



# PARDEE HOME MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

Oakland City Landmark, 1975  
National Register of  
Historic Places, 1976  
California Historical Landmark, 1998

JUNE 1999

## A New University Molds a Youthful George Pardee

by Barbara Smith

### *The University of California in 1875*

It was the fall of 1875 and the young University of California had just lost one of its better early presidents. Daniel Coit Gilman had agreed to become the first president of the newly founded Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and was succeeded at Berkeley by Physics Professor John LeConte. LeConte, the first professor hired by the University, had proven to be one of its workhorses, balancing administrative and scholarly responsibilities. He was a pioneer in the field of limnology, the study of the physical, chemical, meteorological, and biological conditions in bodies of fresh water, and was the first

to test the clarity of Lake Tahoe — by lowering a white dinner plate into its blue depths.\*

### *The University's Tumultuous Early Years*

The University, chartered in 1868, was an amalgam of two earlier institutions. In 1866, to take advantage of the Morrill Act and its generous federal land grants, the legislature created (in name only) the Agricultural, Mining and Mechanical Arts College. The following year, the College of California, a private nonsectarian institution in Oakland, offered all of its assets, including its Oakland campus, its undeveloped Berkeley property, its books, and student body to the State in the hope that the eventual university would forever maintain a College of Letters. (The trustees of the College of California had viewed the proposed Agricultural, Mining and Mechanical Arts College as a mere trade school.) The Legislature accepted the offer, and created a broader university, rather than simply an agricultural and mining college, or "A & M," that would have concentrated primarily on California's leading industries of the last half of the 19th Century.



George Pardee as a student at the University of California, Class of 1879.

*Photo courtesy The Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley*

The University's first class of twelve young men (the first women were admitted in 1870) had attended all four years of classes at the Oakland campus of the College of California, and their graduation in 1873 was the first event held on the Berkeley site. On the still sparsely developed campus of 1875 the primary classroom buildings were North and South Halls.

*Continued on page 4*

## Mary Lou Malone Dies at Age 73



Mary Lou Malone at Pardee Home Holiday Open House on Nov. 30, 1997.

### Longtime Caretaker for the Pardee Family

Mary Lou Malone, a beloved employee of the Pardee family for close to a third of a century, died suddenly, but peacefully, in her East Oakland home this past March 16th. Mary went to work for the Pardees shortly after her mother, Sarah Elizabeth Baker, retired from working at the Pardee Home, in the 1950s; she moved into the house around 1970, as Madeline and Helen Pardee were growing older, and

did not move out of the house until 1994, years after the deaths of the two sisters.

Through her mother and her mother's memories, Mary provided a link to Governor and Mrs. Pardee's era, but also her association with the house extended well into its current time as a public house museum. Pardee family members, family friends, museum employees, volunteers, and visitors all came to enjoy Mary's warm presence in the house.

Mary was born in Tulare, in the Central Valley of California, on November 15, 1925, the daughter of Leon and Sarah Elizabeth Detiege. Mary, whose mother, Elizabeth, was born in San Francisco, took great pride in being a second-generation Californian, but her father, who was killed in an auto accident when Mary was but weeks old, was a Louisiana native. Mary

*Continued on page 2*

\*That plate was the forerunner of today's Secchi Dish, used on a regular basis by researchers from U.C. Davis aboard their Tahoe research vessel, the John LeConte.

## Malone: *Continued from page 1*

would describe her heritage as “French, Blackfoot Indian, and Negro,” and she enjoyed telling the tale of her great-grandmother, who had escaped slavery on the Underground Railroad and became an “upstairs maid” to Abraham Lincoln’s doctor in Washington.

Mary’s mother had been raised in Allensworth, the now famous Tulare County community founded by Colonel Allen Allensworth in 1909 — the only town in the state founded, financed, and governed by African-Americans. Mary, who claimed that her aunt was the second child ever born in Allensworth, lived there with her grandmother as a young girl for a couple of years before moving to nearby Porterville, to live with her grandmother and aunt for most of her youth. She and her mother moved to Oakland during the Second World War, and an unemployment office referred Elizabeth to the Pardees, because “Mrs. Pardee had just broken her hip and they needed help — the help had just walked out.” Elizabeth never lived in the Pardee Home, but would arrive every morning at 6:00 A.M. to fix breakfast — the kitchen and dining room were her major responsibilities. Mary would help her mother with the other housekeeping until Elizabeth’s retirement in the mid-1950’s.

Mary’s mother had remarried, to Paul Baker, and the family lived in West Oakland, at 315 Chester St. Mary can remember the many Portuguese and Italian families in the neighborhood at that time and can remember the aroma of fermenting homemade wine from these households. She was married in 1941 to William Charles Johnson, a native of Gary, Indiana, and sheet-metal worker, who had four daughters with Mary — Marie Antoinette, Patricia (Patsy), Joan, and Florence. Mary raised her family in a now demolished house on 3rd St. in West Oakland, “right behind the SP yard,” near Chester St. Mary, always the most maternal of women, recalled that on Chester St. “I ran an open house for kids . . . they were always coming and going . . . I used to cook beans and spaghetti in big pots, because there would always be someone there to eat. I had a giant-sized kitchen and a big old round kitchen table.”

Following Bill Johnson’s death in the late 1960’s, Mary remarried, to Crawford Malone, who occasionally did yard work at the Pardees’, and they adopted two daughters, Connie and Denise. Her “second” family lived first on Peralta St., around 12th St., and then on Chester St., around 32nd St. Mary recalled that the Black Panthers bought a house across the street from her Peralta St. home, which made her “deathly sick” with worry over possible shoot-outs or other problems. Mary worshipped for many years at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in West Oakland — though not raised as a Catholic, she really enjoyed a Catholic summer camp she had attended as a young girl, and, besides, “I could never understand all the shouting at Protestant churches — the Lord can hear you without all of that.”

For many years following the deaths of Madeline and Helen Pardee (in 1980 and 1981, respectively), Mary would gladly share, with visitors to her caretaker’s quarters in the house, many memories of life with the sisters. She recalled that Madeline was “kinda seddity,” or reserved, while Helen was the one who “made the friends.” Helen, with her botany

degree from Cal, would like to work in the yard most days, despite the presence of paid gardeners (the cactus garden and Hawaiian ginger near the carriage house were her projects). Mary remembered how distressed she would become to look out the kitchen window and see Miss Helen leaning over the fence, freely socializing with the “worst-looking bums” and “hippies,” as the social fabric of the immediate neighborhood and the entire city evolved.

Mary recalled that both sisters liked to watch TV, especially travelogues and their favorite show, “Dialing for Dollars.” Both would play solitaire and do crossword puzzles, and they would seek the assistance of Mary’s mother, a devout Baptist, for any clues regarding the Bible. They also were amateur philatelists, and once, at Helen’s request, Mary fixed “soul food” for a stamp club meeting at the Pardee Home - gumbo, corn bread, okra, greens, chitterlings, and pecan pie!

On Memorial Day, Mother’s Day, and Father’s Day, they would go to the family plot in Mountain View Cemetery in a cab with its trunk full of flowers and run up quite a fare as the cab driver waited for them to distribute the flowers. Mary also said that the Pardee Home was widely known among Oakland cabbies as the “White House,” since it was painted all white for many years.

As the sisters grew older, Mary’s happy memories inevitably became more mixed with sadder ones, particularly after around 1970, when Madeline suffered a serious stroke and a bad fire in the rear of the house forced the sisters to stay at the Hotel Leamington for some months while the house was repaired. When they returned to the house, the sisters gave up their upstairs bedrooms, and Madeline moved into the Governor’s office off the back parlor and Helen moved into the servant’s bedroom. It was at this time that Mary moved into the house for the first time, because the sisters required nighttime assistance.

Mary recalled that for many years on Halloween she would prepare cookies and candies to arrange on some of Mrs. Pardee’s many fancy serving trays, but by the late 1960’s or so, the children had stopped coming around - “they all thought it was just a ghost house.” Thanksgiving Day had always been *the* holiday at the Pardee Home, with dozens of guests, and Mary and the sisters were able to continue hosting Thanksgiving Dinner into the last years.

Christmas was a different story, however as Madeline and Helen never cared for it; Mary understood that when they were young girls their rather domineering Aunt Etta forced them to spend most of Christmas day wrapping presents for others, and they apparently never recovered from the experience. Mary was required to do all the Christmas shopping for them, and the house would have remained completely undecorated for the holidays if Mary had not taken the initiative to put a few things out in the back parlor and dining room. For Christmas each year the sisters would give Mary a bonus check and a subscription to “*American* (i.e., *National*) *Geographic*.”

Mary is greatly missed by all those who knew her at the Pardee Home and by her many other friends and family members in Oakland and elsewhere.

-David Nicolai

