

After the bell had rung, the custom in earlier days was for students to line up in the school yard and walk to their classroom with their teacher. "I can see her yet, when we got in line, standing with her long pointer. I didn't ever get hit with it, but I always sort of half expected to," Leona Johnson McGlinchey remembered of Miss Emma C. Smith. "She would be sure the line was perfectly symmetrical." Young voices piping the words "Good morning, Miss Smith" started the class day of kindergarten children from 1877 to 1919 in Livermore. Miss Smith, a tiny energetic lady, was the teacher of what was then called the "receiving grade." After her death in 1939, Maitland Henry wrote an editorial that praised her efforts: "For all those youngsters Miss Smith held that unique distinction, she was their first teacher. She was the first person they knew out of their own homes as a guide and leader. The impression she made on them is still vivid for, as with all successful teachers, she had a personality and lovable traits."

Miss Smith's parents, Henry C. Smith and Mary Harlan, came across the plains to California with different parties in 1846. They married in 1847 and lived in a cabin in what is now Oakland; Henry was cutting redwood lumber to the east of the area. After a brief spell in Coloma after the discovery of gold, the Smiths moved to Mission San Jose, where Emma Caroline Smith was born on 8 February

1850. Henry and his brother, Napoleon, became partners in a mercantile business. According to Emma's mother, the business was very successful; "many days the receipts would be from \$1,000 to \$1,500." Henry C. Smith was appointed *alcalde* (mayor) of Mission San Jose by the military governor of California. Smith could speak Spanish fluently. Many Hispanic citizens came to him for help in this confusing time of a new American state created from a Mexican land. Smith purchased 800 acres and laid out the town of Alvarado.

Smith was elected to the California legislature in 1852 from Santa Clara County. He is sometimes referred to as the "father of Alameda County" because he drafted the bill to create Alameda County from portions of Santa Clara County and Contra Costa County. He also had Alvarado named the new Alameda County seat. Later, despite Henry's efforts to promote Alvarado, the county seat was changed to San Leandro and then to Oakland.

In 1853 the family moved to Alvarado. Henry continued in the mercantile business there and later began farming. In 1867 the Smith family bought 160 acres and built a home on the old Altamont Road near Livermore. They lived here, with their sons, Frank and Charles, farming and stock-raising for about eight years. Henry was elected the Murray Township Justice of the Peace in October 1871 and continued in that role until he died at Livermore in 1875. He was buried in Oak Knoll Cemetery. His widow, Mary, moved into Livermore with Emma and bought property on L Street that is now under the footprint of the modern First Presbyterian Church built in 1965.

Emma attended the Livermore College, a private high school in Livermore. After graduation, she studied at the San Jose Normal School (state teachers' college). Her first teaching assignment was May School in 1870. She taught for one year at Tassajara School and moved to Deer Valley

School in Contra Costa County and then to schools in Stanislaus County; she came back to work at Livermore in 1877. The Livermore Public School was a two-story wooden building at the site of Fifth Street School (now the Del Valle Continuation School). Emma joined the First Presbyterian Church in 1881 and was an active member. For thirty-five years she was secretary and treasurer of the Sunday School. She also served as President of the Women's Guild; her niece wrote that she "was ever ready to direct an entertainment at the church bazaar when funds were low." Emma never married and lived with her mother, known as "Aunt Mary" to the community, in their small cottage at 462 South L Street.

When Emma was 57 years old, her friends gave her a wedding shower that was unusual, since she was still single, in spite of the many offers of marriage she had, according to the *Herald*, "declined in her gentle, kindly manner that has left her suitors still

## Do You Remember?



By Anne Homan

### "Good Morning, Miss Smith"

devoted if hopeless admirers." About 60 of her friends descended on the L Street cottage with gifts for the "sprightly little lady who would not be a bride." In June 1919 at age 70, Miss Smith retired from teaching. Her fellow teachers gave a surprise luncheon in her honor and presented her with a gold and amethyst brooch. She moved with her mother to Oakland, where they lived quietly until Aunt Mary's death in November 1922.

In the summer of 1924 Emma traveled with friends on a European tour. Five years later she traveled to Alaska. One of her greatest thrills was crossing San Francisco Bay on the Bay Bridge on 19 February 1937, three months after it opened. She noted in her diary, "The bridge was like a dream, beautiful beyond words. I was so thrilled it brought tears to my eyes, to think I had lived to see such a wonderful feat of engineering." Even while living in Oakland, she kept in close touch with Livermore. Every summer she organized a picnic at Mosswood Park in Oakland that was open to all residents, past and present, of Livermore. In 1937 over 125 people attended. Her niece described her: "She was a keen observer and a wonderful storyteller, with a delightful sense of humor." She died at Alta Bates Hospital on 27 March 1939. The Livermore School District named an elementary school in her honor.

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