

The author of this article lives and works on unceded territory of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

Persons: The Martins of San Francisco

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Version 01-01-2020

Introduction

On February 26, 1872 A. P. Dennison and H. F. Bloch sold the 160 acres of the George Smith Donation Land Claim, the land that would later become the Piedmont subdivision, to D. J. Harrington and P. J. Martin for \$ 5,000. After bouncing around in the Martin family, and appreciating rapidly, the land was sold for \$ 24,000 to Chas. A. Neal on June 2, 1888 by D. V. B. Henarie of San Francisco. Neal then sold it on June 26, 1888 to Edward Quackenbush's Investment Company for that same \$ 24,000. The Investment Company then recorded the plat for Piedmont on October 15, 1889 (De Leeuw 2018a, De Leeuw 2018b).

Mostly because of the sales, quitclaims, and other legal wrangles within the Martin family, I decided to take a closer look at this pride of rich people from San Francisco, more specifically at Edward (Johnson) Martin, his wife Eleanor Martin (née Downey), his brother Patrick J. Martin, his sons Thomas S. Martin and Edward Martin, and their business partners Daniel V. B. Henarie and Peter Donahue. As is true for many of the chapters in this book, it will take us astray from the main topic of the book, but it makes a nice story and reveals some interesting details about California and Oregon between, say, 1850 and 1900.

Biographical: Edward and Eleanor Martin

Edward Martin was born in 1818 in Enniscorthy, Wexford County, Ireland.

Seeing no prospect for national independence, Edward Martin, before reaching his majority, emigrated, and his destination was Santiago, in Chili. There he spent five years in commercial business, for which he was qualified by the education he received at home, and in '49 he determined to come to California. Accordingly, he set out on a sailing vessel and reached San Francisco after a voyage of six months. Having arrived, he lost no time in speculative deliberation, but at once went into mining in Calaveras County, where he soon accumulated a handsome fortune by his enlightened industry. He then made a tour to Ireland, and visited on his return the principal Eastern cities, such as New York, Chicago and St.Louis, and on mature deliberation, concluded that San Francisco was his future home. (Quigley, 1878, p. 405).

It must be emphasized that there are other, usually somewhat different, versions of this early history in the other primary and secondary sources.

Around 1852 Edward married Mary Gertrude Agatha Martin (née ??), born around 1823 in New York. She died in 1866 of phtisis (pulmonary tuberculosis), 43 years old, after giving birth to Thomas S. (1853), Mary G. (1854), Edward L. (1855), Frances (1857), Clara (1859), James (1861), and Georgina (1866). In the 1860 federal census Edward Martin, with profession "merchant", was already in possession of \$ 60,000 in real estate and \$ 2,000 in personal estate. Children Thomas, Edward, Mary, and Frances were part of the Martin household.

[Page from the 1860 Federal Census](#)

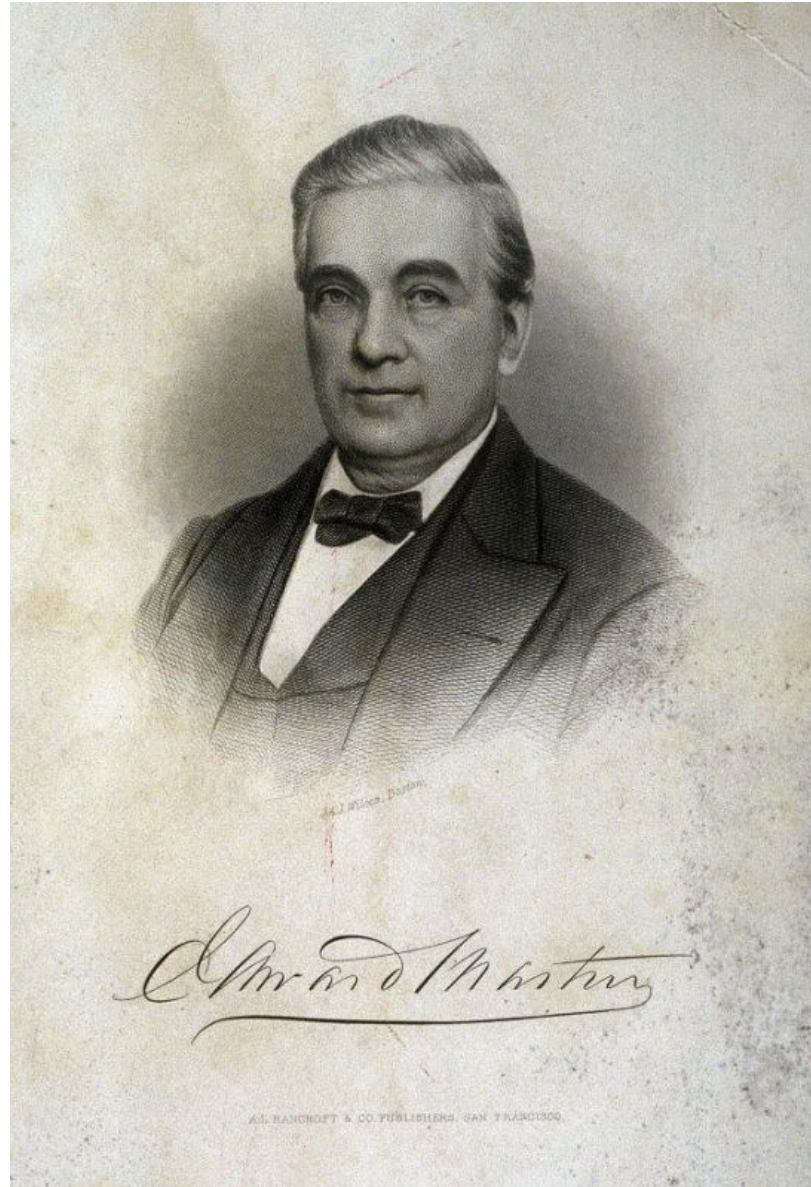
In the 1870 census his real estate holdings had increased to \$ 180,000, his personal estates were up to \$ 30,000. Living at home were Thomas, Edward, Frances, Clara, James, and Georgina. Daughter Mary G. was no longer with them.

[Page from the 1870 Federal Census](#)

But there were some additional household members. In 1869 Edward Sr. had remarried. The new spouse was Eleanor Downey, born in 1826, at Castle Sampson, near Athlone, County Roscommon, Ireland (Phelan, 1928). The Downey family came to the US, settling in Maryland, around 1833. Brother John G. Downey studied medicine in Washington, D.C. and moved to Los Angeles in 1854. His siblings Eleanor, Annie, and Patrick joined him in California in 1857. Eleanor married Walter Harvey in 1858, and had a son John Downey Harvey in 1860. Walter Harvey died in 1861. John G. Downey was the seventh Governor of California from 1860 to 1862, and sister Anna "Annie" Downey married Peter Donahue, another rich widower, in 1862. In the 1870 federal census Eleanor Martin and John Downey Harvey had joined the Edward Martin household. Next door neighbors were the Donahue's, who were really rich. The census taker mentions 500,000 dollars in real estate, and 2,000,000 dollars in personal estate.

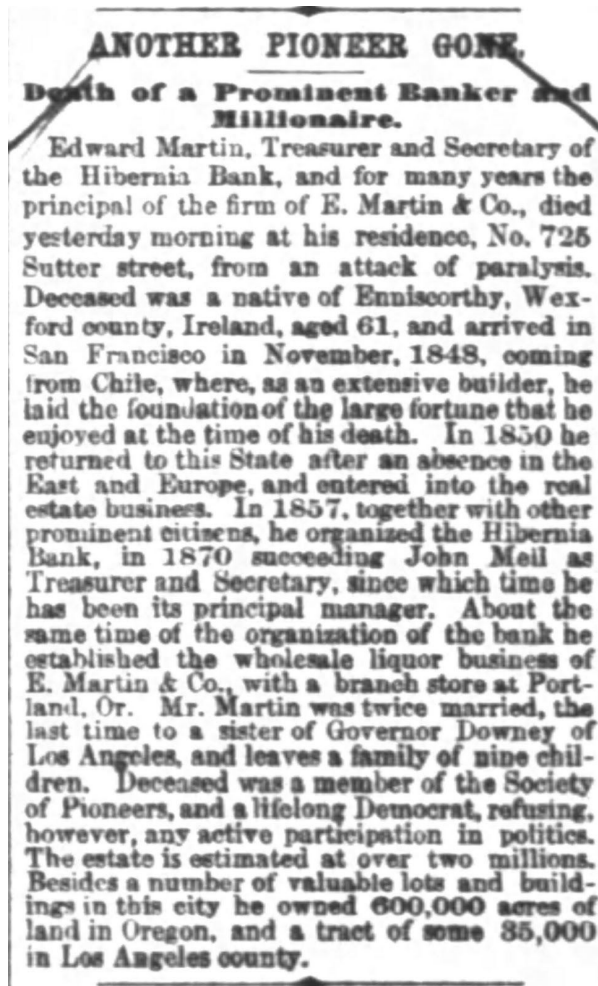
In the 1880 census there were 12 people living in the house on Sutter Street. Three of them were servants. Thomas, Edward, James, and Genevieve were children from Edward's first marriage. John Harvey was a son from Eleanor's first marriage. And Peter (7), Walter (5), and Andrew (3) were new additions to the family. There no longer is a Clara. But, most importantly, on May 12, 1880 Edward Martin had died of apoplexie (an old diagnosis, that could have been a stroke, heart attack, or aneurism).

[Page from the 1880 Federal Census](#)



[J.A.J. Wilcox, Portrait of Edward Martin](#)

How did Edward Martin make his money ? The article below, that appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle after his death, gives a short summary. Mining, banking, real estate, and liquor. I'll look into the real estate dealings and the liquor business in more detail below, because they have some connection to Portland and to Piedmont.



[San Francisco Chronicle, May 13, 1880](#)

Eleanor Martin would live to be a rich widow for another 48 years, and die in 1928, 102 years old. She and her widowed sister, Annie Donahue Downey, were known locally as the "Heavenly Twins". They traveled the world and ruled the society pages.

Eleanor by now was not alone the accepted leader of society in San Francisco, but also its ruler, thereby earning herself the sobriquet of 'the Czarina'. Those who knew her well saw her as a petite and gentle woman who exemplified Victorian 'respectability' and had a strict code of conduct. It was reported that she would not admit a divorced woman to her home and that ladies who drank more than one glass of champagne at her parties were not invited back. Over the years the notabilities she entertained in her mansion on Broadway included three United States Presidents, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and Taft.

Since San Francisco, unlike New York and the large cities back east, was too new to have anyone who could claim membership of 'an old family' as a criterion for acceptance into 'high

society', one's wealth, regardless of one's origins, became a major status symbol. In time Eleanor and Ned Greenway, the San Francisco representative of Mumm's champagne, became partners in the organization of the city's society. They made a list of the most desirable aspirants to become members of a '400' such as Mrs Astor had in New York. In 1887 they invited a social elite to the city's first Bachelor Cotillion.

At 10 p.m. sharp on the night, Eleanor and Ned, arm in arm, led the promenade around the ballroom. When they halted, Ned took a little gold whistle from his pocket and blew it as a signal for the dancing to begin. He blew it again later to announce that it was time to pitch into the banquet of duck, ham, turtle, tongue, scalloped oysters, and ice cream, washed down with Mumm's champagne. Then the Cotillion Master led his 'troops' back onto the dance floor like a drill sergeant.

Eleanor remained the doyen of San Francisco society. She presided over splendid dinners into her nineties, although, according to newspaper reports, she dozed off between courses. She remained active in charitable affairs and after the earthquake and fire in 1906 she permitted the government to use her mansion as a headquarters for the army during the crisis. On 9 May 1906 The People reported that high on the list of losers in the earthquake was Mrs Eleanor Martin, that her losses were estimated to amount to £300,000.

For over fifty years, she had maintained her position as the prima donna of San Francisco society, a tribute to the freedom enjoyed by Irish Catholic immigrants, men and women, in California at a time when employers in New York and Boston were posting signs saying, 'No Irish need apply'. However, the years were taking their toll and she was no longer able to take an active part in events.

On 6 July 1928, Eleanor Downey Martin, the widow of Edward J. Martin, passed away. She was within six weeks of being 102 years old. (Codd, 2011-2012, p. 85-86).

Peter Donahue, by the way, was born in 1822 in Glasgow, from Irish parents. He came to the US in 1835, and learned the engineering trade in Patterson, New Jersey. In 1847 he went to Peru, to build a steamship for the Peruvian government. Lured by the gold rush, he joined his brother in San Francisco in 1849. The brothers started the Union Iron Works, the San Francisco Gas Company (later P. G. & E.), and various local and statewide railroads. With Edward Martin and various other Irish businessmen Peter started the Hibernia Savings and Loan Society in 1859. It later became the Hibernia Bank, and rapidly grew to become the largest bank in San Francisco. In 1852 Peter married Jane McGuire, who died in 1861. The widower, with two children, then married Annie Downey in 1864. As we shall see below, he also invested in various real estate projects, often together with friend, neighbor, and in-law Edward Martin. Peter died in 1885, Annie in 1896. Many more details about Peter Donahue are in Quigley, 1878, p 373-384, Dillon, 1984, Wikipedia, 2018.

Biographical: Patrick J. "P. J." Martin

In the 1860 Federal Census we find two brothers of Edward Martin living together in San Francisco: Thomas is a 33 year old painter and Patrick J. Martin is a 26 year old carpenter. There is an indication of things to come, however, because P.J., as he is generally known, already had \$ 10,000 in real estate holdings. Information about P.J. is relatively scarce, certainly as compared to what we know about Edward, but it seems he came to the U.S. in 1853, and married Margaret A. Foley around 1865. P.J. was born in 1836, in Enniscorthy like Edward. Margaret was ten years younger.

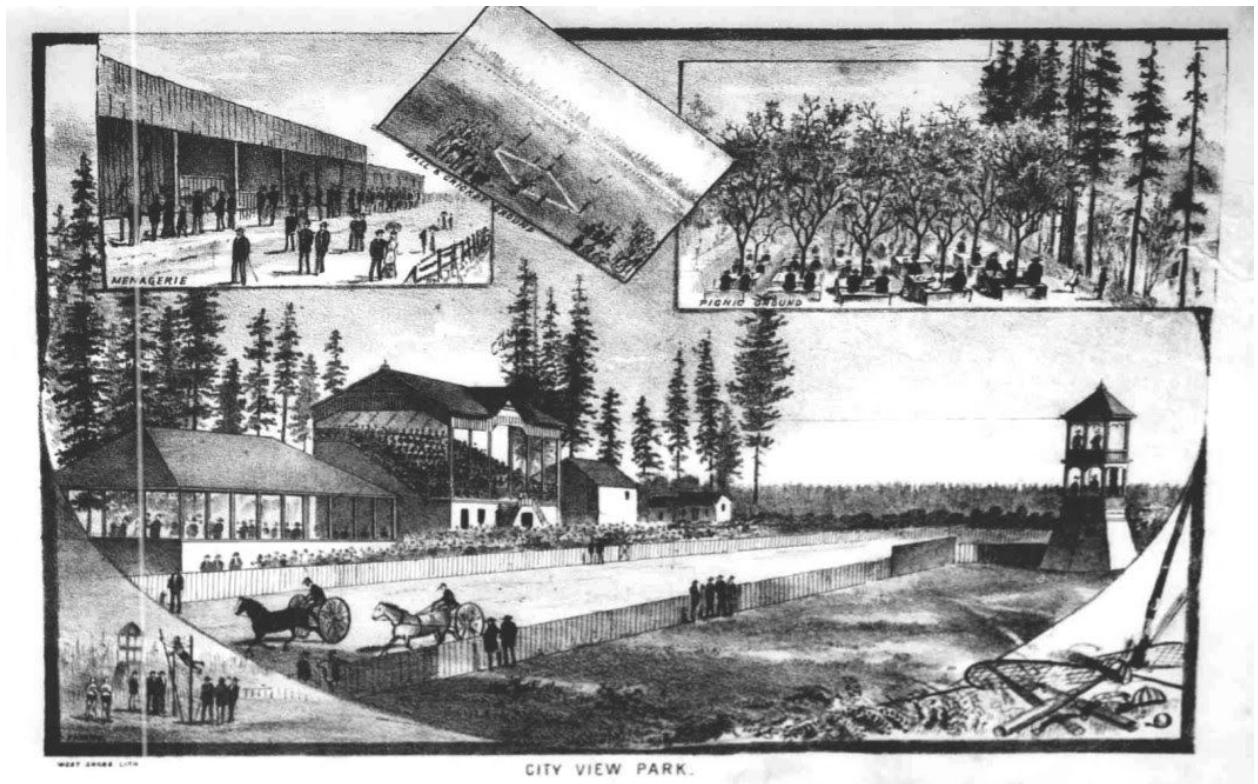
Cutter Whiskey

I don't drink alcoholic beverages and I do not grow lyrical when seeing a nineteenth century whiskey bottle. But some people do. This section is dedicated to them.

The Dalles Military Wagon Road

The story of the Dallas Military Wagon Road does not really touch the history of Piedmont, except through the involvement of the Martin and Donahue families. But it is nevertheless a good story, and I will tell it anyway. It illustrates the role of fraud and graft in the development of the Northwest, and the ways in which people with lots of money succeeded in getting even more money, at the expense of the federal and state governments (and thus of all taxpayers).

City View Park



P.J.Martin Tract

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