

The Hale Family in Ross

By Fran Cappelletti, Ross Historical Society/Jose Moya del Pino Library, 2016

Reuben and May Hale built a house on Glenwood Avenue, near Upper Road, in 1905. It was a big change moving from San Francisco, where they lived with Reuben's mother and brother. He was one of the owners of the Hale Brothers Department Stores. The original business was started by their father Marshal in 1876, with a store in San Jose. Over time, a chain of stores extended to San Francisco, Sacramento, and other cities. To put the Hale's impact in perspective, a family reunion was held at Stanford in 1909 with nearly fifty members, celebrating what would have been Marshal's 100th birthday.



Early photos from 1905 show the house with without many trees and other vegetation, like much of Ross at the time.



1905, Hale Family Collection, Ross Historical Society

Reuben's mother, Prudence, also moved to the Ross house, passing away in 1907. A devout member of the Unitarian church, credit was given to her as a driving force for building the church in San Francisco.



1913, Hale Family Collection, Ross Historical Society

Reuben was active in much more than the department store business. He was President of the San Francisco Merchants Association and was active in rebuilding San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. He is most famous for his idea to host the Panama Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco, on which he served as Vice President on the executive committee and travelled to Europe as part of a Commission to promote the event.

Among many charitable causes, Reuben was a trustee of the San Francisco Public Library and a longtime supporter of the Boy Scouts of America. He and his family loved the natural environment and he took a part in promoting Mount Tamalpais and other parts of Marin.

Reuben and May had two children, Ruby and Newton. Both grew up in Ross and many photos from family collections show them as children playing with their pets, participating in an Easter egg hunt, fishing and driving cars.

Ruby married Oliver Field in 1921 on the expansive grounds and the large wedding party of 200 included the mayor of San Francisco, "Sunny Jim" Rolph. The wedding was covered in the Bay Area newspapers. Ruby and Oliver, both graduates of Stanford, would move to Palos Verdes Estates, near Los Angeles. Ruby lived to be 100 years old, supporting many charitable causes throughout her life.

Newton matriculated at Stanford and he joined the family business in 1922. The company later merged with Broadway Department Stores of Los Angeles, becoming Broadway Hale Stores which later became Carter Hawley Hale. The company operated many stores, including Emporium, Neiman-Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman. He and his wife, Betty, lived in Hillsborough with two daughters.

The Hales lived in Ross until 1925, then moved back to San Francisco and later to the Peninsula. When Reuben died in 1950, his obituary made page one of the San Francisco Chronicle.