

RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Origin of Streets Named After People

by Adrianus Boudewyn - 2006

Google Earth Plus in space is a tremendous tool for geography teachers, but it causes indigestion where government officials see it as unnecessary snooping. However, Google has redone their mapping system, so anyone can use it <<https://www.google.com.co/maps/>>.

Sure enough, when this satellite tool is focused on Bodega, one gets a nice outline of the towns and nearly named street maps. If you subscribe to the service and get the professional version, you can get so close you can see cars parked.

Which in a around about way got us to thinking about street names and how they survive the ages long after it is forgotten whom they were named after. That had been the topic of a group discussion (John Cook, Don Howe, Ruth Burke, Nancy Conzett, Tooch Colombo, Glenice Carpenter) some years ago and it is in that light that we want to update the interest and commit some of it to paper.

Before we did, we consulted with Sue Dahl, the permit technician for Planning and Permits Department. She says that long ago streets were named by developers, for the simple reason that there were fewer people and less growth - and because there was no building department until 1961 and no planning department until the early 1970s. "Subdivisions now choose names they like to have, but go through an approval process to get our permission," says Ms. Dahl, who now handles new road name applications as well as address problems.

First stop for us locally was historian Ruth Burke for her expertise as she pulled out the subdivision maps of 1914 that established development and the streets named after people: Goes up to the current elementary school from Diekmann's Store. It was named for Bill Taylor, who subdivided part of his ranch for the Taylor Tract in old town in 1914. The State Highway 1 portion was formerly called Broadway in the Taylor Tract. Other streets in the Taylor Tract have no information about them. Smith Brothers Road was named after Bill Smith (son of Capt. Steven Smith) and Tom Smith, Bill's older brother. Today, the Yacht Club is located where the old Smith Brothers Fishery once stood. Streets have nautical, tree, and bird names. In Bodega, surveyed and mapped in 1863, the Potter Tract (named for Samuel Potter). Briard Street (now gone) ran from the corner store to the bridge.

In Salmon Creek the main road is Bean Avenue, named after early settler Bert Bean who lived in Salmon Creek. Keefe Street is named after Thomas Keefe, who owned the property that became the Chanslor Ranch. Mr. Keefe, along with his brother, John, and sister, Annie, started a subdivision in Salmon Creek in 1919 and named it after his daughters, Lucille and Aileen.

McChristian Street is named after George McChristian, who bought the Ocean View House and property (built by Hugh Marshall). He owned the water works (that he and Jabez Churchill put in) and started a subdivision. Churchill (Nancy Conzett's grandfather) built a cabin in Salmon Creek and is named after him. Then Vernon Bressie bought out McChristian, started a bigger water works and his own subdivision -- naming for his wife, Elizabeth, and for daughter Mary Ann. Carnes was named by Peter Carnes, after he built a home on the road (it's gone now).