

Raising Children, Sheep, Crops, Petersens Began In Early Dixon

With the passing away of Henry Petersen July 1, 1908, Solano County lost another prominent citizen, rancher and horticulturist, who had endeared himself to the hearts of many and won a place in the esteem of the people generally by his business ability, as well as because of his industry and perseverance in the face of obstacles. He was born in Schleswig Holstein, Germany, Sept. 15, 1835. He came to California without means or friends to assist him in getting a start in the land of his adoption, and after years of ranching activity, during which time he had accumulated a competency, he was able to retire from active work and remain so until his decease.

As a boy Mr. Petersen received no special advantages, in fact did not have the ordinary opportunities of receiving an education, being forced by circumstances to assume the responsibility of self-support at an early age. When he was 16 years of age he shipped from Hamburg, Germany, as a sailor and for a number of years followed a seafaring life. On one of his voyages, after a long trip around Cape Horn, in the late 50's, he landed in San Francisco. Determined to seek his fortune in the mines, he started out from that city with high hopes for success, but after a short experience at the mines he found his castles in the air gradually disappearing, and finding but little gold, he decided to seek work on a ranch.

With this object in view he came to Solano County in 1859; having gathered together a small amount of cash, he purchased 160 acres of land, which was later occupied by J. S. Mayes. Subsequently he traded with Mr. Ammonds for a quarter section south of Dixon, which place he owned at the time of his

death and on which property he erected his residence. On acquiring this property he began tilling the soil the first crops had to be hauled to Sacramento, which was an expensive process, leaving but little return for his labor.

Later, when wheat and barley commanded better prices, he received a more gratifying income from his crops. Encouraged by his success, he made further investments and thus in time acquired a considerable acreage, purchasing from Mr. Cooper 160 acres, and a like amount from Mr. Tuck and Mr. Walsh. In addition to this, Mr. Petersen also bought and sold other tracts, large and small, handling in this way a large amount of farm property. He also gave his attention to stock raising, but preferred to make a specialty of raising wheat and barley, finding these commodities more profitable for the locality of his ranch.

After accumulating his various properties, Mr. Petersen felt no longer the necessity of doing manual work and consequently gave up the immediate care of his ranches to his sons and located in Dixon at the corner of Mayes and Third Streets, where he and his wife enjoyed their declining years amid the comforts rendered possible by their arduous labors in the early days of the county's history.

Mrs. Petersen was formerly Maria F. Beuck, born in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in 1844. Five children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Petersen, of whom one son, Christopher, died at the age of 21. All the children were born on the old home place south of Dixon. J. Henry was the eldest child and was born in Feb., 1868. In 1900 he purchased the then "Cooper" ranch, 3½ miles south of Dixon and in 1903 married Laura Ann Apperson who was also a native of Dixon.

They had four children: Claire, Harry, Dorothy, and Frances.

J. Henry Petersen was interested in all community activities, but he had ill health the last 10 years of his life. He was very active in the California Wool Growers, was on the board of directors and former president. He was president of the board of directors of the Dixon Branch of the Bank of America, past president of the Solano County Farm Bureau. He was a member of various Masonic orders and a life member in the Shrine. He helped obtain the Carnegie Library in Dixon and was one of the sponsors of the Chautauqua many years ago. He was also clerk of the Pitts School District until it was unified. Mr. Petersen passed away Dec. 20, 1949, at 75 years of age.

In Sacramento, William D. Petersen was married to Emma Apperson, also a native of Dixon, and they had two children, Elizabeth and Marjorie. Mr. Petersen, spent all but a few of his last years on the old home ranch of 640 acres, where, after completing his schooling in Dixon, he successfully engaged in farming and stock raising. He was a member of Dixon School Board of Trustees, Masonic Lodge, Solano Mosquito Abatement District, Dixon Game Club, Dixon May Fair Board, and an avid sportsman all his life. He was an excellent shot, and not only gained acknowledgment with his ability to duck and hunt, but won several gold medals in blue rock target matches. After Mrs. Petersen died in 1953 Mr. Petersen lived with his daughters at different times, finally moving to a new home of his own in Pebble Beach. There he died in 1965, just a short time before his 90th birthday.

There were two Petersen sisters, Matilda, who married Dr. L. P. Hall, and Amelia, who married Roland Moss.