

This is a detailed map of the San Jose area, showing major highways, cities, and geographical features. The map includes labels for cities like San Jose, San Francisco, and San Diego, as well as highways like I-5, I-805, and I-8. It also shows various parks, mountains, and bodies of water.

California Pioneers of Santa Clara County

PREFACE

In 1929, Hecker Pass Road was a treacherous dirt road forged through the foliage to connect Gilroy. Today it is a paved 2-lane highway used by many daily commuters. Along its "path of history", this historic gateway at the southwestern edge of Santa Clara County holds many stories, secrets, and promises for the future.

This is the story of Hecker Pass from prehistoric forces of nature to political forces of the 21st century. This is the story of the pioneers that made it happen: Hodges and Whitehurst; Henry Hecker and his legacy; and those whose homes along the pass are now preserved as historic sites and bed and breakfast inns. And with theme parks, championship golf and development in the horizon, the future of Hecker Pass is filled with promise and mystery.

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CHUCK MYER
761 WILLIAMSBURG WAY
GILROY, CA 95020-6343
(408) 847-3266 (H)
(408) 848-0251 (W)

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"HECKER PASS... A HISTORICAL ADVENTURE"

A History of the Southwestern Gateway to Santa Clara County

by

Chuck Myer

Santa Clara County. To the north, its fertile valleys are now covered by the gridiron of streets and urban developments. But to the south, shimmering over a mountain pass, are timber-rich forests. The mountain is majestic Mt. Madonna, standing 1897 feet above the sea. Lush with redwoods, tan oak, madrone, laurel and sycamore, the forest below stands frozen in a timeless infinity. Sword ferns and brakes carpet the ground beneath the trees; creeping vines and wildflowers blanket the sloping hillsides.

Runoff from the forest flows down through tributaries and streams, past the "Magic Springs," past historic homesteads along Bodfish Creek, and into Uvas-Carnadero Creek, flowing not to the San Francisco Bay, but south, to the Pajaro River and into Monterey Bay.

Around the year 1600, a live oak began to grow near Uvas Creek, alongside a fertile field later used as a vineyard on Hecker Pass Highway. With the passage of time, the tree grew to be 90 feet tall and 27 feet around.

The American Forestry Association designated it to be the oldest Live Oak

in the country. In 1976, a bicentennial commemoration celebrated the tree's existence during the American Revolution. A plaque was installed.

Ironically, it is the development of the Hecker Pass area that may have spelled the end for the tree. The increase of wells in the area, combined with the drought of the late 1980s, dried up Bodfish Creek, the main source of its nourishment. The tree came crashing down in a violent storm in March 1990, and was cut into firewood.

WATERWAYS

Most of the Santa Clara County portion of Hecker Pass Highway follows Bodfish Creek, named after a family that had land holdings in the area. Bodfish Creek once ran swiftly and wide, home to steelhead and other species of fish now unknown in the area.

Bodfish Creek flows past a mystical spot called Magic Springs. Kenneth Petersen, mayor of Gilroy from 1963-67, used to go to Magic Springs as a boy, to fill a jug with sulphur water.

"It fizzed when you put in lemon juice for lemonade," recalls Petersen.

Near the current location of the theme park known as Hecker Pass... A Family Adventure, Bodfish Creek meets Uvas-Carnadero Creek, the major waterway flowing from Uvas Dam to the north. Another tributary, Little Arthur Creek, joins the Uvas a mile north of the current intersection of Hecker Pass Highway and Watsonville Road. At this spot, which they called Chitactac, the Ohlone Indians gathered together as much as 3000 years ago. Petroglyphs are still visible in the area, as well as cupules and grooves.

The land was owned in the 1800s by the Adams family, which donated the

site for a one-room school built in 1850s. The school burned down in 1956.

In February 1986, a sandstone boulder bearing a petroglyph was preserved and airlifted by helicopter to nearby Mt. Madonna Park. Having been dislodged during violent storms, it was in danger of being eroded by water. The remainder of the prehistoric landmark will be preserved by Santa Clara County as Chitactac-Adams Park.

EARLY ROADS

The first road from Gilroy towards Mt. Madonna was called Bodfish Mill Road (or Bodfish Canyon Road). It did not go all the way to Watsonville; there was another access road to the summit now known as "Old Mt. Madonna Road." Nor did it make it quite all the way to El Camino Real (now Monterey Road) in the township of Gilroy; known in town as "Redwood Road" (now First Street), it ended at Hanna Street. Bodfish Road was about five miles long, and was used as an access road for loggers, since it led to the region's most successful redwood lumbering mill. The trees that were logged from Mt. Madonna made way for the orchards and vineyards of Henry Miller's Mt. Madonna ranch.

The Whitehurst and Hodges lumber mill in Bodfish Canyon stood on the southern slopes of Mt. Madonna, in the area once known as the Salsipuedes Rancho. A wagon road went for several miles from the Bodfish Mill Road to the mill itself. Using teams of horses and oxen, the company supplied most of the lumber for nearby settlements.

Pleasant C. Hodges came to Gilroy in 1868, and was joined by Lyttleton A. Whitehurst in 1870, when they purchased the mill and lumber business from

William Hanna. Hodges stayed in business with Whitehurst for 40 years. While Whitehurst engaged in politics, Hodges kept the business side going. Hodges died in 1905.

Whitehurst was a strong community leader. He served as president of the bank of Gilroy for 28 years, was mayor of Gilroy from 1892-94, served as a school trustee for 21 years and later served several terms as a state assemblyman and senator. He died two years after Hodges in 1907. In many ways (including as bank president), Lyttleton Whitehurst was the forerunner and predecessor of another man who would lend his name to the mountain pass: Henry Hecker.

HENRY HECKER

Henry Hecker, of German stock, was a native of Ohio. He was born January 14, 1861 in Marion, Ohio, north of Columbus. His parents, John and Mary Zuchman Hecker, were German immigrants.

He came to Gilroy in 1883, and soon went into business as a grocer with George Wentz, another notable in Gilroy history (Wentz served as Gilroy's mayor from 1914-18). Hecker soon bought out Wentz, and established Hecker & Co., one of the area's most stable businesses. He continued the business until 1932.

Hecker served as treasurer of the the City of Gilroy 1892-1916, and as president of the Bank of Gilroy from 1908 to 1916. He left that post to join the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. His remarkable service to the board lasted three decades, from 1916-1945, and he served as president of the Board of Supervisors for several terms.

Hecker was instrumental in completion of roads and bridges, and he negotiated the 1927 purchase of the Mt. Madonna property from the Henry Miller estate for a county park.

Hecker was married four times. His first marriage, just after his 27th birthday, was to Mary Wood, on January 18, 1888. They had one daughter, Mildred (later Mildred Kilpatrick), born October 3, 1888. Mary died in 1889. Hecker later married Martha Wood (Mary's older sister) on October 26, 1892. They had no children, and Martha died in 1897.

The next year, he wed Ethel Mary Holloway Miller, on October 18, 1898. She brought with her her two sons: Gerald Miller and Adrian Elmer Miller (known as Ted). Hecker later adopted them as his own sons. Their daughter Ethel Bernice (later Mrs. Leo Arena) was born August 20, 1902.

His fourth and final marriage took place much later in life, to Pearl Fredericks. In 1945, he retired from public life. He died on New Year's Eve 1947 at age 86.

HECKER'S HERITAGE

As part of the roads and bridges committee, Hecker made a deal with Santa Cruz County to build a new road through Mt. Madonna to connect the two areas. In those days, each supervisor received his share of road funds. Hecker put his aside each year for this pet project. For many years, Hecker wanted to connect Gilroy and Watsonville, and provide a link for travelers wanted to go to the coast from the San Joaquin Valley. In 1928, his chance finally came.

According to San Jose Mercury News reports, the actual costs of building the road are not documented, but details of the completion of the project

were. The road on both sides of the pass was made of dirt. There was a flurry of activity to complete the road on the Santa Cruz side prior to the ceremony. -31

On May 27, 1928, there was a lavish picnic held on the Santa Cruz side of the pass. About 6,000 people attended, and they stayed for the highway dedication ceremony. Justin Byers, who was the publicity chairman, sang "Trees" and "My Little Grey Home in the West." The 11th Calvary band from the Monterey Presidio played. 56

Then a group of 15 men took Hecker to another spot near the current site of Mt. Madonna Inn at the summit (1334 ft.). They showed him a plaque that they had installed in secret. It said: "HECKER PASS: This testimonial 21) dedicated to Henry Hecker whose foresight made possible the completion of the Yosemite to the Sea Highway. May 27, 1928." 63

Hecker was greatly surprised, and was soon overcome with emotion. "It was like he was heart-touched," recalled Louis Cupich, one of the committee members. "He cried like a baby. And he made us promise that as long as we lived we would hold a picnic here. 'Keep this going,' he asked us, 'until the last man dies.'" 59

The original cost of the plaque was \$260. Those contributing to the monument were: Cupich, Nick Bordenave, Joe Bordenave, A. W. Cox, Charles Fredrickson, Ray Knorpp, Leland Du Rose, Vic Bedolla, Fred (Hap) Rea, John (Torch) Rea, Ed Scagliotti, Tracy Learnard, W. S. Moore, William Stroud and Bill Ryan. These active citizens knew a thing or two about new roads, as well: Learnard, Cox, Ryan, and Rea are now street names in Gilroy. 66

There was some discussion about the name the new highway would have. 72

Some wanted to keep Bodfish Canyon Road. Others wanted the word "boulevard". Nick Bordenave, a Gilroy cafe owner, said, "How are you going to make a boulevard out of the mountains? This is a pass. On the east is Pacheco Pass. On the west it should be Hecker Pass."

And so it was.

True to Hecker's request, the plaque founders kept the annual picnic going for two generations. The "last man" was Louis Cupich, who at age 81 held the last picnic in 1967. Also invited that day were the surviving descendants of Henry Hecker. Both of his daughters came: Mrs. Leo Arena of San Jose and Mildred Kilpatrick of Oakland. Also, Mrs. Gerald Hecker of San Jose was in attendance. In 1928, she was Lillian Scagliotti, engaged to be married to Hecker's son, Gerald.

THE OUSLEYS AND THE HOEYS

The Ousley property on the north side of Hecker Pass Highway on the outskirts of Gilroy carries with it a rich and diverse history, particularly in the area of women's rights.

Samuel and Electa Ousley crossed the plains in a covered wagon in 1852-53, and settled on the property in 1854. The site was in the western foothills of the Solis Rancho, and title to the land was unclear when it was claimed by the Ousleys. Samuel died in a farming accident in 1855, leaving Electa pregnant with nine other children and an unpaid 630-acre farm.

Electa Ousley spent the next three decades attempting to get the land recorded in her name, which was an unprecedented request in those days. In 1862, 1200 acres were surveyed and recorded under her name, but the action was

contested. It wasn't until 1884 that her right to hold land was fully recognized. Electa Ousley passed on a heritage of support for women's liberation and civil rights on to her six daughters, particularly her daughters Clara and Mary. All three have been inducted into the Gilroy Hall of Fame. (See Appendix for family tree.)

The Ousleys and their descendants were important charitable supporters of the City of Gilroy. Much of the Ousley estate was donated after the death of Mary Ousley in 1936, first as a reservoir of the Gilroy Water Company. Land was also dedicated for a cemetery and contagious disease house, and later for a recreational park. Ousley Park is now the site of the current Gilroy Golf Course.

Today, the family name is Hoey, and the historic 1872 Greek Revival-style family home at 2485 Hecker Pass Highway has been preserved by the family and designated as a historic site by the City of Gilroy.

KILPATRICK HOUSE

At 3290 Hecker Pass Highway, on a 4 acre site, is the stately 74-year-old Kilpatrick House in the unincorporated area just west of Gilroy. It is full of Hecker Pass history. The site was designated as historic in 1991 by Historic Heritage Commission of Santa Clara County. The structure and its adjacent tank house are excellent examples of their architectural style (Craftsman Bungalow from the World War I period).

The home, originally on Bodfish Mill Road (now Hecker Pass Highway) has played an important part in Gilroy's history in that it has been associated with a number of persons who have had a tremendous impact on the history of

Santa Clara County, four of whom have been inducted into Gilroy's exclusive "Hall of Fame."

The property on which the Kilpatrick House is located was originally part of Rancho Solis, near the boundary of the Las Animas Rancho and adjacent to land owned by the noted "Cattle King," Henry Miller. In 1864, noted attorney Captain William Z. Angney purchased the surrounding 370 acres, and made his home there. He died in 1878. Twenty years later, in 1898, his widow, noted poet Lydia Whitaur Angney, sold the site on 1000 acres to Tracy Learnard, and his wife, Georgene Wilder Learnard. Learnard became Gilroy's postmaster. On November 23, 1917, the Learnards sold the land to the Kilpatrick family.

The stately home was built in 1917 by Frank Emmett Kilpatrick, Sr., a lawyer from Hanford. Mr. Kilpatrick married the eldest daughter of Henry Hecker and his first wife Mary Wood. Mary died while the daughter, Mildred, was an infant. Mildred bore Kilpatrick a son in 1911, whom they named Frank Emmett Kilpatrick, Jr. As a boy on the property, Frank, Jr. recalls fishing for salmon in nearby Bodfish Creek on a year-round basis. (Frank Emmett Kilpatrick, Jr. is now living in Piedmont, California.)

The Kilpatrick property contained a prune orchard and vineyard. The full property stretched over 700 acres. Adjoining properties lost peach crops because of the cold. A neighbor, Sandoe Hanna, recalls how his grandparents used smudge pots to heat the peach trees, which got soot on draperies at the Kilpatrick house, much to the chagrin of Mildred Kilpatrick.

The Kilpatricks sold the property in 1925 to Charles E. and Malvina Blanchard. The Blanchards kept the property as a showplace, adding a large swimming pool and hosting large neighborhood parties.

Doris May and Jack DeBell bought the property from the Blanchards in 1950, and in the seven years they owned the property, it was split into smaller parcels, including the area now developed as Rancho Vista Way. The house remained on a 35-acre piece purchased in 1957 by Firman Voorhies, a noted Gilroy businessman. In 1987, the current owners, Markus and Helen Menig, purchased the home and restored it to its original design. The Menigs, originally from the canton of Graubunden in Switzerland, plan to establish a bed-and-breakfast inn, to be known as the Swiss Hill Inn. Today the property retains its agricultural history by being designated in the Williamson Act.

By recreating a Swiss style bed-and-breakfast inn, the Menigs will complete a historic circle. With evenings filled with authentic food and songs sung in their native German, the present owners will recreate an atmosphere that would remind both Henry Hecker and the Cattle Baron himself, Henry Miller, of their own German upbringing.

DUNMOVIN'

Another historic bed-and-breakfast facility graces the summit of Hecker Pass. The 4,000 square-foot Tudor-style house built in the 1930s, was the first house on the pass, built by the prominent Watsonville family, the Petersons, who owned a slaughterhouse. They gave it its distinctive name. The 22-acre site boasts spectacular views, as well as a tennis court and private redwood grove. Dunmovin' was purchased in 1976 by Ruth Wakefield, and converted to a bed-and-breakfast a few years later with her husband Don. The grounds contain a number of exotic flora and fauna.

Near Dunmovin' was the home of another beloved Hecker Pass "character,"

Janet Whedon Cover. Known as "Mountain Mama," Mrs. Cover moved to Mount Madonna in 1967, and was renowned for her prize-winning preserves and handcrafted hats. In her later years, she became an accomplished author, publishing a book of essays titled, "Talking to Myself." A native of Medina, New York, Mrs. Cover was a founder of United Cerebral Palsy, the disease which claimed her daughter in 1954. Thirty years later, she lost her husband and her eyesight (to macular degeneration), but pressed on as a writer and spokesperson on issues affecting the elderly. She died on October 22, 1992.

HECKER PASS... A FAMILY ADVENTURE

The Hecker Pass... A Family Adventure project, the dreamchild of Nob Hill Foods president Michael Bonfante, has had a long history in itself, involving many changes in concept and design. The site is located just on the outskirts of Gilroy city limits. In the early 1980s, Bonfante was successful in obtaining a permit from Santa Clara County to develop a unique theme park.

The theme park area will eventually include amusements, water rides, exhibitions, and theme-related attractions. Historically, the land has been used by employees of Nob Hill Foods, and for picnics by other large employers. A public outdoor concert series and other special events are also occurring on the site.

The theme park, located at 3050 Hecker Pass Highway, will contain over 80 acres of landscaped recreation area and support services that will combine horticultural themes and California history.

With a \$30,000,000 budget, the project will attract the family unit, pre-teenage children and senior citizens. The park will feature railroad trains,

Lake Discovery with its 3 major waterfalls, formal gardens, a 250-seat view restaurant, three amphitheaters with live entertainment, a craft production area and a sales area.

The park will be divided into several themed areas. One area will include an enchanted forest to showcase Bonfante's famous trees, which twist into unusual and unbelievable shapes. Some of the trees are from the now-defunct Lost World Tree Circus in Scotts Valley. The new grove of unusual and exotic "mystery trees" will include some that have been featured in Ripley's Believe It or Not.

Other possible attractions include a habitat for native animals, and a recreation of a Main Street of an early California town. Five 24-inch narrow gauge railroads, some already in place, including an authentic C.P. Huntington, will lend to the atmosphere. Also included will be a state of the art children's rides and play area, miniature golf, a corporate BBQ and banquet area, "Gabilan Meadows" -- an educational exhibition hall, antique cars and bumper cars, unique food service restaurants, and two historic carousels, including a recreation of the historic Ilians Supreme Carousel.

Construction began during the summer of 1988 and will be complete by the turn of the century. Enough of the park has already been constructed that employee groups have been able to using the grounds for picnics and special events since the mid-1980s.

I DIDN'T KNOW THIS WAS HERE

Bill Ayer, General Manager of Hecker Pass...A Family Adventure, and former Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Gilroy, says he loves

to take visitors for a drive along Hecker Pass Highway. He reports that the most common reaction is, "I didn't know this was here!"

Recreational uses along the drive include the 3056-acre Mt. Madonna Park, the jewel of the Santa Clara County park system. Besides its majestic red-woods, the park includes the ruins of Henry Miller's estate, and a pen for the rare White Fallow Deer. At the east end of the park, along Hecker Pass, is Sprig Lake, designed to introduce the joys of fishing to younger generations.

Unfortunately, these recreational opportunities have brought about some senseless tragedies in recent years. Poaching and harassing of the White Fallow Deer has confounded Mt. Madonna Park employees. And on Sunday, October 5, 1986, four bicyclists were killed along Hecker Pass Road when Catherine Miller, driving a van owned by a Hecker Pass Winery, bent down to change a cassette, swerved and struck them. The ensuing court case shed light on the dangers of cars and bicycles sharing historic scenic roads.

Also along the route is the "world's greatest 11-hole golf course," operated by the City of Gilroy on land donated by the Ousley family. The Gilroy Elks Lodge (2765 Hecker Pass Highway) occupies the top of the small hill above the course. When golfers take "the back nine," they traverse the opposite of "Elks Hill," playing two different fairways than before. There's an element of risk: two of the holes converge onto the same green! Plans are in the works to expand the course to 18-holes by the year 2000.

Other attractive yet sensitive land uses along the corridor include historic wineries (Solis, Conrotto, Thomas Kruse, Fortino, Hecker Pass, Sarah's Vineyard, Live Oaks), a cactus farm (D'Arrigo) and a Christmas Tree farm (Hoey), and the spectacular flower fields at Goldsmith Seeds (2280 Hecker

Pass Highway).. Even the quaint filling station and watering hole, "Scot-ty's," at Hecker Pass Highway and Watsonville Road, has become the subject of local lore.

Together, all of these features make for a historic, exciting, and inspiring route between Watsonville and Gilroy. Its astounding views and opportunities were featured in a 1988 Better Homes and Gardens article, adding to its nationwide interest.

THE FUTURE

Are the treasures of Hecker Pass fated to be relegated to history, or will they be preserved for the future? The Hecker Pass Corridor Area is currently the focus of a land use planning study being conducted by the City of Gilroy and Crawford, Multari and Starr of San Luis Obispo. The study was precipitated by a 1991 development request for a shopping center at the gateway to the Hecker Pass Corridor, at the southwest corner of Hecker Pass Highway and Santa Teresa Boulevard. Adding to the concern is the announcement that CalTrans plans to widen the highway, possibly endangering the row of cedar trees that line the scenic corridor.

The fact that such a study is underway shows that the citizens of Santa Clara County are sensitive to the rich historic treasures along Hecker Pass Highway, which must be dealt with judiciously to preserve them for future generations.

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Arieas, Rusty, State Assemblyman, District 25
Ayer, Bill, Hecker Pass.... A Family Adventure
Bonfante, Michael, Hecker Pass.... A Family Adventure
Burr, Jim, Conrotto Winery
Chaffee, Ron, California Highway Patrol
Coats, Geary, Coats Consulting
Crawford, Paul, Crawford, Multari and Starr, San Luis Obispo
Dorn, Michael, City of Gilroy Planning Director
Fachin, Mark, City of Gilroy civil engineer, and Hecker Pass resident
Fakharzadeh, Saaïd, CalTrans project manager
Gage, Don, Mayor of Gilroy
Goldsmith, Glenn, Goldsmith Seeds
Hanna, Sandoe, Gilroy Historical Society
Hoey, Jim, Hoey Construction
Kazeminejad, Eraj, CalTrans representative
Kruse, Tom, Kruse Winery
Menig, Markus and Helen, Swiss Hill Inn
Prien, Mary, Gilroy Historian
Snar, Pat, Gilroy Museum director
Vandenberg, Gretchen, Gilroy Unified School District, and Hecker Pass resident
Wilson, Susanne, former supervisor, Santa Clara County
Wyman, Beth, Santa Clara County staff and Morgan Hill historian

OUSLEY FAMILY

Orin Rockwell d. 1839 Ohio

m. Sarah Rockwell d. 1858 Gilroy

- c. Porter Rockwell
- c. Electa Rockwell b. 5-23-1816 Connecticut
d. 11-12-1900 Gilroy

m. 1-11-1837 Samuel Marshal Ousley b. 2-18-1813
d. 10-1-1855 Gilroy

- c. Sarah Jane Ousley b. 11-26-1837 Ohio
d. 11-7-1868 Gilroy

m. 4-9-1856 Joseph Thomas

- c. 3 (b. 1857-1861)

- c. William H. Ousley b. 3-16-1840 Kentucky
d. 11-19-1841 Kentucky

- c. Caroline Electa Ousley b. 3-13-1842 Kentucky
d. 3-4-1925 Gilroy

m. 10-6-1863 Isaac Horace Thomas b. 2-1838 Kentucky
d. 3-2-1923 Visalia

- c. John Thomas d. before 1923
- c. Martin Thomas d. before 1923
- c. Anne Thomas
m. Philip Baier

- c. Emma Electa Ousley b. 3-1-1844 Missouri
d. 12-8-1879 Gilroy

m. 8-26-1863 Peter Francis Hoey b. 10-30-1835 Chicago Ill.
d. 12-19-1888

- c. Emma Psyche Hoey b. 9-8-1864 Gilroy

m. 12-9-1885 George Easton

- c. Elmo Easton b. 8-11-1891 Gilroy
d. 9-22-1891
- c. Electa Emma Easton b. 2-11-1894 Gilroy
- c. James Harold Easton b. 9-16-1896 Gilroy
d. 11-6-1896

- c. Mary Frances Hoey b. 8-30-1866 Gilroy

m. 12-9-1885 Robert Elmo Easton

- c. Daughter b. 4-5-1890

- c. John Cain Hoey b. 12-29-1868 Gilroy
d. 4-25-1915

m.

- c.
- c.

- c. Thomas L. Hoey b. 12-30-1870 Gilroy

- c. Marshal V. Hoey b. 6-15-1873 Gilroy

- c. Katherine Hoey b. 6-16-1875 Gilroy

- c. James Francis Hoey b. 5-31-1877 Gilroy

- c. William A. Hoey (twin) b. 11-19-1879 Gilroy
d. 9-25-1959

- c. Edward Bryant Hoey (twin) b. 11-19-1879 Gilroy
d. 8-28-1951 Gilroy

m. Josephine Sophie _____ b. 1884 Salinas
d. 6-30-1978

- c. Charles Hoey (twin) d. 1940
- c. Edward James Hoey (twin)

m. Estelle _____

- c. Marjorie Hoey
m. Allen Siverson
- c. Barbara Hoey Armenta
- c. James Hoey
- c. Sharon Hoey Horwath
— c. Lea Ann Horwath
— c. Charles Horwath

- c. Marjorie Hoey

- c. Sharon Hoey

- c. John L. Ousley b. 6-1-1846 Missouri
d. 10-4-1905 Gilroy

- c. Bryant Rockwell Ousley (twin) b. 10-2-1848 Missouri
d. 12-14-1868 Gilroy

- c. Porter W. Ousley (twin) b. 10-2-1848 Missouri
d. 12-13-1928 Gilroy

- c. Martha Anne Ousley b. 11-16-1850 Missouri
d. 9-22-1924 Gilroy

- c. Mary Electa Ousley b. 5-15-1853 Placerville, California
d. 7-4-1936 Gilroy

- c. Clara Marshal Ousley b. 12-11-1855 Gilroy
d. 6-3-1926 Gilroy