

THE SCHMIEDELL FAMILY BY GARY SCALES

The Schmiedell Family story starts in 1846 when William and Amanda McCutchen left Missouri for California with their infant daughter, Harriet. The McCutchen's wagon broke down in Fort Bridger, Wyoming. Several days later they were asked by Captain George Donner to join his large twenty-wagon train. Harriet died in the fierce winter snows of the Sierra as one of the 45 fatalities of the ill-fated Donner Party. Her mother, Amanda died a decade later in San Jose giving birth to their fourth child, Edward Johnson McCutchen, who would become one of San Francisco's most prominent and well-known attorneys. In 1896 McCutchen joined together with Charles P. Eells and Charles Page forming a law firm whose longevity would reach into the twenty-first century. McCutchen's daughter, Alice, married Edward G. Schmiedell and would become a co-founder of the Lagunitas Country Club. Eells and Page descendants also would be major contributors to the Club's heritage.

Alice McCutchen's father-in-law Henry Schmiedell arrived in San Francisco the summer of 1849 from Lima, Peru. A native of Germany, Henry was well educated and at a young age apprenticed at mercantile and trading houses in Hamburg and Lima. He continued these pursuits in San Francisco, as well as investing in real estate. By 1860 the Comstock Lode in Nevada was producing more silver bonanzas than the Forty-Niner Gold Rush. Henry Schmiedell took notice. Unlike the disordered business conditions that prevailed a decade earlier, the financial community discovered even greater fortunes could be made trading in the shares of silver mining properties. Henry immediately began to employ the investing skills that he had learned both in Hamburg and Lima.

Henry Schmiedell was instrumental in forming the San Francisco Stock Exchange and served as its Treasurer and Trustee. He established a partnership with Eli Hochstaedter, a wealthy San Francisco investor. With Hochstaedter's capital and Schmiedell's astute management skills and impeccable business reputation, the firm became extraordinarily influential and successful. By taking major stock positions in some of the storied silver mines, including the Belcher, Ophir and Crown Point, the firm did an enormous and most lucrative business. And when in 1873, the legendary Consolidated Virginia Mine proved to be the greatest silver bonanza in history; no company "did a larger trade or reaped a more generous golden harvest than Schmiedell, Hochstaedter & Co."

In 1878, while in his mid-fifties and at the height of his firm's success, Henry retired to tend to his ample fortune, thus ensuring his wife Fronnie, their two children and succeeding generations freedom from financial worry or want. Daughter Nettie married George T. Howard, part of the "Peninsula Royalty" and a founding family of Hillsborough, at a wedding attended by over 1,000 guests. Son, Edward married Alice McCutchen and set out on a two-year honeymoon adventure that took them around the world.

Henry Schmiedell died in 1894 and son Edward took over the extensive real estate holdings Henry had acquired in his retirement. The Schmiedell Estate Company's portfolio included a number of prominent apartment buildings and downtown office buildings. The Earthquake and Fire of 1906 took a heavy toll on these assets. Despite these losses, Henry Schmiedell's estate was estimated well in excess of one million dollars, a substantial fortune at turn of that century.

Edward and Alice decided to live in Ross and purchased a five-acre site on Upper Road from the Dibblee Estate Company. Alice's mother had a small summer cottage on Lagunitas Road and the Schmiedell's thought the Ross Valley would be an ideal place their growing family to spend their summers and an occasional weekend. During the rest of the year they lived at 775 Post in a luxurious apartment building owned by the Schmiedell Estate Company. They engaged architect John White, brother in law and partner of Bernard Maybeck to design their summer residence. The architectural firm at that time was known as Maybeck, Howard & White. George Howard was married to Edward's sister, Nettie. They named the estate *Baskinridge* in honor of Alice's mother's family home in New Jersey.

A staff of nine servants cared for the spacious shingled main house. In addition there was a carriage house, caretaker's house, guest cottage and three playhouses for their children, Elizabeth, Doris and Ted. Each of the family members had their own horse, cared for by their coachman, Traemane. When automobiles became popular the carriage house was retrofitted with a rotating turntable for automobile storage.

In the next issue we will learn how Edward Schmiedell and John Ward Malliard formed a partnership that would last for several generations. And through these business relationships and subsequent marriages several prominent families were joined, many of who would be instrumental in the development of the Lagunitas Club.