

## **EDWARD AND ALICE MCCUTCHEN SCHMIEDELL**

**By Gary Scales**

By the end of the nineteenth century Edward and Alice Schmiedell and the three children were spending more time at Basking Ridge, their spacious summer residence at the corner of Lagunitas, Glenwood and Upper Roads. While Edward continued to manage his father's extensive real estate holdings, he started a food brokerage business with John Ward Mailliard.

Remember that Schmiedell's wife, Alice, was the daughter of leading San Francisco's attorney, Edward J. McCutchen. Charles Page was McCutchen's law partner and his sister Lizzie married Mailliard in 1881. Charles and Lizzie's father was New England-raised Dr. Thomas Page who had established a medical practice in Valparaiso, Chile and become one of that country's most celebrated surgeons. In 1849 Dr. Page and his wife, Anna Maria bought the 17,000-acre Rancho Cotate (later Cotati) in Sonoma County. In the next decade the Pages and ten of their thirteen children moved to California and settled on the Rancho.

The Mailliard family came to Marin County in 1854 and purchased the 8,800-acre Rancho San Geronimo. When John Mailliard married Lizzie Page the two families controlled over 25,000 acres of fertile agricultural land. With Edward Schmiedell's capital and business contacts, a food brokerage partnership with direct access to the bountiful produce of the Mailliard-Page land holdings seemed a natural fit. As the properties were sold off, the company represented more manufactured goods and products. John Mailliard was an avid stamp collector and corresponded regularly with a fellow philatelist in Louisiana by the name of Edmund McIlhenny. One day Mailliard's secretary enclosed a letter to McIlhenny in a business envelope rather than a personal one. Mr. McIlhenny wrote back: "I notice you're a food broker. We make a little hot sauce that is kind of popular down here in Louisiana. Maybe you'd like to try and sell it." Mailliard-Schmiedell represented Tabasco for the next 100 years and the company is credited with selling more of the sauce than anyone else in the world.

Another Page sibling who figured prominently in the Lagunitas Club story was Charles and Lizzie Page's older sister, Anita. She and her brother Henry returned to Valparaiso to live. There Anita married into a distinguished and very wealthy Chilean family and had one child, Edith Page Smith. In 1915 Edith married British-born Vernon Skewes-Cox who had moved to Chile to head an import-export business. Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Skewes-Cox had four children and eventually moved to Ross in 1930. They purchased a magnificent hilltop from the Kittle family, which they named Monte Alegre and that would remain the family home for several generations. Not only was Vernon Skewes-Cox a president of the Lagunitas Club, but also so were his son, Bennet, for whom the Skewes-Cox Sportsmanship Award is named, and his son-in-law Adrian Malone.

The Mailliard-Schmiedell partnership lasted for several generations and through these business relations and subsequent marriages several prominent families were joined, many instrumental in the development and history of the Lagunitas Club.

Both Edward and Alice Schmiedell became active members of the Ross community and permanent residents after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire in San Francisco. Edward played a leading role in the incorporation of the Town of Ross and served on the original Town Board of Trustees. We will discuss in later chapters Alice's instrumental role in the founding of the Lagunitas Club.

The Schmiedells became enamored with the beauty of the Sierra, particularly Lake Tahoe, and soon joined other Bay Area families that had summer homes at the Lake. It was through the Schmiedells that A. Crawford Greene met and later married Natalie Coffin of Ross. Later Greene assisted Schmiedell in establishing a bucolic enclave on the Nevada shores of Lake Tahoe. Secret Harbor continues to be a tranquil sanctuary for now the fifth-generation of descendants of the Schmiedell, Greene, Kent, Poett, Mein and Merrill families.

Betty, Doris and Ted Schmiedell grew up in a world of privilege. While the Schmiedell Estate Company suffered heavy uninsured property losses with the 1906 Earthquake and Fire it caused little notice on life at Basking Ridge. The children played with neighborhood friends most within the same social circles as their parents. Barroll McNear and his sister Amanda were close friends, as was Genevieve Bothin. Summers were spent at Lake Tahoe and the Schmiedells continued to maintain a residence in San Francisco.

The eldest son Ted married but had no children. Doris never married and continued to live at One Upper Road for many years. Youngest daughter, Betty married James Moffitt in 1922. Moffitt was the scion of the distinguished Moffitt family of San Francisco. The University of California named their San Francisco hospital in honor of his father, Dr. Herbert Charles Moffitt and paper-manufacturing company of Blake, Moffitt & Towne, a well-known San Francisco institution having been founded in 1855. James briefly worked for the family company but was a dedicated ornithologist and at the age of 36 was appointed Curator of Birds and Mammals in the California Academy of Sciences. When World War II broke out James Moffitt served as a Naval Aviation Lieutenant and died in a plane crash in the Aleutian Islands. James and Betty had one child, a daughter, Alice who would be the sole Schmiedell grandchild. Alice Moffitt married Captain Richard Gatterdam, a highly decorated war hero and pilot with the United States Air Force. Alice and Dick Gatterdam and their three children were active members of the Lagunitas Club for many years.

Edward and Alice Schmiedell celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary at Basking Ridge in 1960. Edward died five years later and Alice within another five years, both in their nineties, and having lived rich and productive lives.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** Again we are grateful to the Moya Library-Ross Historical Society. Also Edward Schmiedell was an enthusiastic photographer and many of the photos in the Moya Library files are from his early negatives. And much of the information regarding the early days in Ross and the founding of the Lagunitas Club come from the Oral History of Miss Doris Schmiedell taken in 1976 by the Ross Historical Society. The marvelous story of John Mailliard and Edmund McIlhenny is a quote from "The Mailliards of California."