

Another Fair Oaks Pioneer Discovered

By Jim Pearce

A number of wealthy Fair Oaks pioneers named their properties poetically; Straithmore, Kingswold, Rosewood, Glenmerle (Hodge). A photo in a four page 1925 Fair Oaks real estate brochure shows a home named "Rowan Brae." I've paged past it a number of times and wondered where it was but never took the time to investigate. A few days ago I noticed it again and decided to



"Rowan Brae"—See Description Above

read the property description in the brochure. It turns out that the property was two 20 acre parcels on the northwest corner of Sunset and Illinois. On our assessor's maps for 1910 the owner is listed as the estate of Edward Galvin. The house does not currently exist.

You've probably never heard of Edward Galvin, he's not on anyone's short list of prominent Fair Oaks pioneers, but he was very important to Fair Oaks history. He was a real estate and insurance broker in Chicago and is listed as one of the original investors in Fair Oaks. He was also on the first excursion train to Fair Oaks in November, 1895. He presumably came out soon after and built his home, but he kept a downtown Sacramento home as his legal residence and business address. He served on several State agriculture boards and is listed as primarily interested in growing the Pomelo fruit (also known as grapefruit). When Fair Oaks opened its second post office in eastern Fair Oaks IN 1899, it was located on his property and known as the Pomelo Post Office.

So, why do we put Ed Galvin in the same category as Straith, Hodge, King, and other important Fair Oaks pioneers? Galvin was one of the first of the excursionists to build a home in Fair Oaks, probably in 1897, and begin a life of orchardist. He was fairly old, born in 1838 and died in 1909. He's buried in the Fair Oaks Cemetery.

In 1899 the Chicago – Fair Oaks Association wrote a letter from Chicago to Mr. Galvin which read in part, "...the undersigned, citizens of Chicago and owners of property at Fair Oaks.....have read the recent publications in the Sacramento papers relative to public improvements in that section of the county, in which both as property owners and as prospective residents we have an especial interest; and as you are upon the ground we would ask you to make the necessary and proper representations upon our behalf to the Board of Supervisors or such other officials as may have jurisdiction of the matter." They go on, "Most important of all is a good strong safe bridge over the American

River.....connecting.... Fair Oaks to the railroad station at Salisbury.” The letter is signed by Cash, Lademord, Ruggles, Bramhall, King, Straith, Vanderworker, Hodge, Ingalis, Vehmeyer, Barry, Patterson, Clapp, Howard, Beaton, Wilcox, Hargis, Midler, and Craig. So it seems that all of the Chicago investment group put their faith in Galvin to represent their interests. The entire letter along with an accompanying newspaper article is on the website under “Galvin Papers.”