

San Leandro Historical Society

Newsletter

December 2020

The mission of the San Leandro Historical Society is to build awareness and appreciation of the history of our unique and diverse city and to support the preservation of historic sites and the historic legacy of San Leandro.

Annual Dues

Membership Dues letters are enclosed. We hope you will rejoin the San Leandro Historical Society for 2021. Dues are our bread-and-butter, paying for expenses such as mailings, insurance, our post office box, garden materials, and minor maintenance of the Historic Little Brown Church. This newsletter would not happen without dues!

Please return the form with a check, or go online to www.sanleandrohistory.org, click on "Membership" in the left column to pay with a credit card or PayPal.

2021 Event Ideas

Since we are still uncertain when we might be able to gather, we are mostly considering online events. We have talked about:

- Bringing back Josh Bevan for another San Leandro Architectural History presentation;
- An author talk with Nick Neely, whose book *Alta California* tells the story of the Gaspar de Portolà 1769 expedition through California, and Nick's journey on foot following the same route 250 years later;
- A presentation on San Leandro neighborhoods, including Bay-O-Vista, Broadmoor, Upper Bal, and others.

When it becomes safe to gather, we will have a Little Brown Church Open House, and we hope we to have an architectural event for the Cherry Festival if it happens.

Please let us know your thoughts and interests!

Historical Society News

2021 Board. We are pleased to announce the 2021 Board:
President ~ Cindy Simons
Vice-President ~ Evelyn González
Treasurer ~ Maria Magallon
Secretary ~ Linda Pollard

Heartfelt Thanks to Gerry Mellen. Many of you may know Gerry from the Garden Club, Meals on Wheels, or other organizations she volunteers for. The Historical Society has been lucky to have Gerry involved for many years. Most recently, she has been our Treasurer. Although we have a new treasurer this year, we hope Gerry will still be involved.

Street Names Backstory Event: Thanks to generous sponsors **Chad and Jean Pennebaker, Betty Brown, The Bulling Towne Group, Joe and Diane Winkel, Marcy Helm and Mark Smallen!** And thanks to donors **Jacqui Diaz, Carmen Avelar, and Karen Diaz,** and auction item donors **Diana Prola, Maria Magallon, and Linda Slater.** Also, thanks to **Evelyn Gonzalez** who put together the online auction. We had 71 households register for this event. The sponsorships, donations, and auction bids netted over \$1,000 for future events.

African-American Museum Project. The San Leandro Museum is closed because of Covid-19, but we are in touch with museum staff and continue to do research. Please let us know if you or someone you know would talk to us about African American life in San Leandro. Eventually these stories will be videorecorded and archived at the museum.

Stay healthy and safe. We wish you the best of holidays, and a 2021 that is vastly better than this year!

THE HISTORY FILES: ESTUDILLO STREET NAMES

The town of San Leandro began on Rancho San Leandro, the Mexican land grant ranch of José Joaquín and Juana Estudillo. The town owes much of its start to land donated by Juana Estudillo after her husband's death, and to two ambitious and industrious sons-in-law, William Heath Davis, who married María de Jesús Estudillo, and John Ward*, who married Concepcion Estudillo. Ward and Davis laid out the town site, built a hotel and restaurant to establish downtown San Leandro and the Plaza, rode up and down the county to urge votes for San Leandro as the Alameda County Seat, and saw to it that bridges, roads, and businesses were established in the area. It's no surprise that several streets are named for Estudillos, and you will find most of them in old downtown San Leandro.



José Joaquín Estudillo



Juana Estudillo

First, of course, there is Estudillo Avenue. Paralleling Estudillo to the south, you will find Joaquin and Juana Avenues, the given names of the San Leandro land grant owners.

Continue south on the map to find Dolores Avenue, named for their daughter, whose nickname Lola is another San Leandro street. Dolores married Charles Cushing, in the first wedding at St. Leander's a week after construction was completed in 1864.



John Nugent

South of Dolores, Maud, Elsie, and Sybil Avenues are named for Joaquin's and Juana's granddaughters. Their mother Magdalena Estudillo married John Nugent. He started the *San Francisco Herald*. "A bold caustic writer and a bitter and relentless enemy, he rushed with all his soul into the political quarrels of the time." A pistol duel that resulted in a compound fracture did not stop him from repeating the craziness a year later and getting another compound fracture. He first inspired the Committee of Vigilance in San Francisco, then condemned the vigilantes with a strong editorial that offended the many vigilantes in town, and the newspaper folded. He and his family eventually moved into the grand Estudillo home on Estudillo Avenue.

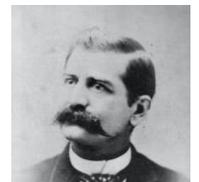


Cushing Family (Dolores Estudillo)

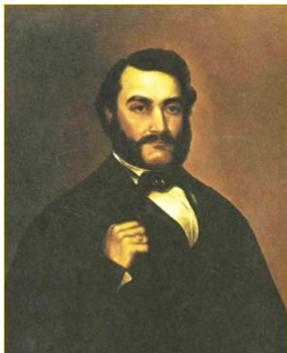


Chumalia is the baby nickname of Jesús María Estudillo. Jesús María was a city councilmember (which was called a trustee then). He was involved in many civic affairs of the late 1800s.

Martinez Street, parallel and just west of San Leandro Boulevard, is named for Juana's father, who owned Rancho El Pinole. Antonio Street is named for one of Joaquín's and Juana's sons.



Jesús María Estudillo



William Heath Davis



María de Jesús Estudillo

Davis Street is named for William Heath Davis and María de Jesús Estudillo Davis. An American born in Hawaii, Davis came to Mexican California as a young man, met many of the land grant families because of his trading business, and married Joaquín's and Juana's daughter María de Jesús. He gained and lost fortunes, failed in founding a new town in San Diego, but with his brother-in-law John Ward succeeded in founding San Leandro. He is known to historians for his memoirs *Seventy-Five Years in California*, one of the few first-hand accounts of life in Mexican California and the transition to an American state. For a while, they had a farm at the foot of Davis.

*There used to be a Ward Street, but it was renamed Estudillo.