

Do You Remember?



By Anne Homan

Murray Township

The city of Livermore is in Murray Township, the easternmost and largest political division of Alameda County. On 6 January 1853, the township was established by the Court of Sessions and named for Michael Murray, who came west in a wagon train from St. Joseph, Missouri, with his sister, Eleanor (called Ellen), her husband, Jeremiah Fallon, and their two young children. They all had emigrated from County Roscommon, Ireland, and lived for a time on the east coast before deciding to come west. Their wagon train arrived safely in California in October 1846 before the winter snows set in on the passes.

Michael Murray and the Fallons settled first in old adobes abandoned at Mission San José. When the Gold Rush began in 1848, the men went up to the gold mines. Perhaps Murray and Fallon had good luck in the dry diggings at Hang Town, because in November 1850 they each paid \$1,500 to José María Amador for land near today's Dublin. Michael Murray had married Amelia Nash in San Francisco in February. By 1852 each family had moved to its approximately 250-acre holding and begun farming; they specialized in raising sheep. They are listed in the 1852 Contra Costa County census: Michael with his wife, Amelia, and two young sons, ages one and two; Jeremiah and Eleanor with four children, seven and under.

Tom Green, John Green's son, told how Murray and Fallon worked together to build, not the usual adobe of the time, but frame homes. "They hauled the timbers for the frame work and rafters, together with bolts for the shingles, from Redwood Canyon in the redwoods back of Oakland. They split the shingles themselves and even the nails were home made." Fallon and Murray gave four acres of land and helped build both Murray School and St. Raymond's Catholic Church. Michael Murray served as Alameda County supervisor, representing Murray Township, in 1860 and 1861.

Complications arose over the family's land holdings. In 1852, Amador sold the south half of Rancho San Ramon to J.W. Dougherty for \$22,000—including the land he had already sold to the Murrays and Fallons. John Green had squatted on the property now in dispute by Murray and Dougherty. He paid both men for this land in 1862. After Amelia Murray died in March of that year, Michael remarried; he included his house in the sale with Green and moved with his family to San Francisco. He died in the city in September 1881 at age 74 of bronchitis, bequeathing to his family his San Francisco real estate investments.

Michael Murray's nephew, Peter Murray, and his future wife, Margaret Donlon, emigrated separately from Ireland to California in the late 1850s. They married in February 1860 and lived in Dublin until 1862. They claimed 165 acres in the Livermore Valley that year with agricultural college scrip, qualifying for proof in 1872, and claimed an additional 80 acres with a military bounty land warrant proved in 1878. This land was north of Livermore in sections 30 and 31 T2S/R2E. Peter's sister, Mary, also emigrated and married Michael McCollier in Dublin in 1857; they lived on a ranch in Collier Canyon. Two of Peter Murray's sons, Peter J. and Daniel J., worked as butchers in Livermore. A third son, Michael Raymond Murray, married Mary Elizabeth Fallon, daughter of William J. and Anne Coppinger Fallon, who had come to this country in the 1870s from County Galway, not from County Roscommon as had Jeremiah and Eleanor Fallon. The Galway Fallon family acquired land along what is now called Fallon Road. By the 1900 census, they had 10 children; Mary Elizabeth was the oldest.

The specialty at Peter and Margaret Murray's ranch on sections 30 and 31 was raising large work horses, which they sold to drayage firms in San Francisco and Oakland. "They had their own stud, they raised their own colts, broke the horses, trained the teams." A grandson of the Murray/Fallon marriage, Michael Richard "Mike" Murray, remembered that his great-uncle William Fallon had an almost magic touch in training horses and dogs on the ranch, "even to his dying day."

The Murrays also raised hay, and their nephews, the three bachelor Fallon brothers of Mary Elizabeth, would come over to the Murray place for two or three weeks to help with the haying. William "Skipper" Fallon was one of them. According to Mike Murray, the Fallon brothers "usually had a jug of wine on whatever rig they were running. It was a gallon jug with a burlap sack sewed on it. And they'd soak the sack in the trough overnight so it'd be nice and wet and then they'd put the port wine in there and they'd carry that all day. Well, (one day) Skipper never came in for lunch. And you know, lunch in those days, that was like a sacred thing. Everybody came in to lunch. So they went looking for him. And there's the horses up on the hill where Skipper was running the rake, but the horses are stopped, and Skipper's down in the rake with the hay. Got a bit saturated and fell off his seat, and the horses kept going, and he hollered 'Whoa,' and they stopped, but he was scuffed up. I remember he was really scuffed, 'cause he got drug in that rake."

In 1902, Pleasanton Township was carved from the west end of the original Murray Township. Descendants of Peter Murray sold his original acreage north of Livermore to Las Positas College last year.

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