William Campbell, More to the Story

The week following November's *Communique*, I received Jeanette Watson's book, *Campbell: The Orchard City* (1989). I am indebted to Barbara at the UMC Campbell office for tipping me off about this book which provides twelve lovely chapters on William Campbell and his family's life. So, I'd like to make some corrections as well as fill gaps gained since the previous article.

As a review, William Campbell is important to UMC Santa Clara for keeping worshipful gatherings continuous between Mr. Hecox's departure for Santa Cruz in February 1847 until non-appointed preachers like the Revs. Elihu Anthony or Charles Campbell, arrived in the autumns of '47 and '49, respectively. The capstone to these uninterrupted meetings was the arrival of Bp. William Taylor who formally organized Methodism for upper California.

By 1850 William owned several properties in San Joses, including the adobe near our church as well as his more famous farm in what would become the basis of the village of Campbell. However, it was his son, Benjamin, that continued farming along the foothills once William moved from the area in 1859[1]. With his oldest son, David, William settled a second town in Tulare Co. called Porterville. It's likely the methodist church there owes something to their relocation[2]. But it's here where William was buried-- ***not*** Oak Hill cemetery. William died, Dec. 2, 1884.

The lust for Gold didn't really apply to the '46ers who came for agricultural and, often, religious pursuits[3]. Though William and several of the Campbell men departed for the mining camps in late Spring '48[4], very few remained past the summer. For Benjamin the misery of the heat in California's interior was enough. Returning to our Valley along Saratoga Creek, under the shade of redwoods, for lumber harvest proved more profitable than mining. Indeed, the real 'gold' in the late 40's was timber and potato crops. The Campbells were ready to supply both. Upon the arrival of the railroad in 1886, the Campbells and other farmers switched from grain to fruit production, hence, the Valley's legendary 'garden' of many prune & apricot orchards.

Given the great number of Campbells arriving between 1846 to 1851, tracking their busy activity can be challenging, as in the case of their military participation, 1846-47. Benjamin and his brother, David, both served under Cpt. Aram. His uncle, Thomas, served in the southern department with Col. J.C. Fremont, and William, his father, enlisted with the irregulars of wily Cpt. Weber. Since each Campbell fought in the same, single battle vs. Cpt. Francisco Sanchez, respective roles may confuse.

Later, Benjamin returned to Missouri to marry and bring his wife, Mary Rucker, to California along with her family & friends, e.g., the Lovells and Finleys. Benjamin's father-in-law, Mr. Rucker built Campbell's first methodist chapel. The family also established Campbell's original Town Hall which served as a regular preaching point with class meetings before the ME church fully planted itself in 1890**.** Between the methodist chapel and the later church near their home, the Campbells enrolled and attended San Jose MEC.

There's no doubt the Campbells had strong Temperance convictions. Like Adna Hecox in nearby Santa Cruz, the Campbells were active in several Temperance societies. As lots sold, Benjamin wrote anti-saloon clauses into the deeds of the town, prohibiting selling and production of spirits among the population. To ensure such laws were properly observed, Benjamon even became Campbell's first Justice of Peace!

Benjamin's gravestone can be found at the Mission City Memorial Cemetery in Santa Clara.
– Charles Bartlett

[1] Watson, p. 23
[2] In other words, both Coloma & Porterville MEC were offshoots of Santa Clara methodism. Together with San Jose & Santa Cruz, these congregations are part of SCUMC's history.
[3] The Campbells' wagon company split at Fort Hall, Thomas, his brother, continued to the methodist mission in Oregon.
[4] Familiar mining camps like Dry Diggins, Mormon Island, and Sonora.