That winter Decoto and Rawlins stayed to whipsaw and to work the claim, while Gladhouse and Smith left for California to bring back their wives.

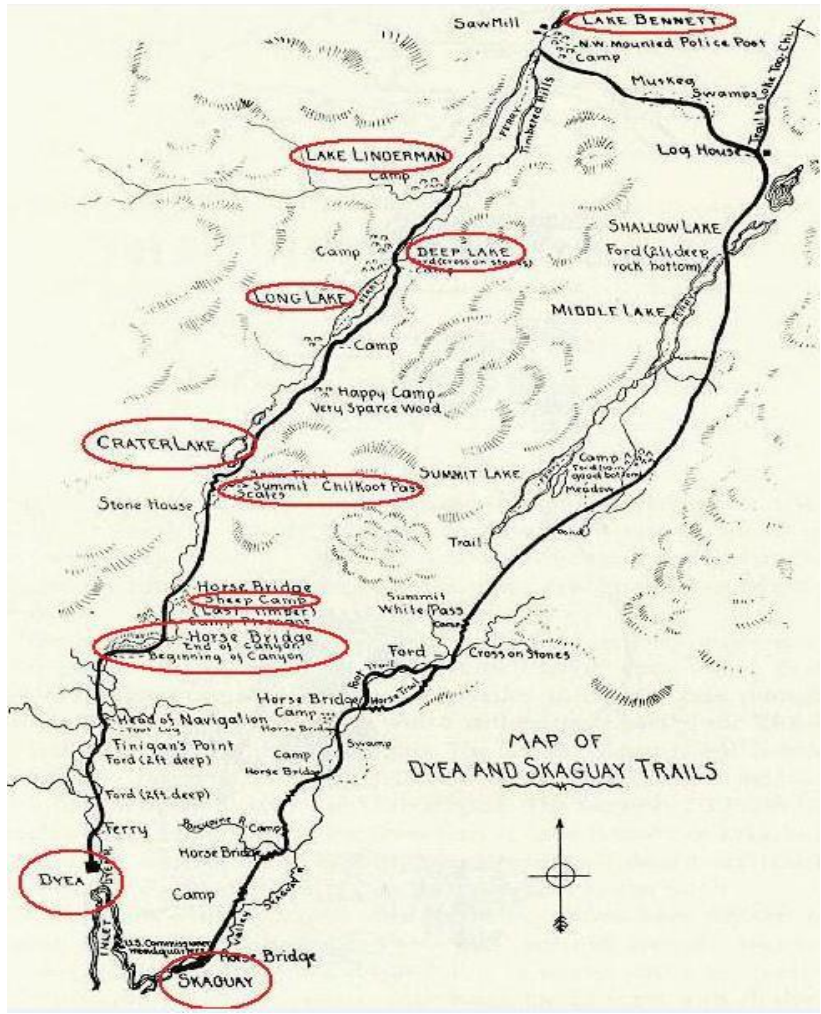
While at Mill Flat, Decoto bought an Alaskan sled and several "malamute" puppies, paying \$5 apiece for them. The two men worked the claim until fall, using an improvised hydraulic apparatus, but being unable to get to bedrock, abandoned it. Commissioned by his partners, Decoto set out for Seattle with the hope of selling the claim.

Taking his outfit and dogs, he engaged passage on a small schooner. After sailing for three weeks, during which time the craft ran into a blow which cracked her bowsprit and upset the galley stove, putting the cook to rout, the seafarers found themselves back in Cook's Inlet, the point from which they had set sail. The captain swore long and heartily. A careless sailor had left an iron belaying pin beside the compass, and the ship, in effect, had been sailing around the belaying pin.

The schooner stood to sea again and Decoto landed safely at Sitka with enough money to pay for his passage to Juneau, point of departure for Seattle. He set foot on the Juneau beach with but 75 cents in his pocket. Hardly had he landed when he met two men he knew. They advised him to take a job at long-shoring. He accepted their advice and worked for 42 hours straight, at 50 cents an hour. Then, with \$21 to the good, he rented a cabin and got a job in the "Glory Hole" of the Treadwell, one of the richest mining properties of Alaska. The "Glory Hole" acquired its name from the fact that the miners were frequently killed in the "diggings" by falling rocks and thus transported to Glory.

After acquiring a "stake," Decoto continued his journey to Seattle, where, unable to sell the claim at Mills Flat, he returned to draw what money he had left. He was now a full-fledged Alaskan. But he did not linger to enjoy that distinction.

Gold in fabulous quantities had been struck in the Klondike and the greatest gold rush in history was on, with the storm-swept peaks of Alaska barring the converging thousands from the gold fields.



The other route was the White Pass trail, later known as the Skagway trail. The trail started four miles from Dyea, in the Valley of Skagway River over a pass, 2,800 feet in elevation. Of the two routes, the Chilkoot trail was the best known, though the White Pass trail was then being advertised as a good horse trail all the way. Some of the gold seekers selected Chilkoot; as many more White Pass. But for Decoto there was little choice.



DYEA WATERFRONT, MARCH 1898

He had played the Alaskan "game" once, and had lost; now, with only a few dollars, his team and his experience in the Kenai Peninsula, it was up to him to win his way to the Klondike by brain and brawn.

As usual, an opportunity presented itself. The services of freighters and packers were in great demand. On the Chilkoot trail the rate was 10 cents per pound to the top of the "hill," and from there 10 cents a pound to Lake Lindeman, head of navigation to Dawson. The average outfit of a Klondike weighed one ton. Many of the miners packed on their backs, moving their outfits forward at the rate of a few miles a day; others hired packers, Indians and whites. Horses were used. Dog sleds were common. A few miners used pushcarts, specially constructed for narrow trails.

Mushing to Dyea, Decoto freighted from there over Chilkoot Pass and to Lake Lindeman all winter. From Dyea to the summit of Chilkoot is about 19 miles. The method used was to move an outfit to the foot of the pass, and from there it was carried by pack to the summit, the 3,500-foot pass, a precipitous wall of rock, reaching into the sky, being scaled by means of steps cut in the snow and ice. Burdened by a 100-pound pack, it took a strong man two hours to make the ascent. Once on the summit, the packers threw aside their loads and sitting on them, slid to the bottom of the pass for another load. Six hours constituted a good day's work at the pass.

The steps were kept open by a novel method. At the end of each day the miners took up a collection. This went to volunteers who during the night, with shovels and axes, cleared away the snow or further improved the trail, so it would be ready for the packers in the morning.

Despite the hardships and uncertainty ahead, most of the gold seekers were a cheerful lot. Here and there in the motley throng, however, could be readily picked out the men who were "getting cold feet," Mr. Decoto said. That throng, which during the winter of '97 and '98 numbered thousands, ranged from young and sturdy men to the weak and aged. Frail women braved the Arctic cold. The streams of humanity which during that winter poured over the Chilkoot and White Pass trails formed a spectacle almost unparalleled in history.

But if suffering and tragedy were to be found on the trails, there were many odd sights. One man, Mr. Decoto related, packed a heavy grindstone on his back, and all wondered what he would do with it. Later he set it up at Dawson and charged miners for the privilege of using the stone to sharpen axes and picks. Another man drove an immense ox before him. Still another staggered under a load of glass windowpanes, which he sold in Dawson for \$2 apiece.

Prices were "sky high." At Sheep Camp, near the foot of Chilkoot, in a "hotel" of rough boards, a meal of bacon, beans and tea cost 75¢. Horses were worth from \$150 to \$200, poor ones at that. On the White Pass trail horses were valued at 20 cents once they had reached the summit. Oats sold at \$16 a sack. Hay was \$325 a ton. Horseshoe nails sold at a dollar a pound. A set of horseshoes cost \$10. Packers were paid as high as \$26 a day.

Many of the stampeders, instead of waiting until reaching Lake Lindeman to cut timber and build boats, carried boat buildings material with them. Others

were laden with collapsible canoes. A large number brought boats to Juneau, and there abandoned them. Enough boat building material was brought in, it was estimated, to pave from one end to the other both the White Pass and Chilkoot trails. One stamper, who succeeded in getting a boat over the summit and to Lake Lindeman, loaded the craft and went to sleep, only to find on awakening that it had been stolen and was on its way to the Yukon.

During the winter that Decoto packed on the Chilkoot trail occurred the snow slide at Sheep Camp, in which 60 were smothered to death. The snow swirled down from the Scales side of the "steps" sweeping away 60 out of 80 who were on their way from the Scales to Sheep Camp for the night. Decoto, who was on the summit when word of the tragedy reached him, made haste to the scene of the disaster and helped dig the dead out.

The dead, numbering men and women, were taken to Dyea. There the frozen corpses were placed in a small room. To conserve space, Mr. Decoto related, the bodies were arranged in an upright position, shoulder to shoulder, along the walls.

*The Hayward Daily Review, January 13, 1931*

#### **The Adventure of Peter Decoto – Part IV:**

The Klondike stampede of 1897-1898 will go down in history for all time. No less than 30,000 persons, representing the daring from all parts of the world, toiled over the White Pass and the Chilkoot trails that winter in the mad rush for gold.

Barrier after barrier they stormed. They adopted the skin and fur garb of the Eskimo and conquered the Arctic cold. They negotiated seemingly impossible trails, moving cumbersome outfits forward at the rate of but a few miles a day. Resorting to methods used by their forefathers, they whipsawed lumber for boats from green timber. They dared fearsome rapids; braved the ice floes of the Yukon, and those who survived reached Dawson, the objective, where even a greater test awaited them.

Social distinction did not take precedent on the Arctic trail. A college education might be of some benefit, but unless backed by courage and practicability it meant nothing. Nor did Nature always favor the physically strong. Perhaps the greatest quality was moral courage.

Illustrating these points is the story of Peter Decoto and Guy Rawlins, two California youths who were partners during the great stampede, Decoto had landed at Juneau, starting point for the Yukon, with even less capital; and both packed goods for others in order to win their way over Chilkoot. Yet, out of the 30,000 that stampeded that winter, they were the first to reach Dawson!

In accomplishing this feat, Decoto had a point to his advantage. He had spent a winter in Alaska. He had adopted the dress of the Eskimo. He had acquired a dog team and sled. He had worked in the mines and "mushed" over Arctic trails. He was no "chechako." He was as hard as nails. So was his partner, Rawlins.

Decoto's dog team consisted of four "malamutes," wolfish, fierce dogs, yet loyal and even affectionate if treated with kindness. On the Chilkoot trail the partners split the team, each taking two dogs, and Rawlins acquired a sled. Six cents a pound they made in moving freight from Juneau to the Scales; from there they packed it up the "steps" for 10 cents a pound. And they made good wages, as high as \$46 a day apiece.

**KLONDIKERS ASCENDING THE CHILKOOT PASS IN SINGLE FILE.**



Once an Alaskan reached the "summit" with his outfit, the worst part of the trail was over, though ahead were the rapids of Miles Canyon and White Horse, and beyond the grinding, crushing ice of the Yukon River.

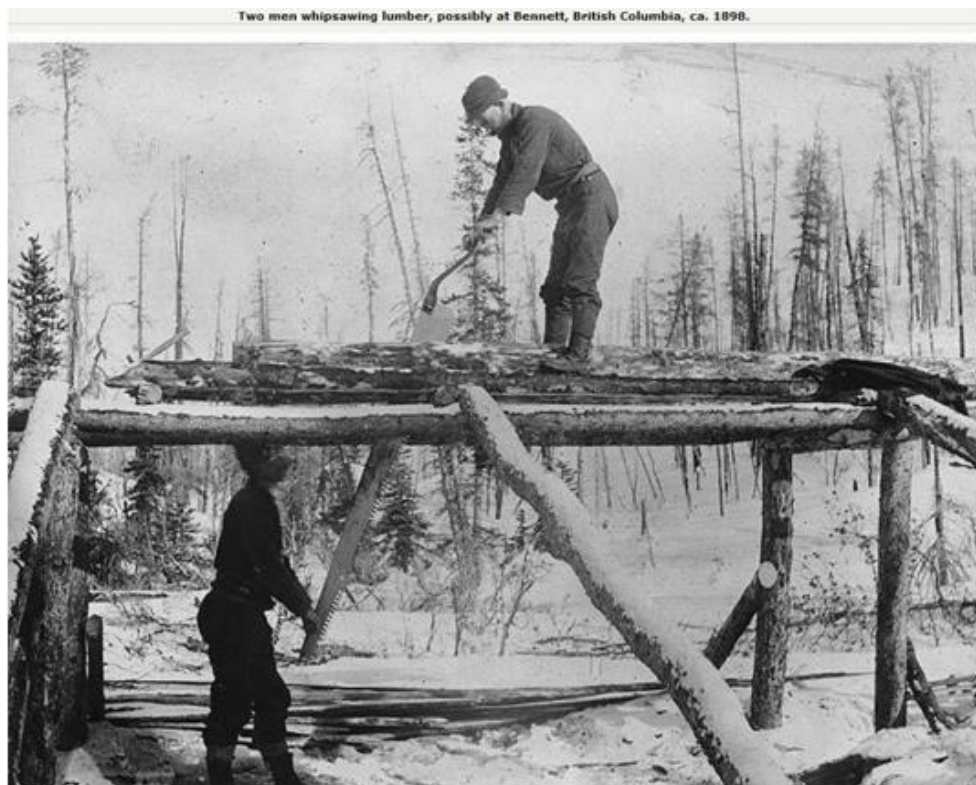
Crater Lake, a small body of water, lies just on the other side of Chilkoot Pass. It was frozen. To reach it, many of the stampeders rode their outfits down, toboggan fashion. Decoto and Rawlins, moving their combined outfits, totaling 3,500 pounds, skirted the lakeshore. About two miles distant from Crater Lake is Long Lake. They sledged its length, three miles and reached the shores of Lake Lindeman, as miles distant from Chilkoot.

Lake Lindeman, on the shores of which the majority of the Klondikers assembled or built boats for the passage of the Yukon, is four and one-half miles long, narrow, and on one side walled in by a towering mountain. At the head of the lake, on the left hand, a river enters, where there is timber for boats. Timber also was to be found two miles back from the lake. There were both spruce and fir.



When Decoto and Rawlings sighted Lindeman, there were about 50 tents on its shores, though this number increased to 1,000 before they left. The wood rang with the strokes of axes. Dog teams labored in the traces, dragging sleds loaded with green logs. Men were busily engaged in erecting sawpits. Others were laboriously sawing, and others more fortunate were building boats, crafts ranging from long, slender waisted bateau to clumsy skiffs and heavy scows. Smoke curled from the numerous Arctic stoves. The savory odor of cooking was in the air. The sun was shining, but the air was bitterly cold.

Leaving Lindeman, and moving slowly, half a day forward, caching the goods, and then on with the camp outfit as far as they could, they freighted to Marsh Lake, 70 miles from Lindeman. Here they resolved to build their boat. Only two other outfits were camped at Lake Marsh.



They created a sawpit and whipsawed boards from spruce. When finished and seams caulked with oakum and tarred, the craft was clinker-built, 27 feet long, 9 foot beam, and when loaded with outfits, dogs, and sleds, drew 18 inches of water, with 12 inches freeboard. They fashioned two oars, 12 feet long, and a steering oar, and also installed a "mast," using a tarpaulin for a sail.

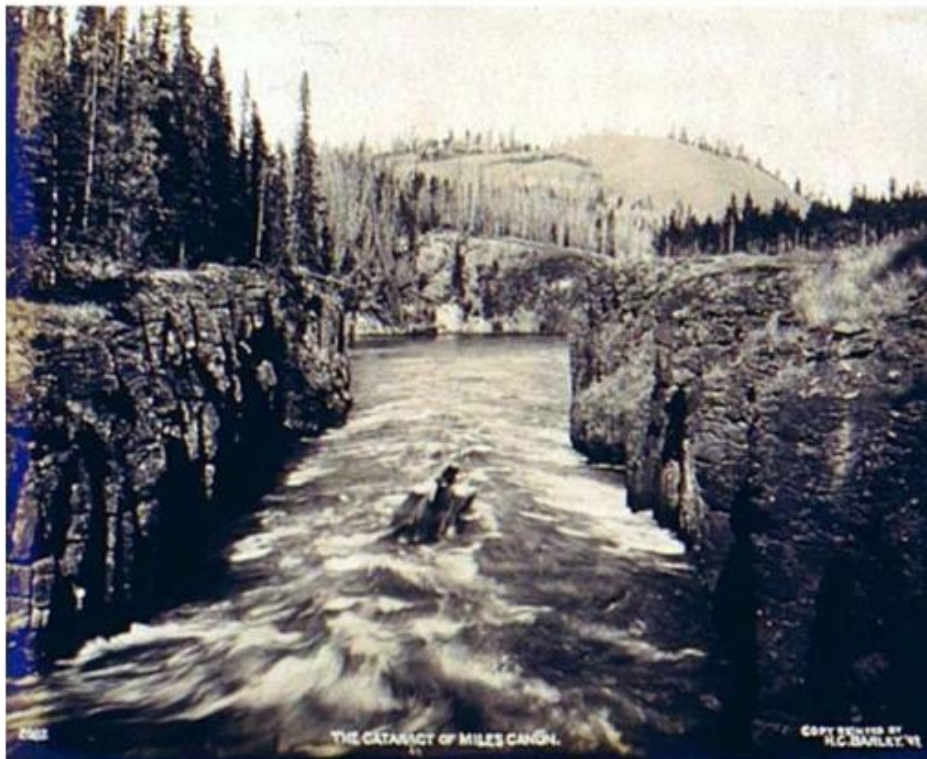
It was still winter and they waited for the ice to break. But growing impatient, they moved the boat on sleds to the foot of the lake and continued from there to Sixty Mile, where they launched their craft, loaded it and floated down the stream to Lake Labarge.

At Labarge they found ice, and here, in transferring their outfits and boat to the ice, Rawlins had a narrow escape. Stepping onto a patch of thin ice while engaged in unloading, down he went, with a heavy sack of beans on his shoulder. Under the ice the current from the river flowed swiftly. But Rawlins bobbed up, with the sack of beans still on his shoulder! The day was saved, and so were the beans. Rawlins was chilled to the bone, however, and after changing clothes behind the shelter of a tarpaulin, had to run up and down on the ice to get warm.

Malamute dogs, trained in Arctic ways, refuse to venture on treacherous ice. In freighting across Labarge, Decoto's team balked. Another Klondiker, sled and team passed him by. Decoto plied the lash. But a moment later he was sorry. Hardly had the Klondiker proceeded 100 yards, when he, sled and dogs, crashed through the ice. Catching up a board from the sled, carried for just such an emergency, Decoto rushed forward and managed to rescue the man and dogs from the traces. But the Alaskan's sled and outfit were gone, and so were his hopes of reaching Dawson.

Waiting overnight for the lake to freeze solidly, the partners freighted the length of Labarge to Thirty Mile and so came to Miles Canyon, the first of the rapids. There were 40 boats behind them. There were one or two boats ahead and several big scows. Miles Canyon describes an "S" in its windings. On either side are walls of rock from 60 to 80 feet high. The current is so swift that they water flows with a "crown," that is, it is higher in the center than on the sides.

Boat navigating the Miles Canyon Rapids on the Yukon River, Yukon Territory, 1899.



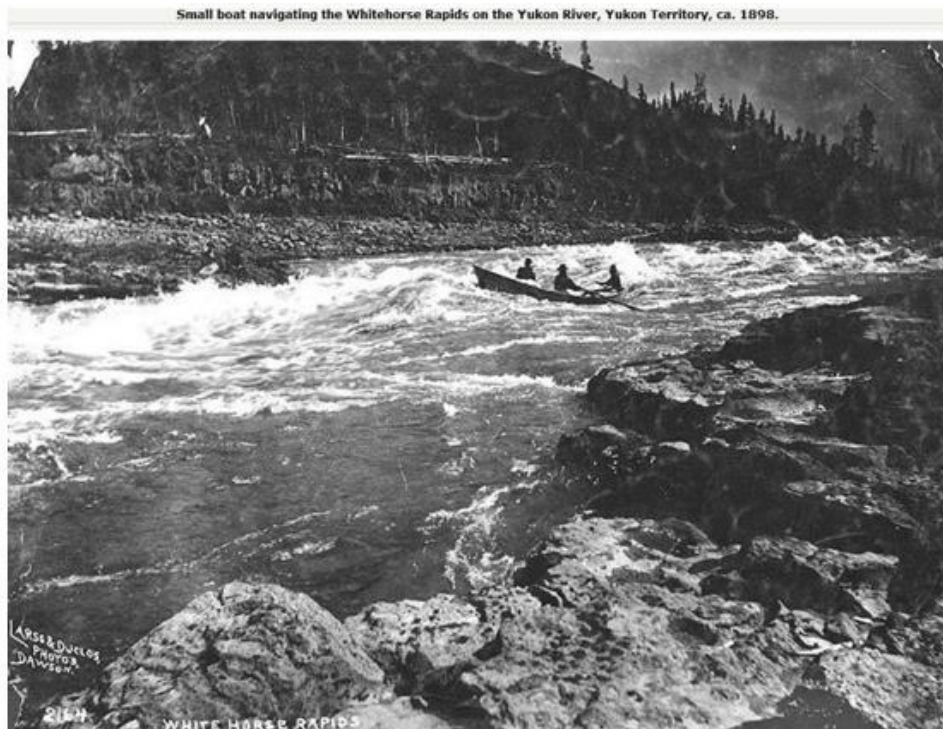
The trick of shooting the rapids was to stay on the crown, avoid the rocks on the left and a dangerous eddy on the right. Without lightening the boat, and with Decoto at the oars and Rawlins in the stern with the steering oar, the craft shot through at dizzy speed. Past the rocks they glided safely, past the eddy. In another moment the boat was riding in comparatively smooth water.

To see how some of the other boats had fared, Decoto rowed back a distance. A boat containing two lanky Swedes was held fast in the eddy. Around and around the craft circled. The two Vikings heaved on their oars. Surrendering to the eddy, they stood up and shouted and signaled for help. They ranted and uttered words not to be found in the dictionary. Finally after having been in the grip of the miniature maelstrom for more than an hour, and in despair of ever getting out, they dropped on their knees and prayed fervently. Just then the boat shot out in the stream.

*The Hayward Daily Review, January 20, 1931*

### **The Adventure of Peter Decoto – Part V:**

The thrills of shooting White Horse rapids, one of the last natural barriers that intervened between the Alaskan stampeders and the gold fields during the famous Klondike stampede of 1897-1898, were vividly related here yesterday by Peter Decoto, who was a pilot at the rapids during the gold rush.



White Horse rapids, which during the stampede days claimed the lives of scores, is located the head of navigation to the Yukon River, about 124 miles from Dawson. The rapids are formed by the pouring of the whole body of the Lewes River through a gorge of basalt 20 to 30 feet high. For a quarter of a mile the river lashes itself into a perfect fury, and then, with a jumping and tossing, bursts through a gorge a span wide with banks level with the water and spreads out, once more a wide, serene river.

Decoto and his partner, Rawlins, had run the canyon rapids with their sturdy clinker-built boat fully loaded, and had shipped little or no water. But here, at the head of White Horse, they pulled to shore and unloaded enough tools and supplies so that, if they met disaster in the rapids, they could at least build another craft.

Then they sat of the bank of the Lewes and watched the others enter the white water. About every other boat came to grief. Then they studied the methods of a policeman of the Canadian Mounted Police, who took several boats through safely, and by this observation learned where the channel was.

Their boat was heavy, with little if any freeboard to spare, and it was decided to shoot the rapids stern first, with Decoto at the oars and Rawlins at the steering oar. They pushed into the stream. The current gripped the boat; they shot into the seething crest, with Decoto straining at the oars and Rawlins doing his best to aid the rower in keeping bow pointed upstream.

At the first leap into the "soapsuds" the spray flew several feet outward from the flaring sides of the craft. After a dozen or so lunges into the crests of the waves they struck a submerged rock. For a split second the boat was perilously near capsizing; then they slid over and were again shooting downstream. In a few more seconds they were in smooth water. The White Horse rapids were now behind them!

Many of the more timid soon besieged the two daring young Californians, and they safely piloted more than 30 boats through, for which service they received \$10 per boat. Soon, however, they gave up piloting in favor of the Canadian policeman who had been stationed at the rapids, inasmuch as their pay was only \$20 monthly, and the extra money they could make as pilots came as a godsend.

Resting from their strenuous labors, the two partners camped below White Horse. While there they were eyewitness to an incident, which illustrated another, and humorous side of Alaskan life. Two partners had agreed to disagree, and the climax of a heated argument sawed their boat in two, each taking his half. Each then boarded over the end of his "boat," took aboard his outfit, and they floated down the stream, one pretending indifference to the other.

Disagreements of this kind were common, Mr. Decoto said. He told of another incident wherein two partners, after a "fight," smashed their boat to bits and then floated down the stream on rafts.

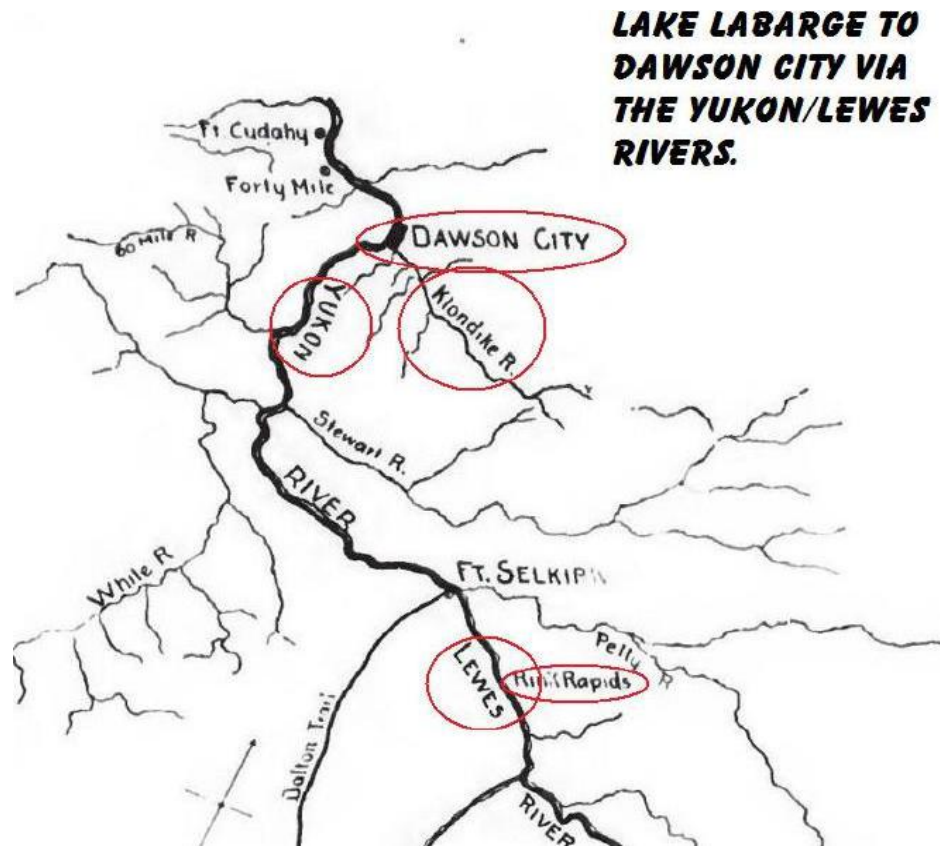
Breaking camp after a few days, Decoto and Rawlins embarked and floated down as far as the Hootalinqua River, where they encountered an ice floe so strong that they were forced to make their way to shore and camp. Here another boat and party of Klondikers joined them, and when the floe had passed the two boats floated down the river together.

Just above the Pelley River the voyagers sighted an ice jam and as the risk of being sucked under the ice, boats and all, were forced to make for shore in a hurry. The current was running swiftly. As Decoto's boat nosed the bank,

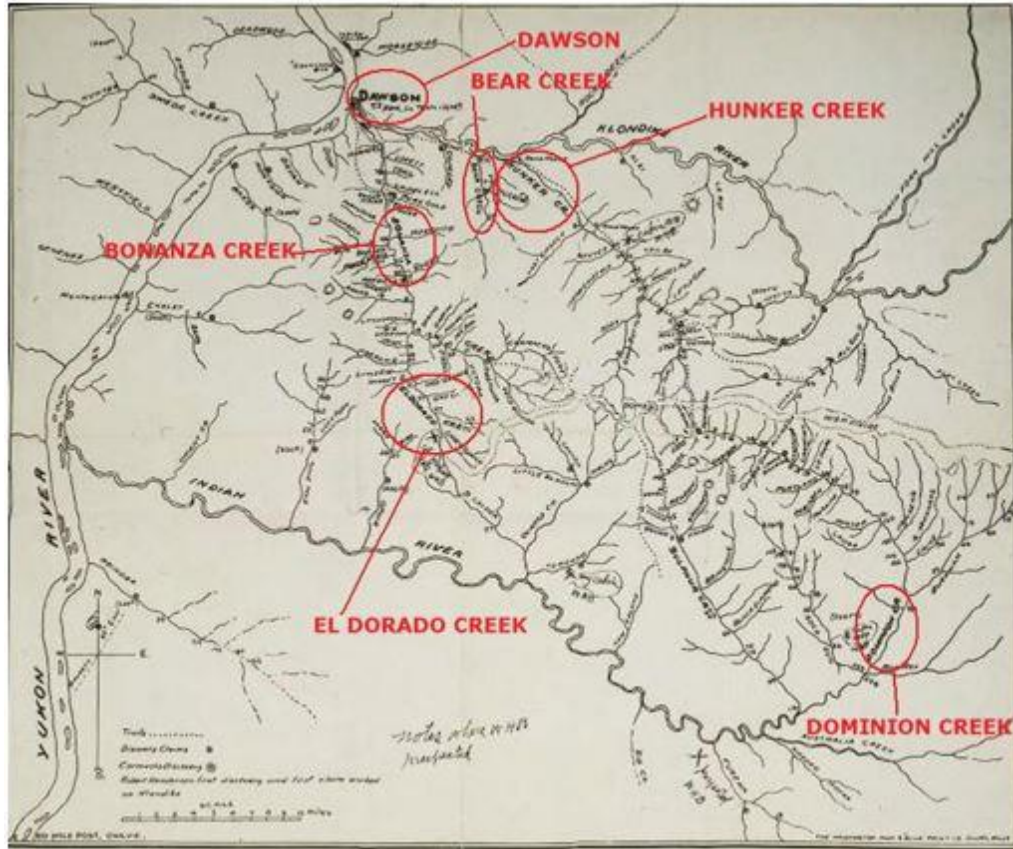
Rawlins sprang to shore, painter in hand. Brace himself as he might, however, he could not hold the boat, and had had not Decoto managed to swerve the craft into a jutting point of land, the boat and rower doubtlessly would have been swept into the suck of the ice jam.

The other voyagers had succeeded in getting to shore, in the shelter of a little cove. Decoto and Rawlins joined them, and to save their boats from being smashed to kindling, with oars "poled" the crowding, grinding ice cakes by, until the worst of the floe had passed.

The two parties were ahead of the hundreds of Dawson-bent. When the ice jam broke up, Decoto and Rawlins pushed out into the stream, but the other voyagers elected to wait for more favorable conditions. For two days and nights, unable to land because the ice was piled up 30 feet high on both shores of the river, the two Californians floated down stream.



Above the Stewart River they found a place to land and camped three days. The river was still filled with floating ice, they pushed on and the next day, on May 4<sup>th</sup>, sighted Dawson, the city of their dreams. A crowd of 20 or 40 men and women was waiting for them on the bank, eager for the first news.



"Dawson looked mighty good to us," said Mr. Decoto. "The town then consisted of 20 or 40 cabins. Snow was still on the ground. We put up a tent, stored our outfits and slept in my uncle's cabin until we could build a cabin of our own. Dawson was 'wide open.' Everyone had money or its equivalent, gold dust. A meal cost \$8 and comprised coffee, bacon and dried eggs. Whiskey sold at 25¢ a glass. A quarter was the smallest piece of change in the Klondike. Old timers saw to it that nickels and dimes were gathered up as fast as the chechakos brought them in and thrown into the Yukon."

At the time Decoto and Rawlins landed at Dawson the "diggings" where fortunes were being taken out were on Hunker, Bonanza, El Dorado, Bear and Dominion Creeks. Bear and Bonanza Creeks were located about three miles from Dawson; El Dorado, 20 miles; Hunker, 25 miles; and Dominion, 40 miles.

Contrary to the pulp-magazine "thrillers" of northern life, though "six-guns" were prominently carried at that time, they were not intended for use against fellow miners, and every gun had to be registered with the Canadian government, Mr. Decoto said. "Bad" men were scarce in the Klondike, for Old Father Chilkoot was particular as to whom he admitted.

**The Hayward Daily Review, January 28, 1931**

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\* **SPORTS** \*

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January 1, 1896:

Decoto Boys vs Hayward High Football:

New Year's Day, 1896, dawned cold and foggy and till early in the afternoon the fog seemed to become thicker, but by the time the football game began the sun was shining brightly. The football game featured the Decoto boys against the Hayward High School team.

The game was well played, considering everything. From the start it was evident that the Decoto boys outclassed the Hayward players. They were considerably heavier and showed greater skill in every style of playing. The game ended with Decoto winning 18 - 0.

The Decoto line-up featured:

Luna, Center	Juhl, R. Guard	Peterson, L. Guard
Whipple, R. Tackle	J. Carr, L. Tackle	Anderson, R. End
Haines, L. End	F. Carr, Q-Back	Decoto L., R Half
Garcia, L. Half	H.C. Searles, Full Back.	

After the game the victors and the vanquished, together with the officials and some friends, went to the Hayward Villa for supper.

In November 1896 The Decoto football boys were hard at it, and although they had not yet received their suits, they practiced on Sundays and make a good showing as they line up. The following are the names and positions of the players as contemplated, subject to one or two changes:

M. Luna, Center  
W. Peterson, Left Guard  
E. Woods, Right Guard  
C. Whipple, Left Tackle  
J. Carr, Right Tackle  
L. Decoto, Left End  
F. Kelley, Right End  
M. Anderson, Quarterback  
Harry Searles, Fullback  
F. Garcia, Left Half  
H. Haines, Right Half

These boys are all good players and will stand a show with any team in the county outside of Oakland. Good grounds have been secured right in town and Manager Juhl would like to hear from some team in the county with regard to a game.

In December 1896 the San Leandro and Decoto football teams met for a game. The score was Decoto 30, San Leandro 0. Searles, Jack Carr, Whipple and Garcia won the game.

It was in July 1899 that the kids employed in the California Nursery at Niles challenged the Decoto youngsters to play a game at Decoto. It would be a game for "blood," and would probably wind up in a free-for- all fight. But there was not a Decoto kid in sight Sunday when the time for the football game came around. Report had it that every one of the youngsters had urgent business elsewhere and could not or would not meet the nursery gang.

Similarly, the football game between Decoto and Hayward in December 1899 had to be called off because only four Hayward players showed up for the game.

The football team representing Company H, League of the Cross Cadets, met the Decoto on December 31, 1899, at the Sixteenth and Folsom Street grounds San Francisco. Coming into the games the Cadets had a record of 12 wins against only 3 losses. Decoto meanwhile had bragging rights of having defeated the great team from Centerville High School. The game ended in favor of the Cadets with the final score Cadets 27 Decoto 0.

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\* **MEMORABLE EVENTS** \*  
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**January 1890:**

**Miss Jennie Decoto Graduates from Oakland High:**

Miss Jennie Decoto, of Decoto, is among the members of the December 1890 graduating of Oakland High School.

**March 12, 1890:**

**Sanford Taylor Passes Away:**

Sanford Taylor, who died at Decoto recently, left an estate valued at \$4,500. The heirs are the widow, a son, his brother George Taylor, and the children of a deceased daughter, Sarah Martin.

**April 1890:**

**Flag Raising Ceremony held at Decoto School:**

There was a flag raising ceremony on April 18, 1890. The event was led by E.S. Snyder, Principal, and his assistant, Ms. Lena Carter. The exercises consisted of singing, recitations, flag exercises and speeches by the pupils. County Superintendent Fisher was present and made an address. Also attending were the school trustees, I.B. Haines, Ed Salz, and Ed Whipple.

**October 1890:**

**John Rock Petition:**

A petition was received from John Rock and others, asking that the boundaries of Niles and Decoto School Districts be so changed as to place all of the land of the California Nursery Company in the Niles School District. The report was adopted and the change made and filed in October 1890.

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**Dennis Sullivan:**



Dennis Sullivan, Decoto's local peddler, sold his outfit and moved to San Francisco to live. His Decoto residence was put out for rent.

**November 25, 1890:**

**Abbie Ibberson Passes:**

Little Abbie Ibberson, eldest daughter of Thomas and Minnie Ibberson, died at her parents residence on November 25, 1890. Little Abbie, whose age was 6 years, was kicked in the face by a horse. At the time the wound was not deemed dangerous, but on the eighth day after she was hurt, death occurred. She had been an attendant of the Decoto public school and was a remarkably smart child. She was buried from the residence of grandfather, H. L. Smith. Services were held by the Rev. Mr. Maar, who conducts the Sabbath School here. The music was conducted by the Sunday School Choir, and the little girl's schoolteacher Miss Lena Carter. The pallbearers were her schoolmates, Katie Graesslin, Christine Anderson, Nancy Kenneally and May Haines. The body was interred in Odd Fellow's Cemetery.

**November 29, 1890:**

**Alma Ibberson Passes:**

On this Saturday, November 29, 1890, little Alma Ibberson, youngest child of Thomas and Minnie Ibberson, died of croup at her grandfather's residence. Alma was ten months old and a bright baby girl. She was buried beside her sister, Abbie who passed away on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The family has the sympathy of Decoto in their trouble, having buried both little girls and all they have within four days.

**December 24, 1890:**

**Death Calls Mary Elizabeth Kenneally:**

Mary Elizabeth Kenneally died on December 24, 1890, in Decoto. She was the dearly beloved daughter of Michael & Mary Kenneally, a native of Decoto, aged 15 years.

IN MEMORIAM:

Hopes are crushed and hearts are bleeding,

Lone the fireside now and drear,

She, the best loved and dearest,

Far away to heaven has flown.

Long, long will we miss you Minnie

Long days for you we'll weep,

And through many nights of sorrow

Memory will her vigil keep.

PARENTS, BROTHERS, and SISTERS...

**January 1891:**

**Katie Graesslin Birthday Party:**

Miss Katie Graesslin celebrated here sixteenth birthday by giving a party to her many little friends. Among those who were there were: Mollie and Annie Terkelson, Annie Juhl, Christina Anderson, Henry and Fred Graesslin, Charlie Woods, Alfred Nesmith and several others. The day was passed in games, etc.

**April 1891:**

**James Wells Celebrates Birthday:**

Master James Wells gave a party Saturday in honor of his birthday. The young people enjoyed a very pleasant time. Among those present were: Pearl and Charlie Wells, Patsy and Tommy Kenneally, Charlie Ibberson, Lottie and Ella Ferreira, Maud Dennett, and Anthony and Allie Bush.

**May 1891:**

**Tramps Injure Railroad Brakeman:**

As the 3:22 o'clock Sacramento train left the Decoto station yesterday, some tramps were ejected from the train. One of them threw a rock at Brakeman Crandall, cutting one of his ears and rendering him insensible. The tramps headed towards Alvarado with a posse following. No word as to whether they were apprehended.

**June 1891:**

**Towns Vie for new High School:**

With the announcement of the building of a new high school building for Washington Township the scratching and positioning of the various school districts began to take place. It will be a fight to the finish. Niles wants the school and so does Irvington. Mission San Jose people claim that they are entitled to it and Decoto made a bid for it. Alvarado demands it but Centerville would claim it. So it appeared that there were some hard feelings over the location of the proposed new school.

**July 6, 1891:**

**Fire Consumes Warehouse and Saloon:**

Edward Salz' grain warehouse and T.S. Ferreira's saloon and general merchandise store (and utilized also as a Post office) burned down at 1 o'clock on July 6, 1891. Everything was lost. The railroad station was badly scorched. The origin of the fire was thought to been caused by too many firecrackers. The property was insured. The Southern Pacific Company sent up a water train, but as the valves refused to work it was of no service.

**September 1891:**

**Young Lad runs into Barbed Wire Fence:**

Joe Pimentel, a 9-year-old boy, was severely cut about the face last Tuesday by running into a barbwire fence. This makes the second child that has been cut in the same manner on the same fence within the past two weeks.

**November 1891:**

**Antonio Marshall Breaks Arm:**

Antonio Marshall, a Portuguese resident of the hills near here, had his arm badly broken last week while cutting down a tree in the hills. A large limb fell on his arm and pinned him to the ground. A physician from Haywards was called and the broken member set.

**August 8, 1892:**

**Henry L. Smith Passes:**

Henry L. Smith, one of Alameda County's oldest citizens died in Decoto August 8, 1892, after an illness of three months. He was well known all over the county and belonged to the California Pioneers. He crossed the plains about the time of the gold excitement, and had been located in different parts of the State ever since. He was 59 years old and leaves a son, J.H. Smith of Decoto, and a daughter Mrs. Ibberson of Niles.

**September 30, 1892:**

**Christian E. Andersen Passed Away:**

Christian E. Andersen, loving husband of Catharina E. Andersen passed away in Decoto on September 30, 1892. He was 55 years old and a member of the Sycamore Lodge No. 129, IOOF of Hayward.

**February 17, 1893:**

**M.S. Pimentel Missing:**

M.S. Pimentel, a Portuguese farmer living near Decoto, is supposed to have been burned to death early on the morning of February 17<sup>th</sup>. His barn was consumed by fire, and the charred remains of a man were found among the embers. Pimentel has not been seen, and there is no other conclusion but that the remains are his. The origin of the fire is unknown. Two valuable horses, a lot of farming machinery and several tons of hay were destroyed, entailing a loss of about \$1,200.

**December 13, 1893**

**Miss Luella Whipple has married Rudolph Volmer:**

Rudolph Volmer to Luella Whipple.

**January 22, 1895**

**Miss Mary Decoto has wed Henry Crosby:**

Henry Crosby, Centerville, to Mary Decoto of Decoto

**March 1895:**

**Bell Ranch Bridge:**

A. Bush came before the board (County Board of Supervisors) to inquire what was going to be done in regard to the repairs to the Bell Ranch Bridge, near Decoto. If he understood the proposition rightly, the proposed repairs would divert the stream from its natural channel and would injure his property. He claimed that the bulkhead, in the first place, had been wrongly constructed, or it would not have been washed away. The land was worth to him \$1 per cubic yard, and he did not wish to lose it. The matter was finally referred to the Committee of the Whole.

**August 1895:**

**Samuel Peters Drowns:**

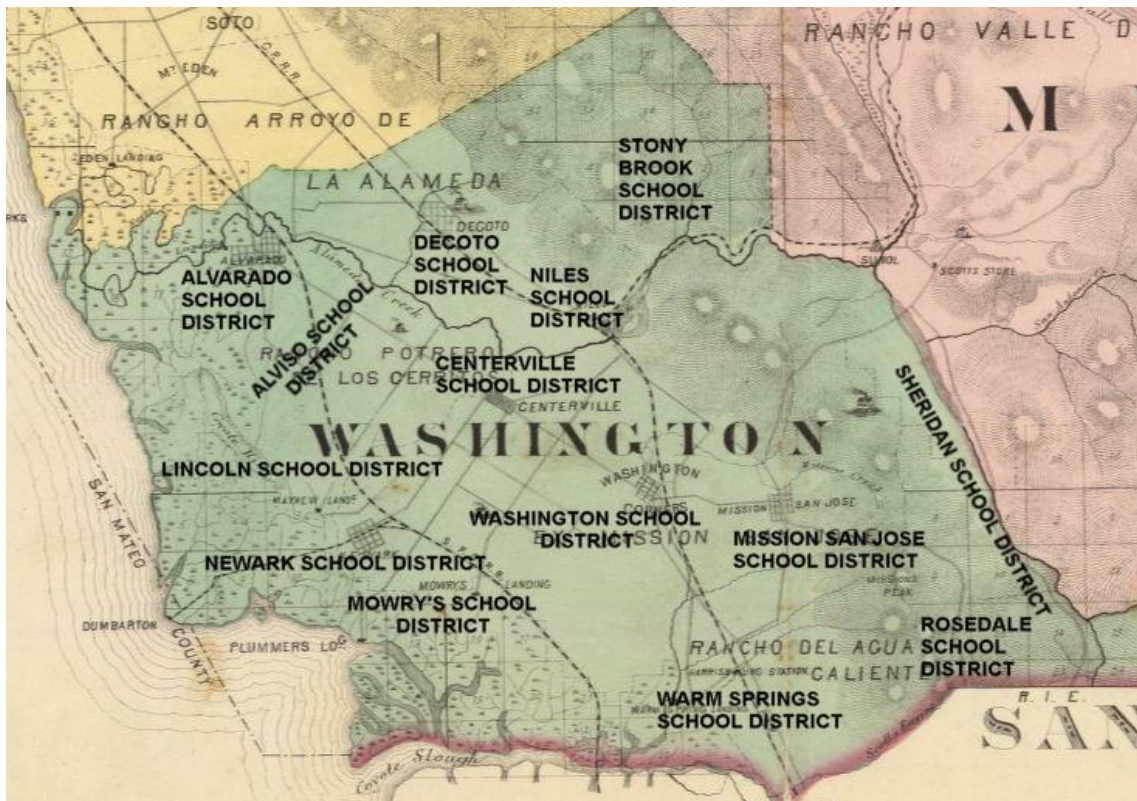
Samuel Peters was drowned accidentally in the Niles Creek yesterday afternoon in the vicinity of the picnic grounds. He was bathing in the creek with a number of other people, but he ventured too far away from the other, and being an inexperienced swimmer got beyond his depth and sank. A woman was swimming in his vicinity, but she became excited and failed to render him any assistance. The deceased was 21 years of age and a Portuguese. His father resides at Decoto, where the remains were taken for interment.

**September 1895:**

**Students in Washington Township:**

County Superintendent of Schools J.P. Garlick shows us the following numbers of students in our school district for the 1895:

| <b><u>School Name</u></b> | <b><u>No. of Students</u></b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Alvarado                  | 161                           |
| Alviso (None given)       |                               |
| Centerville               | 237                           |
| Decoto                    | 188                           |
| Lincoln                   | 27                            |
| Mission San Jose          | 180                           |
| Mowry's Landing           | 32                            |
| Newark                    | 160                           |
| Niles                     | 177                           |
| Warm Springs              | 145                           |
| Washington (Irvington)    | 192                           |



**November 2, 1895:**  
**Andrew Patterson Passes Away:**

Andrew Patterson, age 66 years, passed away in Decoto.

**December 1895:**  
**Fire Destroys store of Frank Ribera:**

The general merchandise store of Frank Ribera was burned at 4 o'clock this morning. The store of W.B. King, owned by Ed. Salz, was saved by a hard fight. The barbershop in the same building, which was owned by M. Brown, was a total loss. The first thought is that the fire was purposely set, as an attempt was made three months ago to burn the place by saturating it with oil. The loss is about \$2,000 and the insurance \$1,200.

**January 1896:**  
**"Kings Day":**

"King's Day," a Portuguese holiday, has just been celebrated by the Portuguese of Decoto. To properly celebrate it, a little band of eight men are dressed in fantastic costumes and masks. Toward evening they started out with a drum, fife and accordion to march by and to use while dancing.

Four of the men dressed as ladies and four in different male attire. When passing a house the leader called a halt on his whistle, and the company, followed by a crowd, would pile up into the yard and up to the front door. When all were there, if the door were not at once opened, the musicians would commence a song.

When the song was finished the door was thrown open and all who could, entered. Those in costume formed lines in the center of the room, the band struck up and the dance commenced. For the ten minutes the dance went on and not a word was spoken and at the end the host usually passed refreshments around.

After a general health drinking the march was resumed to the next house. This was kept up till long after midnight. Some of the residences visited were those of Americans and the little band was generally admitted.

**February 1896:**

**Alvarado School Wants Decoto Students:**

The Alvarado School Board of Trustees petitioned the Board of Supervisors for a change on the Alvarado School Boundary to include some territory in the Decoto School District. These boundaries include a district the children of which have always attended the Alvarado School.

**August 31, 1896:**

**Walter Baker Passes Away:**

The funeral of W. Baker, a pioneer and prominent fruit raiser of the Decoto area, took place yesterday. He died on Monday evening, August 31, 1896 after a short illness at the age of 73 years. He came to California in 1857, settling about one mile from Centerville, but later bought and moved to the place where he died. He was prominently identified with the local church and took a deep interest in the Salvation Army. He leaves a widow, Harriette, and four married children.

**October 17, 1896:**

**Death Takes Mrs. Mary Riser:**

Mary Riser passed away in San Francisco on October 17, 1896. She was the beloved wife of Charles W. Riser, and daughter of Adolphus and the late Elizabeth Decoto, a native of Hazardville, Conn.

**December 9, 1896:**

**William Mortimer Passes:**

William Mortimer, owner of a large prune orchard and a prominent resident, passed away in Decoto.

**November 1896:**

**Suffragette Movement:**

Woman Suffragists were defeated by the local votes in Washington Township. The results by precinct:

| <b><u>Town:</u></b>    | <b><u>Yes</u></b> | <b><u>No</u></b> |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Alvarado               | 53                | 93               |
| Centerville            | 30                | 142              |
| Decoto                 | 22                | 40               |
| Niles                  | 44                | 83               |
| Newark                 | 26                | 101              |
| Washington (Irvington) | 74                | 75               |

**December 1896:**

**Young Decoto Girl Elopes:**

Decoto has an elopement that has furnished some food for talk there. The interested ones are Miss Bertha Baker, the 18-year old daughter of a farmer of that place, and

Earl Scott, the young son of a San Francisco police officer. Sunday the young man called at the Baker farm, armed with a marriage license, and when he was ready to leave, Miss Baker and her brother accompanied him to the train. Instead of returning home she went on the train with him and at Oakland they were married.

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**Intruders Leave Thank You Note:**

*"Thanks, we found the \$60 and will eat our next dinner at the Palace Hotel, where we can be found."*

The above little note with a signature was found by a farmer and his wife last night on their return home. Mr. & Mrs. Martin, who reside at a ranch house between Decoto and Mission San Jose, had a novel experience with two or more unknown tramps last night. It was thought that they were the victims of about four road agents, as when they returned from church the dinner table looked as if two relays of visitors had sat down and eaten a hearty meal.

Last evening the occupants of the ranch left their home to attend the prayer meeting at the little church recently dedicated at Decoto. They closed their doors, but with the confidence that is usually felt in rural districts they did not take the precaution of locking doors or fastening windows.

When they had gone some tramps approached the house and finding a ready entrance and no one at home they at once proceeded to make themselves comfortable. Judging by the complete preparations made they must have depended on the long absence of the family. The tramps set a table for two and ransacked the larder for what they could find. It looked as if two men had eaten and then given plates to two more, as only two chairs were pulled up the table, while there were four plates with remnants on them.

After eating the tramps looked around for anything that was of value but not of sufficient weight to prove an encumbrance. Carefully hidden away under a sugar bowl on a shelf was \$60 in gold. This was taken and appears to have satisfied the tramps, as nothing else was missed.

Before leaving one of the robbers penned the little note already referred to and placed it on a conspicuous part of the table. When Mr. & Mrs. Martin returned they found the note and at once rushed to the place occupied by the sugar-bowl. Their worst fears were realized. As they could not inform the constable last night the robber-tramps had a big start and have not yet been caught.

**June 1897:**

**George Emerson Breaks Arm:**

George Emerson has met with an accident that will keep him confined to his bed for 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.

**June 23, 1897:**

**George Emerson Passes Away:**

George Emerson, age 68, passed away in Decoto.

**October 1897:**

**Young People Visit Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Hayes:**

A number of Decoto young people dropped in on Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Hayes Saturday evening, taking them completely by surprise. But they were equal to the occasion and cordially invited the visitors to enjoy themselves. This they proceeded to do in a gay manner and all kinds of games were played to help pass away the time. During the evening, Mrs. Hayes treated the company to a cup of her famous chocolate and big slice of home made bread that went right to the spot. Big plates of apples and nuts were set out and the guests did full justice to them. They departed at a late hour after thanking the hosts for their kind hospitality.

**April 1898:**

**Dancing Party at Masonic Home:**

Another very pleasant dancing party was given by three young men of Decoto who style themselves the "bashful boys," in the boarding house on the Masonic Home hill last Saturday evening. Supper was served at midnight and it was one of the best the Decoto young ladies could get up at short notice, but the boys must have been satisfied with it, as they ate everything in sight and one of the boys remarked, "It takes the Decoto girls to make good cake."

**May 24, 1898:**

**Marriage, James R. Whipple to Laura M. Thane:**

James R. Whipple, Decoto to Laura M. Thane, Niles.

**June 1898:**

**Dancing Party T Henry May's Barn:**

Mrs. F. Meyer, Mrs. Henry May and Miss Ingalls gave a very pleasant dancing party in Mr. H. May's large barn Friday evening. Japanese lanterns served as an illumination for the place, while the walls were decorated with green branches, making a very pretty effect indeed. Although the floor was somewhat rough, the dancers declared they had a "perfectly lovely time." About thirty couples were present, there being some from Alvarado and Newark. The young ladies brought eatables and a nice lunch was served during the evening.

**November 26, 1898:**

**Death Calls Mrs. Elizabeth Lowrie:**

Mrs. Elizabeth Lowrie, mother of Mrs. Ezra Decoto of Decoto, Robert F., William J., Peter G., John M., and David C. Lowrie, passed away on November 26, 1898 at the age of 84 years. She was the sister of the late Mrs. Adolphus Decoto. She was a native of Camsbarn, Sterlingshire, Scotland.

**1899:**

**The school census returns for Washington Township in 1899:**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>No. Pupils</u></b>
Alvarado	172
Alviso	92
Centerville	246
Decoto	211
Lincoln	24
Mission San Jose	197
Mowry	20
Newark	133

Niles	171
Rosedale	28
Stony Brook	19
Sheridan	52
Warm Springs	143
Washington (Irvington)	176

### **February 1899:**

#### **Farmers Need Rain:**

Farmers about Decoto are looking very blue on account of the holding off of rain. Fruit men are hiring all the engines they can get to pump water to irrigate their trees. Many wells are being sunk and engines are working night and day. The grain crop is still looking well, and will stand the drought for some time yet. There is a good prospect for a fair fruit crop if the frosts keep off.

### **March 1899:**

#### **Heavy Rains Cause Flood:**

The heavy rain of late March has flooded the low land around Alvarado and has drowned thousands of gophers, which have for years been a great nuisance to raisers of sugar beets and garden truck.

### **May 1899:**

#### **Earthquake Shakes Decoto:**

Two sharp shocks of earthquake only two or three seconds apart were felt in this section at 2:41 o'clock on the afternoon of May 1<sup>st</sup>. They caused many clocks to stop and did slight damage in some sections to badly constructed or old buildings. The vibrations seemed to be from north to south and lasted several seconds.

### **June 1899:**

#### **Woman can foretell Earthquakes:**

Apropos to the telling of rural stories, the *Niles Herald* tells one of signs and symptoms of coming events that beats anything the East can tell on any subject. After recording the occurrence of the recent earthquake, the *Herald* says: "Mrs. Bush of Decoto has a faculty of foretelling earthquakes and remarked the previous evening to the family that one was coming. It is said she has not missed on or made a mistake for twenty years for more. They are always preceded with a peculiar stomach trouble, and at no other time does she ever feel it." Comment on that is not only unnecessary, but in any form could hardly be other than impertinent, irrelevant and immaterial. It is one of the few stories that go as it stands.

### **July 17, 1899:**

#### **Decoto School is Crowded:**

The Decoto public school opened on July 17, 1899, with over one hundred pupils enrolled. The rooms were crowded and as soon as the children that are expected at the Masonic Home come down to school, it will surely require an addition to the school building and another teacher, making four teachers in all. Principal Martin takes a great interest in the school and is constantly studying up some new scheme to give his pupils better advantages. During vacation the wall of the school building were freshly tinted and the schoolyard raked up and the grass burned.

It was necessary to partition off the upstairs room of the order to make another room accommodate the increase of pupils. Another teacher will be hired as soon as



the work is done, making four teachers, thus putting the Decoto school, in regard to instructors employed and pupils enrolled, ahead of any school in the township.

**August 1899:**

**Miss Isabella Whipple leaves for Seminary Park:**

Miss Isabella Whipple left today for Seminary Park, where she will enter Mills Seminary. Miss Whipple was in attendance at Curtner Seminary before that institution burned. At the school where she now goes she intends making the violin her principal study, and Decoto people look forward to seeing her make a brilliant success as a violinist.



**Pleasure Boaters Stuck in Bay:**

Word has been received here that a party of pleasure seekers from this township were nearly drowned yesterday near Pacific Grove. The party was out in a gasoline launch. The machinery in the boat broke down and the launch got into the trough of the sea. Some Chinese fishermen saw the danger and went to the rescue. Among those from the Decoto area was: Mrs. Henry May, Mrs. Rudolph Volmer and the Misses Edna and Ella Whipple.

**August 1899:**

**Marriage, Fred Hurlburt to Edna Whipple:**

Fred Hurlburt to Edna Whipple, both of Decoto,