

The Cupola

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Pardee Home Museum

APRIL 2002

Oakland City
Landmark 1975

National Register of
Historic Places 1976

California Historic
Landmark 1998

Enoch and Mary Pardee – A Gold Rush Romance

By Jeanne Watson

In the last issue of *The Cupola*, we featured an article about Enoch Pardee's Gold Rush journey to California, to honor the 150th anniversary of that event. We ended the story, based on our invaluable collection of letters between Enoch and his Ohio sweetheart Mary Pardee, with Enoch's arrival at the gold fields. We continue the story now as Enoch settles down in San Francisco and arranges for Mary to be escorted out to California for their marriage.

By early 1855 Enoch Pardee had established himself as an "oculist" in San Francisco with his office upstairs at 202 Pacific Street. His success, with sometimes between twelve to thirty patients a day, gave him confidence that "I now stand at the head of this Profession on the Pacific Coast." Because Enoch could make his fiancée of six years "comfortable and happy" there would be no reason to delay marriage to Mary Elizabeth Pardee (a distant cousin) from Northampton, Ohio.

Mary and Enoch had not seen each other in more than four years because a September, 1851 visit had had to be canceled due to his "violent fever" that lasted three weeks, "followed by Ague." Instead, Enoch decided to travel to California to improve his health and "accumulate property," sailing December 24, 1851, from New York City.

In a December 21 letter Enoch declared his intentions, telling Mary "If I could only have heard these words depart from your lips before my departure: I shall ever prove(sic) to be yours truly." He hoped to return in a year and a half, but "if I find the country filled with deseas



Enoch and Mary Pardee with the sole product of their romance, George Cooper Pardee, circa 1858

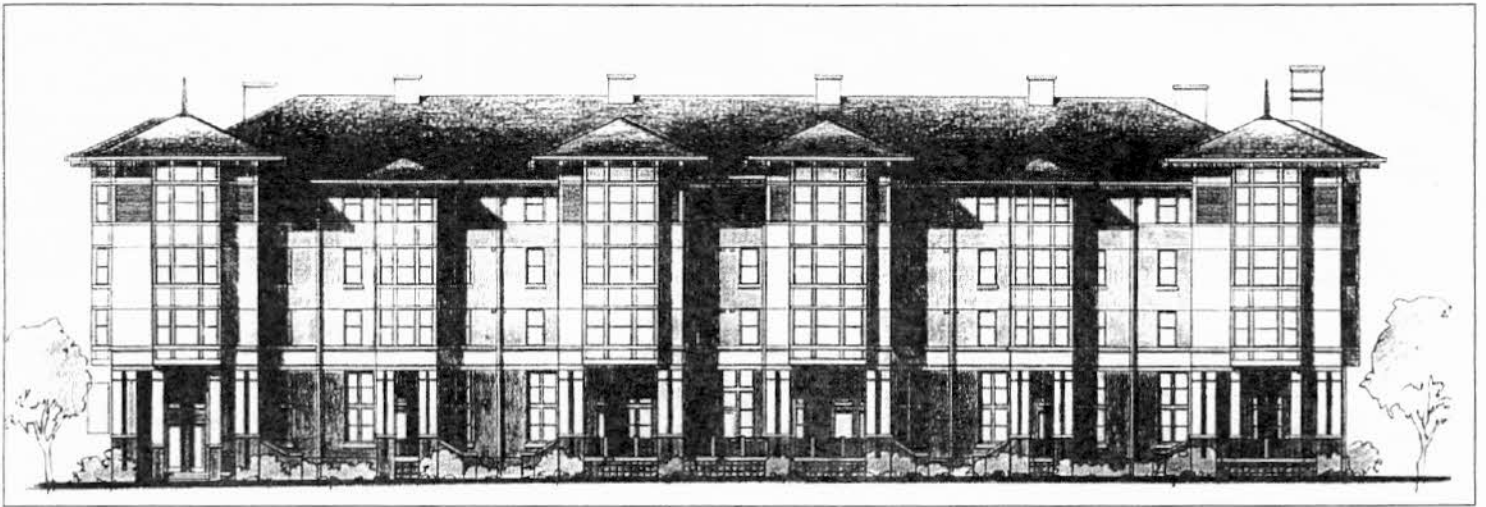
(sic) of the Eye I shall devote my whole attention to that profession."

After their long engagement, Enoch became concerned in January 1855 when he learned an acquaintance from Ohio knew Miss Pardee and told him, "she had a fellow out here and did not marry him." Mary, who had been teaching school, assured Enoch, "Again do I listen to words of tenderness and receive the blessed assurance of love from those lips that participated in the first kiss that I ever bestowed upon the lips of man." She thought it "best for both that we did not unite in the holy bonds of matrimony before this time." She also thanked him for "a pretty little watch...I prize it highly...it is your gift."

On January 10th, Enoch wrote Mary "the likeness you entrusted me with [I] placed in hands of an Artist to have drawn in Life's size. One week to see it complete." He would have "a likeness taken and from that I am intending to have my profile painted in full size. If you do not come I will keep them together in my sleeping apartment and look upon them and think them as near reality as possible and still hope for a time more congenial to my feelings."

Enoch told Mary she could bring her bed "which you set so much store by - it can be sent by express and not trouble you...by placing it in a trunk you can forward it

Continued on page 4



Martin Luther King Jr. Way elevation of Landmark Place.

February Groundbreaking for Landmark Place Condominiums

On Wednesday morning, February 6th, a groundbreaking ceremony was held next door to the Pardee Home to mark the start of construction of ninety-two condominium homes called Landmark Place. The ceremony marked both the beginning of actual work and the end of a long planning process which made the project possible.

The lot — at 30,000 square feet, identical in size to the Pardee Home's — had sat vacant for years since its clearing during the 1970s in the name of urban renewal. Its clearing did not involve the demolition of any valuable historic structures.

For some years afterwards there was talk of doing a second Preservation Park on the site, and two old houses stood on stilts there during that time, before one burned to the ground and finally the other was demolished by city order a few years ago.

Finally, after years of false starts, and with the support of Mayor Jerry Brown, who made the construction of housing for 10,000 new downtown residents the top priority of his administration, the city requested proposals for the site in August, 1999.

When the proposal by Lalanne Volckmann, developers, and Michael Pyatok, architect, was chosen out of the three submitted, these parties initiated two voluntary design review meetings in the dining room of the Pardee Home with representatives of the museum, the neighborhood, and the Oakland Heritage Alliance.

Following a presentation by the developers and architects, the trustees of the Pardee Home Museum voted

unanimously to approve the project to the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, which exercises design review authority over any new construction in the city's official historic districts, including our Preservation Park Historic District.

On May 6, 2000, the Landmarks Board voted unanimously to approve the project to the Planning Commission, which endorsed it at its July meeting. Inevitably, more months passed while the design work was finalized, financing assembled, etc., before the groundbreaking this past winter.

The ninety-two homes of Landmark Place, ranging in size from 500 to 1,200 square feet and selling from the mid \$200,000s to the mid \$300,000s, will be located three to four blocks from City Center, City Hall, and the federal and state office buildings nearby.

Mike Ghielmetti, vice-president of Signature Properties, the company which inherited the project from Lalanne Volckmann, praised it at the groundbreaking as "housing in an affordable range for people who would want to live near their work."

Other speakers, including Councilmember Nancy Nadel, Vice-Mayor Larry Reid, and City Manager Robert Bobb spoke enthusiastically about Landmark Place, including the role it can play in creating a vital downtown district day and night, and the successful design solution for its sensitive site, between a historic district and downtown high-rises.

Landmark Place should be ready for occupancy in summer, 2003.

Mayoral Correspondence Among Our Most Valuable Archival Holdings

Regular readers of *The Cupola* may remember that the museum was awarded, in 1999, a Conservation Project Support grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to create a new, supplemental archival storage space upstairs in the house. In the process of relocating, rehousing, and cataloging the historic documents involved in this project, we discovered a number of items of exceptional interest.

Among the most valuable are two "letter copy books" belonging to Governor Pardee, one from his years as a medical student in Leipzig, Germany, the other from his term as mayor of Oakland. Copy books were used many years ago — before computers, before photocopying machines, before carbons, before "ditto sheets" — remember those? — to make copies of one's personal or official correspondence. They were composed of sheets of a particular type of paper from Japan which you could moisten and impress with a newly written letter in ink, to create an exact copy of that letter.

Pardee's copy book from Leipzig is very valuable, filled with letters about his medical studies, about developments with his

family in Oakland, and, perhaps most fascinating, handwritten copies of the monthly column he wrote for the *San Francisco Chronicle* about life in Germany under the nom de plume Amos Kaog (to be featured in future issues of *The Cupola*).

We wish to feature here just a couple of excerpts from the other copy book, containing a portion of George's outgoing correspondence as mayor (from July 28, 1894 to March 29, 1895), which we consider particularly valuable because of the paucity of historical documents regarding city government in Oakland.

For whatever reasons, and whoever may be at fault, the city government in Oakland has never initiated a systematic program of archiving important documents, such as official mayoral correspondence, which would shed light on the evolution of the city in general, and on the development of municipal government in particular.

Although the letters in this copy book cover only eight months of George's two-year term as mayor, they are all the more valuable for offering a rare glimpse into life in the



George Cooper Pardee circa 1895

mayor's office over one hundred years ago. Two examples of Mayor Pardee's correspondence follow:

In the letter below, Pardee was writing about an issue which vexed many Oakland mayors — charter reform. A Board of Freeholders was the panel appointed by the mayor to codify charter reforms which were then put to the city's voters. Four amendments to the city charter were adopted under Mayor Pardee, in January 1895. Warren Olney was a prominent San Francisco attorney who lived in Oakland and was elected mayor here in 1903.

Aug. 1 1894

Mr. Warren Olney,

Dear Sir: — There is a feeling abroad among the people of this city that the present charter is faulty in many respects, and that a new instrument (under the last constitutional amendment making new charters superior to the General Laws) would be best for the city. If such action be taken it must be taken very quickly in order to get it before the next Legislature. Will you kindly give me your ideas on the matter? Would you consent to act as a member of the new Board of Freeholders? I hope you will.

Very truly yours,
Geo. C. Pardee

Feb 28, 1905

Hon. A. Lawton,
Chief Engineer

Dear Sir: — I am informed by several people (witnesses to the act) that certain members of the Fire Department have been in the habit of cruelly using or unnecessarily abusing certain horses of the Fire Department — more especially a certain chestnut horse. The persons complaining are respectable and reputable citizens, and are loud in their denunciations of the brutality displayed. Will you kindly look into the matter and let me know about it?

Very truly yours,
Geo. C. Pardee
Mayor

