

# WHAT'S IN A NAME? "Romance Along the Line of the W. P."

credit to Vic Neves

**SAN FRANCISCO** Name originally given in honor of St. Francis of Assisi to the Gulf Farallones by Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeno, Portuguese navigator, in 1595. A Dutch cartographer, having heard of Sir Francis Drake, used the name "Babis (Bay) de Sir Francisco Drake," which was subsequently applied to what is known as Drake's Bay. Both Cermeno and Drake missed the great landlocked harbor which was named San Francisco Bay in the latter part of the 18th Century.

**ALAMEDA, Calif.** This city, which adjoins Oakland on the south, derives its name from the secondary meaning of the Spanish word "alameda" which comes from alamo, a poplar or cottonwood tree. Literally, the word "alameda" signifies a grove or avenue of cottonwoods, but in its later and usually accepted sense it signifies "a public walk or promenade under trees."

**BERKELEY, Calif.** Oakland's sister city adjoining on the north and site of the University of California, was named for George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, who wrote the poem in which appears the line: "Westward the course of empire takes its way"

A member of the committee assigned to select a site for the University of California, quoted the stanza, whereupon another member of the committee said: "Why not name the site Berkeley?"

Outstanding on the campus of the University of California is the campanile, a slender tower which rises to the height of 302 ft. and which was the gift of Mrs. Jane K. Sather. The twelve bells in the campanile were made in England. On the largest bell is the inscription composed by Professor Isaac Flag, which reads:

"we ring, we chime, we toll.  
Lend ye the silent part.  
Some answer in the heart,  
Some echo in the soul."

**OAKLAND, Calif. (M.P. 6.6)** This metropolis of the East Bay region occupies part of the first grant of land in Alameda County (August 16, 1820) -- the Rancho San Antonio -- to Don Luis Maria Peralta. Its early Spanish name was "Las Encinas," meaning The Oaks, so bestowed because a large number of oaks grew on this site.

**KOHLER, Calif. (M.P. 11.3)** For the owner of a plant served by a spur from this point.

**ESTUDILLO, Calif. (M.P. 16.5)** For Don Jose Joaquin Estudillo to whom a land grant was made in 1842.

**SORENSEN, Calif. (M.P. 22.1)** For Hans Sorenson, who had a ranch here. **ALVARADO JUNCTION, Calif. (M.P. 25.2)** Alvarado was named for Gen. Juan Bautista Alvarado who was Mexican Governor of California 1836-1842. Originally called New Haven.

**DECOTO, Calif. (M.P. 26.6)** As to the origin of this name, this writer quotes from a letter written by Hon. Ezra W. Decoto, former member of the California Railroad Commission and later

engaged in the practice of law in Oakland, California. Mr. Decoto says:

"My father, Ezra Decoto, came to California from Canada in 1854; he farmed in Alameda for a few years and went back to Canada to stay. He spent one winter in northeast Canada at his home, came to the conclusion that there was no place in the world to live except in Alameda County. He gathered together quite a Canadian colony and returned to Alameda County in 1860.

"He and his two brothers, Adolphus Decoto and John Decoto, bought from Mr. Clark who had originally bought from the Vallejos, about 1,000 acres of land. When the Southern Pacific Company built its line through Alameda County, it passed directly through the Decoto farm. My father gave the Southern Pacific the right-of-way and when it established its station, it called the town Decoto."

The California Home for widows and orphans of members of the order of F. & A.M. is located in the foothills back of Decoto.

**PABRICO, Calif. (M.P. 27.5)** Coined from Pacific Brick Co.

**EBERLY, Calif. (M.P. 28.9)** Named for W. V. Eberly, former manager of the California Nursery Co.

**NILES, Calif. (M.P. 29.7)** Originally known as Vallejo Mills, from flour mills erected by Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo on Alameda Creek. In 1869 the town was named Niles for Judge Addison C. Niles of the S.P. From Niles Junction (W.P. 30.5) the W.P. operates a branch line (23.8 mi.) to San Jose. Niles Tunnel (M.P. 32.1), which is Tunnel No. 1 and is 4,277 ft. long, pierces a spur of the Coast Range.

**SUNOL, Calif. (M.P. 36.0)** For Don Antonio M. Sunol of the French Navy to whom Gen. John C. Fremont makes references in his "Memoirs."

**HACIENDA, Calif. (M.P. 39.5)** Sp. for an agricultural estate in the country. A "rancho" is primarily devoted to cattle raising. Near Hacienda was the former home of Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, mother of William Randolph Hearst, newspaper publisher.

**PLEASANTON, Calif. (M.P. 41.5)** For Gen. Pleasanton, cavalry officer who served under Gen. John C. Fremont. Pleasanton race-track, laid out in the early '70's, was known to lovers of the "sport of kings" the world over on account of its association with E. J. ("Lucky") Baldwin and other noted horsemen. Lou Dillon, Jim Logan and other famous horses were raised here. Pleasanton was originally called Alisal, Sp. for cottonwood.

**LIVERMORE, Calif. (M.P. 47.6)** For Robert Livermore, first settler of English speaking parentage. "Rider's California" says that he was the first man, after the mission padres, to engage here in grape, fruit and grain culture.

**TREVARNO, Calif. (M.P. 49.0)** This is a Welsh word meaning "Head of the Valley," being the name of the George Bickford home in Cornell, Wales, a name connected with the safety fuse industry for many years. As heretofore stated in these columns, there is a story behind every place name, and in this instance the writer passes on this tale told by Mr. Thomas W. Norris, president of the Coast Manufacturing and Supply Company, manufacturers of safety fuse, which runs as follows:

At Tuckingmill, in Wales, there lived in 1830 a leather merchant, William Bickford. He had long seen and deplored the terrible frequency of accidents in the mines of that locality and this led him to ponder on how these evils might be prevented. At first he thought of enclosing the charge of gunpowder in a parchment bag or cartridge but this did not prove feasible, and in addition, the cost made the proposition impracticable.