

Table of Contents

Introduction.	1
Chapter 1. In the Beginning.	3
Chapter 2. Audubon of the West	6
Chapter 3. Valley Gold Rush.	9
Chapter 4. He Saved the Redwoods	15
Chapter 5. Eye of the Beholder	18
Chapter 6. Lost Chances.	21
Chapter 7. Naked Ladies.	23
Chapter 8. Almost an Impressionist	26
Chapter 9. Charles Henry Harmon.	28
Bibliography.	30

Introduction

Recently I was called in for jury duty at Superior Court on First Street in San Jose. While patiently waiting to fulfill my civic duty and reading a very dry novel, I noticed a huge oil painting in the jury waiting room. Being a San Jose native, I thought it must be a rendering of the valley when agriculture was the main source of income. It featured rows of expertly painted orchards with pastel blossoms intermingled with hues of green and brown that captured the essence of the valley when it was a farming community. A ranch house would dot the landscape and in the center were a few taller buildings representing the downtown area. Besides being a beautiful pastoral, the painting made quite another statement; it was enormous.

"Jurors 1324 through 1399, please step to court room 3. Numbers 1324 through 1399, room 3," the receptionist called into the microphone.

My number was not called so I walked over to the painting and noticed a typed card below the piece. The artist was Charles Henry Harmon and he had been commissioned by the Board of Supervisors in 1914 for \$1,000 to paint the Santa Clara Valley at blossom time. The work had been displayed at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition World Fair in San Francisco. It was nine by

eighteen feet and weighed 800 pounds. Somehow it had ended up in Superior Court's Jury Room.

As the time slowly crept by, I would alternately read and look at the painting, wondering about Harmon. Was he a San Jose native? How did he come to command a \$1000 fee, a sizable amount in 1914? What other artists chased creative pursuits in the Valley of Hearts Delight? San Jose had always taken a back seat to San Francisco culturally but here stood proof of an art history unique to our valley. If there was one artist, there had to be others. Here is what I discovered from the beginning about the art and artists of Santa Clara County.

In the Beginning

The first Santa Clara Valley inhabitants were the Ohlone or Costanoan Indians. They were a peaceful, plentiful people who created useful and decorative items; baskets, headdresses, beaded necklaces and body tattoos. They used the vermilion cinnabar of the region as a face and body paint. They lived unchanged for thousands of years.

The Spanish arrived in 1769 and decided to stronghold the new world with the building of twenty one strategically placed missions. Two of them were placed in Santa Clara County; Santa Clara de Asis Mission in 1777 and San Jose de Guadalupe in 1797.

The first recorded art in Santa Clara Valley appeared in 1806. The unknown artist was a member of the George von Langsdorff expedition. Whether he came as an explorer or as an artist to record the journey is lost to history. The piece depicted the Costanoan Indian dance at Mission Santa Clara. The 6 Indians were clothed as nudity was frowned on by the missionaries and the resulting sketch shows their bemused faces as they danced. This piece may have been drawn by von Langsdorff as in 1803 he sketched Indian baskets, belts, headdresses, etc. and the technique is similar.

In 1816, Louis Choris, an artist with the Russian expedition led by Otto von Kotzebue, sketched a group of Ohlones. The well fed men and women were playing a game of chance, guessing which hand held the smaller stick. Shells and clothing were given to the winners.

Throughout history the church demanded art to record religious doctrine and the missionaries in Santa Clara Valley were no exception. The first documented paintings for the church were done by Augustin Davila who painted the Santa Clara Mission Church in 1825. Davila was requested by the Mexican government to paint religious icons at the mission. He painted the ceiling with the holy trinity portrayed as 3 men with clouds, angels and stars intermingled around the religious icons. The Costanoan Indians assisted him, enticed with food and clothing. The pigments they used included the Almaden Mines cinnabar vermilion. Cinnabar is the red mineral that is the principal ore of mercury. The pigments were mixed with cactus juice to mute the color, painted on huge redwood slabs, and attached to the church walls. Sadly, the original murals were destroyed by fire in 1926 but were recreated a year later and are still impressive to view.

In 1841, the French explorer de Mofras drew Father Narcisio Duan at San Jose Mission. It sweetly depicts the

seated Father presenting an apple to an Indian child. The San Jose Mission was known for its fine collection of religious art but only a few pieces remain today.

The missionaries created religious art with the help of the natives who joined the church. They created paintings, wood sculpture and forging religious items to aid in worship.

Audubon of the West

In 1846, Andrew Jackson Grayson, a naturalist, art connoisseur, and patron crossed the plains just ahead of the Donner party. He was the son of a wealthy Louisiana planter. He loved the wilderness and explored the Louisiana outdoors as a youth, sketching the beauty he saw. His father disapproved of his early attempts to become an artist and persuaded him to enter the mercantile profession, graduating from Catholic College near St. Louis, Missouri. In 1842, he married Frances Jane Timmons, who shared his passion for artistic pursuits. The family had a son, Edward, when they traveled west.

In 1850, Grayson commissioned William Smith Jewett (1812-1873), a 49er from New York to paint Grayson, Francis and their child looking at the Sierras for the cost of \$2,000. Jewett lived in California from 1849 through 1869 and is recognized for painting many realistic portraits of the wealthy. Some records state that the Grayson painting depicts the family when they first saw Santa Clara Valley; others say it is overlooking Georgetown, California. The exact truth is lost in time, a reoccurring theme in art history. The painting is called "The Promised Land" and proved that Grayson loved his new home and that he was a patron of the arts to pay Jewett so generously. The work

captures the hillside beauty of the west and the young family surprised at the panoramic view with an artful naiveté.

In California, Grayson served as an officer in the Mexican war under Fremont, panned for gold, operated a store in San Francisco, speculated in real estate, and made a small fortune. He lived in Marin County near Fairfax before settling in San Jose to follow his desire to paint Western bird life. Studying Audubon's Birds of America inspired Grayson to become an ornithology artist. He decided that San Jose's warm climate and wide open spaces was the place to achieve his goal. He purchased 4 acres near Julian and 4th Street and established a studio called Bird's Nest Cottage that many visited. Grayson's accomplishments included being a self taught artist and writing biographies of each species that was published in Hesperian Farmer's Journal of Useful Science. His paintings of birds won him the title of Audubon of the West. In 1855, he took first prize at the California State Fair. The following year, he won first prize at the Santa Clara County Fair. He studied continually and was the first to note the decline in the California condor.

Grayson and his family left San Jose in 1857 for Tehuantepec, Mexico to continue his work. The vessel

crashed on the jagged coastline and most of their belongings and paintings were lost. Before they had left, "The Promised Land" was sent to San Francisco's Mercantile Library Association for safe keeping. They resided in Mazatlan where he continued to paint until his death in 1859 from a fever, a few days before his fiftieth birthday. After his death, Francis continued trying to get his bird drawings and writings published but to no avail. She eventually gave them to the University of California. Grayson's Audubon of the West were in their archives until 1982 when Birds of the Pacific Slope was published by Andrew Hoyem. It contains one hundred fifty-six bird portraits done by Grayson while he lived at the Bird's Nest Cottage in San Jose.

Valley Gold Rush

During the 1850's, California joined the United States, San Jose became the Capital, and the Gold Rush created wealth for many. Artists came to document Santa Clara County's beauty and to portraiture the prosperous. Most of them worked in oils.

One exception was J. Ross Browne. He was born in Ireland in 1821 and came to the United States in 1833. He became a special agent for the post office. In 1849, he moved to San Jose and started the first regulated post office. He always carried a sketchbook, pen and pencils. He wrote and illustrated "Down in the Cinnabar Mines" published by Harper's New Monthly Magazine in 1865 and still considered one of the best accounts of the New Almaden Mine. He ultimately moved to Oakland but returned to San Jose often. He died in 1875.

Mary Hallock Foote arrived in San Jose a year after Browne's death and was his feminine equal. She wrote and illustrated Western life from a woman's view or as she called it the "protected point of view". Her work is still considered as outstanding of the genre.

She was born in Melton, New York in 1847 and attended New York City's Cooper Institute. Her self-illustrated "California Mining Camp," the story of the New Almaden

Mine, was published by Scribner's Monthly in February 1878. She detailed mining life along with the family, social, and religious perspective missing from Browne's account. She also described the dangers of mining.

At this time another woman showed remarkable artistic talent. Her name was Matilda Lotz and she was a San Jose native but established herself professionally in the galleries of Paris and London for her animal portraits. San Jose was more interested in her trips abroad than her success as an artist.

In 1849, the first professionally trained artist to show interest in San Jose arrived. His name was Baylord Taylor. He was a world traveler, writer and water color artist. He visited San Francisco, Stockton, Monterey, and then moved to San Jose. Taylor is known for the landscape painting of a ranch scene along the Diablo Range foothills east of San Jose. It includes several buildings that are shaded by oak trees. A wooden picket fence is depicted with fall colored hills in the background.

Also in 1849, Mission Santa Clara de Asis was painted by H. G. Peelor. Harold Gustave Peelor lived at 29 N. Montgomery with his studio next door. He was born in New York City. His main source of income was from painting signs, bicycling from job to job. He painted realistic

local scenes like the Mission Santa Clara piece which he patterned after Andrew Putnam Hill's work. He died in 1940 at the age eighty-three.

In 1850, Lieutenant Joseph W. Revere visited Santa Clara Valley and sketched the New Almaden Mine that was lithographed by William Endicott and Company of New York and brought nationwide attention to Santa Clara County.

In 1851, William Newton Bartholomew used creative license while painting New Almaden and Mission Santa Clara and changed their respective mountain ranges.

In 1868, an unknown artist sketched a primitive drawing of Mission San Jose recording its ruin after the Hayward fault earthquake. The mission was razed and replaced the same year. Much of the religious artwork at the Mission was destroyed in the quake.

Alexander Edouart was born in England and trained in Scotland and Italy before coming to San Jose in 1852. He is best known for his painting of the 1860 Enrequita quicksilver mine on Capitancillos Creek. It colorfully depicts miners, priests, townspeople, horses, and even a dog assembled to witness the happy event.

Salathiel Ellis came to San Jose in 1871 from Vermont. He was in the military during the Civil War and was also a talented artist. Several presidents commissioned him to

sculpt the Indian Peace Treaty Medallion. He also designed the American War Veterans bronzes. There is no inventory of Ellis' work though his medals are military history. He died in 1879 at seventy-five and is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery.

Marius Dahlgren came to the United States in 1872 with his brother who was also an artist. Dahlgren is best known for painting the Santa Clara Valley from high above the basin, now known as Mount Hamilton Road. Dahlgren was in California from 1873 to 1905. He had a studio and room at San Jose Boarding House. He created many landscapes of the state while he was here. He painted the oil, "View of Goat Island" of San Francisco Bay chronicling the boats, fishermen and waterfront that is part of the Oakland Museum of Art's collected works.

Eva Kottinger was born in 1859 in San Jose. She attended San Jose College of Notre Dame where she studied art. She is best known for an oil portrait of her father and a painting her home in Pleasanton which are part of the San Jose Museum of Art's permanent collection.

In 1868, Philip Langensee, a German immigrant, moved to San Jose and became a naturalized citizen. He was a farmer by trade but by 1880 had become a full time carver, creating much of the interior ornaments of San Jose's

downtown buildings. His work that survives can be seen at the San Jose Court House. The Farmer's Union Bank also has birds and animals done in his Germanic style. He died in 1919 at the age of eighty-five.

In 1873, Edmonia Lewis, exhibited her sculpture at City Market Hall in San Jose. She was one of the most famous artists in the United States. The San Jose Library Association, excited with her work, purchased a white, marble bust of Abraham Lincoln. "Awake" and "Asleep", neoclassical sculptures of young children were also sold at the exhibit and later donated to the Library Association.

Lewis was of African American and Chippewa descent. She was born in 1845 and orphaned at 9. At the age of fifteen she attended Oberlin College. Beaten by vigilantes and left in the snow to freeze, she was dismissed from the school even though she was cleared of any wrong doing in the incident. She moved to Italy where she was welcomed.

Many of her subjects were drawn from her difficult life. Lewis' splendid body of work is a tribute to her enduring spirit. Though she never lived in Santa Clara Valley, the three sculptures purchased in 1873 are still enjoyed by visitors to Martin Luther King, Jr. Main Library

to this day. These three sculptures are the only known works by Lewis in the west.

In 1877, General Naglee commissioned John R. Keys to paint grape pickers on his vineyard overlooking the Coyote Creek north of William Street. It portrays a realistic rendition of a rural Santa Clara Valley.

In 1883 Henry Chapman Ford did an etching of San Jose Mission as it still stands today.

The mid century artists of the 1800's were drawn to the Santa Clara Valley because of its beauty and opportunity. They painted landscapes, portraits, interiors, and still life. During this time period, few artists were living and working in Santa Clara Valley exclusively. They came and went as their work permitted. These early painters produced historical documentation rather than unique artistic achievements.

He Saved the Redwoods

One of the few artists who lived and worked in Santa Clara Valley was Andrew Putnam Hill (1853-1922). He was born in Indiana in 1853 and came to San Jose in 1867. He had done 2 creditable paintings while attending local schools and before enrolling in San Francisco School of Design in 1873. Between 1873 and 1922, Hill is credited with executing fifty-two paintings, twenty-one which were before 1901. Besides being an artist, he was a photographer and environmentalist.

Hill carried on the tradition of California Pioneer landscape art. He is known for painting the three rows of willow trees leading to Mission Santa Clara from the Pueblo of San Jose, a 4 mile journey, circa 1799. A horse and buggy with passengers is in the foreground, a Victorian house stands to the right. The painting "The Alameda" was completed in 1882. He captured nineteenth century Santa Clara Valley with talent and charm.

Hill painted "Crossing the Plaines" (1914), a memorial to the arduous journey the Pioneers undertook coming west. He painted "Santa Clara Mission" as it looked in 1849. "Donner Lake Winter Camp" depicts the first successful overland party to cross the Sierra and was another of Hill's panoramic masterpieces.

Hill is best known for organizing the Sempervirens Club whose mission was to save the redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains from lumber interests. The group battled the legislature and Governor Gage with positive results. They persuaded the State Legislature to buy the original land for a redwood park. It cost \$100 an acre for twenty-five hundred acres. Big Basin Lumber Company donated thirteen hundred acres. In 1895, Hill took photographs of the fire that devastated the redwoods and brought them to the State government. In 1901, due to the Sempervirens efforts, the land and redwoods in Santa Cruz Mountains became the 1st California State Park which was named California Redwood State Park. Hill had a studio at the park where he sold photographs and paintings of the giant redwoods. A plaque is located in the park dedicated to Hill and reads "He saved the redwoods".

Besides painting and environmental work, Hill taught art. One of his collaborations was with Sydney J. Yard. In 1892, they entered into a 3 year partnership. They had studios in San Jose and Palo Alto specializing in photography. They displayed their work at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. Neither died wealthy. Hill's estate was less than \$900 at his death in 1922, having spent much of his own monies on saving the

redwoods. Yard's estate was valued at approximately \$10,000.

Hill was the most famous artist of his time in Santa Clara County. He captured the essence of Santa Clara Valley and California with skill; recording history for future generations. He preserved the past with his many paintings and photographs of the area and is directly responsible for saving the redwoods.

Eye of the Beholder

In 1875 the San Jose Art Association was formed with the plan of establishing an art school in San Jose. Within a year, they boasted eighty artists. On May 31, 1876 they had their first art exhibition. It had twenty exhibitors displaying their work at the Music Hall Building which is now 40 North First Street.

In 1876, Thompson and West Atlas featured a double page drawing of the New Almaden Mine. The mining company considered it juvenile art and refused to pay the \$500 for the work. In 1878, the matter was taken to court. To strengthen their case, Franz Goldstein was introduced as an expert witness. Goldstein, a native of Austria, was naturalized in Wisconsin in 1872. Highly trained, he taught painting in San Jose and worked for the County Recorder's Office as a Deputy Court Recorder and artist. He is responsible for the artistic originality of the Santa Clara County land grant books.

On February 8, 1879, the Pioneer reported of a fine oil painting in the window of Morton's Stationary Store downtown. The artist, Harold J. Peelor, was a member of the San Jose Art Association and the painting depicted Thomas Blake's horse "Captain Thomson". The reviewer said,

"It will compare very favorably with works of some of the best animal painters."

On April 17, 1880, the Pioneer reported Alma Woodleigh had 2 paintings displayed in the window of the Pioneer Drug Store. "They are gems of art and painted in black and white oil...a first of their kind..finer than steel engravings," the editor wrote.

In 1883, The Art History Club was formed. They studied art throughout the world and desired to create a school of art in San Jose. Ida Mae Coates was a member and also a classically trained sculptress. She is best known for her "Ideal Head" and "Greek Girl" which were shown at the World's Columbian Exhibit in 1893. Santa Clara County had a good showing at the Chicago Exhibit that year as Andrew Hill and Sydney Yard also displayed their work. Coates' classic style was not the norm of the California artists of the era. She specialized in work of women and children and was vocal critic of the art movement in San Jose.

Throughout the late 1800's and early 1900's, San Jose displayed art in storefront windows downtown, much of it created by the artists of the San Jose Art Association. For better or worse, the paid art critic was introduced by the Pioneer Newspaper. Art classes were being taught at

the University of Pacific, California State Normal School
(now San Jose University) and privately. For a small
farming community, San Jose had a large group of artists
and patrons to the arts.

Lost Chances

In 1886, General Henry Morris Naglee offered his valuable collection of foreign and domestic art to the City of San Jose. The city was apathetic and the collection went to Crocker Art Gallery in San Francisco where it was destroyed in the earthquake of 1906.

A decade after Naglee's death, Mr. and Mrs. Myles O'Connor offered "The Last Pleiad" statue to the city of San Jose. It was refused with the excuse that there wasn't a suitable place for it.

In 1898, the O'Connors again offered to donate "The Last Pleiad" along with a four hundred twenty-five piece art collection obtained on numerous trips to Europe. It was valued at \$250,000 and would be donated to San Jose if the city would provide a \$20,000 gallery to display the art. The city fathers showed interest in the new offer and a site was approved on the Normal School Campus. The \$20,000 was to be raised by the San Jose Art Association. Three years later, only \$3,600 had been raised due to many unfilled pledges and excuses. Gossip surfaced of misused funds to the art being copies. Disgusted, the O'Connors offered the collection to Trinity College in Washington D. C. who gladly accepted the offer. In addition, the

O'Connor's donated \$200,000 to the college for an art gallery.

In an effort to improve their reputation, the San Jose Art Association pledge money of \$3,600 was used to commission a statue of President William McKinley. The rest of the \$13,000 was raised by donations. The bronze statue by Rupert Schmidt of San Francisco was dedicated March 21, 1903 at St. James Park where McKinley once spoke. It remains there today.

Naked Ladies

Astley David Middleton Cooper (1856-1924) was born in Missouri to a wealthy family. He had a good education and was free of financial concerns. Cooper loved Western art and traveled west, staying with Indians and sketching them. He arrived in San Francisco in 1878 and moved to San Jose in 1883. He was either at his studio painting in east San Jose or at one of his favorite saloons.

Cooper painted everything; allegorical subjects of the Plains, life-sized female nudes, the Black Forest in Germany to the Delta of the Nile. He was comfortable painting suicides and visions of hell. His big break came when Civil War General U. S. Grant commissioned him to paint his portrait.

Cooper's paintings were shown in Europe and the eastern United States. He was famous for his scenes of American Indian life though his classical religious subjects were also popular.

The size of his work was as varied as his themes: "Morning of the Crucifixion", a sanctuary in a Denver church is eleven by thirteen feet; "The Blacksmith" owned by the San Jose Museum of Art is ten by fifteen feet. Then there is an Indian riding a Pinto pony that measures fourteen by sixteen inches.

Cooper's nudes were life size and healthy, customary of the era. They were in demand at the local saloons as many were displayed above the bar. Rumor had it that Cooper gave them to the owners to settle bar bills as so many of them were found in these establishments. His "Little Egypt" was displayed at Sacramento's Fire House Restaurant. A voluptuous nude is still displayed above the bar at Wave's Smokehouse and Saloon at 65 Post Street in San Jose, purported to be a brothel in the late 1800's.

His final studio was a large Egyptian structure on the northeast corner of 21st and San Antonio Streets. Known as the "Egyptian Temple," it was sometimes confused with the Rosicrucian Museum by tourists. His studio is gone but his Victorian cottage still stands at 250 S. 19th Street.

Cooper was a prolific, self taught artist who was affable, impulsive, generous, and well liked in the community. He hosted parties for traveling vaudeville companies. He gave paintings away as gifts. He married once to Charlotte George in 1919 at the age of sixty-three. He taught one student, his nephew, Benjamin O'Fallon Raborg (1873-1918). He was not as productive as his uncle but his style could be confused with Cooper's. His best known painting is a quirky image of nude women, one who appears to be a leering lecher from a distance. Raborg died at 45

in a San Francisco streetcar accident, a footnote in San
Jose art history.

Almost an Impressionist

Theodore Wores (1859-1939) was dissatisfied with San Francisco's art scene and moved to Saratoga in the 1880's. A gentleman and an accomplished artist, he gained notoriety in this country and abroad. His oil paintings capture the splendid richness of Santa Clara Valley in the Los Gatos and Saratoga areas. Wores enjoyed painting the grand vistas of the Valley of Heart's Delight and painted many of them. He captured the valley with the impressionist's brush technique and a keen observation of light. Some of his most splendid works are "Peach Orchard, Saratoga, California," "Santa Clara Valley," and "Road with Blossoming Trees". His paintings have light and airy brush strokes combined with the softness of colors that was hallmark in the Impressionist movement. Wores differed from the Impressionist discipline by painting every detail and not leaving anything to the imagination.

"A Corner in My Studio" complete with a nude was done in light grays, browns, and soft whites touched with muted reds. This piece was probably done when he studied in Munich, Germany. He also did many San Francisco Chinatown scenes.

Wores also painted flowers and landscapes influenced from his 2 extended trips to Japan in the 1880's. His

"Lotus Pond, Shiba, Tokyo" is probably his best known. It recently fetched \$178,500 at Christie's Auction House.

Though never a full fledged Impressionist, Wores paintings were technically sound. They explained the external beauty of the subjects painted but never moved forward in the artistic realm to change the reality of what was actually seen. His wife, Carolyn, and brother, donated many of his paintings to the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara and are shown there periodically.

Charles Henry Harmon

Harmon (1859-1936) was a fifteen year Ohioan when he came to San Jose in 1874. He was a self taught artist and did touch up work for photographers early in his career. Most of his paintings were small except for one exception. It was "Santa Clara Valley at Blossom Time". After it was shown at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition World Fair in San Francisco, it disappeared for many years. In 1938, it adorned the Board of Supervisors 2nd floor office of the old courthouse on North 1st St. It was there until 1954 and then put into storage. In 1962, it was brought to the Jury Assembly Room (through the ceiling) in the new Superior Court Building where it is today.

Harmon also did a small, primitive painting of "The Alameda" as may have appeared in the 1840's. It shows the three rows of willow trees lining the dirt road to the Mission. It is one of his earlier works and lacks the professional technique that he accomplished later in his career.

Harmon was of medium height, plain of dress and a hint of restlessness. His wife, Ida, was a school teacher. He had a studio in the Auzerais Building but kept no inventory of his work. He was best known for painting the Santa Clara Valley and early Pioneer scenes and achieved a

moderate amount of success in his lifetime. His early work was primitive and difficult to find, either lost or destroyed.

Harmon was one of the three most well known artists of his time. Along with Hill and Cooper they created a large body of work that documents Santa Clara County. Of the three, less is known about Harmon. He appears to have lived quietly with no great causes or need for much social contact. Harmon's most known work "Santa Clara Valley at Blossom Time" is also his finest artistic achievement and records for posterity the splendid beauty that was Santa Clara Valley. It was also the inspiration for this essay.

The End

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