

5.

Daly's Hill

AS THE BUSINESS enterprises near San Francisco developed, a dairy that was to become a cornerstone of the City of Daly City was established in the northern extremity of the county between the Old Lake Merced Rancho and Mission Road. Its first owner was one M. Holenworth who established a homestead near La Portezuela in 1853 and remained there until some time after 1868 when his land passed to John Donald Daly from the Millbrae area.

Of this second owner a reporter for the **Daly City Record** wrote, "John D. Daly, for whom the City of Daly City has been named, is one of the few men who helped to bring about the present development of this section of the county, and to find a more interesting character than John D. Daly, or one more closely associated with the upbuilding and history of the northern end of the peninsula would indeed be a difficult matter."¹

Surely this is true. When he was but thirteen years old John Donald Daly and his mother sailed down the Atlantic coast from Boston to the Isthmus of Panama. There they joined a mule train that picked its way through the jungles in an effort to reach the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

While they were with the mule train, John Daly's mother grew thin—probably from yellow fever—and died, leaving her son to find his way to California where he had no relatives or friends to receive him.

For anyone the trip from Panama to California was arduous, but for a lonesome thirteen year old boy it was almost impossible. Upon reaching Panama City he found himself to be one of hundreds of argonauts who were contending for a place on the ships that docked on their run from the Straits of Magellan to San Francisco.

Often such vessels were unseaworthy and many had crews of drunken sailors or untried men who had been pressed into service. History tells of ships floundering on the strands of Mexico; of others sinking into the Pacific. Some ships caught fire when a candle or rude jolt ignited the gunpowder and dynamite that the ships carried for merchandising in California.

While no one seems to know how thirteen year old John Daly obtained passage on such a ship, it is believed that he agreed to work for the captain and did so during his long days at sea. He was fortunate enough to find a friend, a lad named Newhall, to share the otherwise lonely hours.

When his long sea journey was over John Daly supported himself by doing odd jobs for the dairymen of San Mateo County. At fifteen he took a job carrying

the mail from Millbrae to Belmont as part of a San Mateo County version of the Pony Express. Later he worked on a dairy ranch between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Mile Houses in San Mateo. Still later he transferred to the W.J. Fifield Dairy Ranch near Pilarcitos Lake. There he remained until he accumulated enough money to start his own dairy.

One day as he was driving a mowing machine on Mr. Fifield's ranch he saw sixteen year old Lillie Carrick who had come to the ranch to visit its owners. He courted her and they were soon married. To complete his family group John D. Daly brought his father and his step-mother from Boston and established a home for them in Belmont. The records of the Daly family show that Lillie Carrick Daly died, and eight years later her husband married Florence Smart.

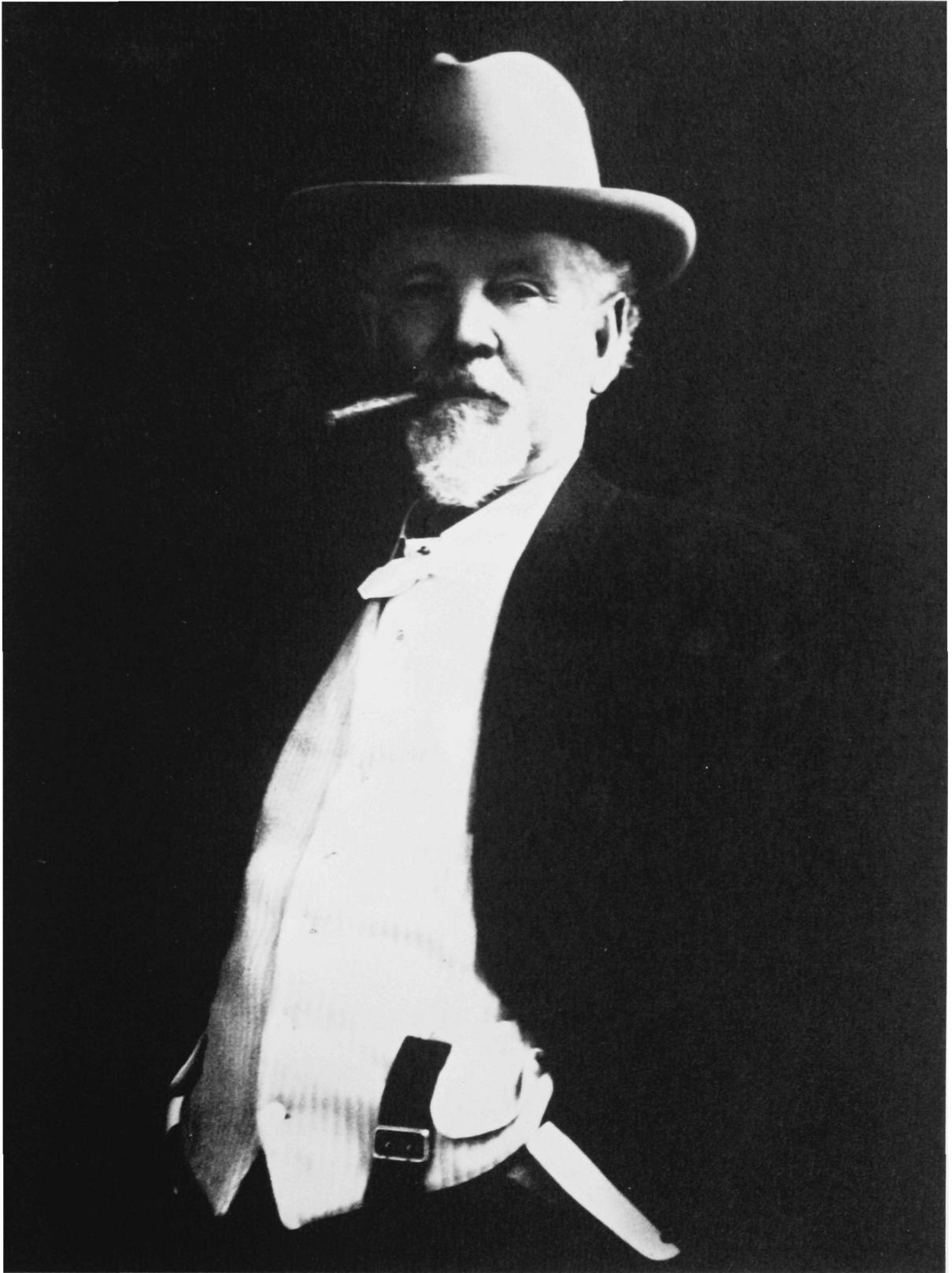
After he acquired the Holenworth Ranch, John D. Daly renamed it the San Mateo Dairy and specialized in milk and egg production, distributing his products from 1010 Valencia Street in San Francisco. Within a few years his ranch house and his barns were among the largest buildings in the northern part of San Mateo County. His payroll included twelve men, some of whom lived on the 250 acre ranch.

One of his employees said that he was both a shrewd businessman and a generous neighbor. One of his employees said of him, "Mr. Daly had very little schooling but possessed a great intellect. He could estimate the size and condition of land—good or bad—while engineers were still figuring. He had a general knowledge of most every subject, especially business and science."²

His daughter remembered that he never refused to lend "a helping hand." She reported that he built a small cabin in the middle of his pasture land where he kept a stove, some chairs and a bed. Later he added a garden and detailed an employee to keep it weeded; all this so homeless people could go in and cook a meal and have a place to stay. No one ever robbed him or abused his property.³

Sometimes John D. Daly's business acumen and his generosity met, as in the story of his association with one John Deltorchio. Deltorchio was a printer who came home from World War I with a desire to establish his own business. Sensing an opportunity to help a young man as well as venture into a new business, John Daly built a print shop on Mission Street and financed John Deltorchio in a business that flourished for over thirty years, benefiting both Daly, the financier, and Deltorchio, the printer.⁴

In 1907, shortly after the 1906 earthquake and fire, John Daly broke up his dairy at the top of the hill and sold all of his land except three or four acres between San Jose Avenue and Mission Street. He moved his barn from the top of the hill to this property and built a small house and surrounded it with flower gardens. Meanwhile he spent most of his time building the city which sprang from his land and that of his neighbors.



JOHN D. DALY



JOHN D. DALY'S SAN MATEO DAIRY



DALY'S QUARRY & GARDENS