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The Bostons A Pioneer Family of Santa Cruz County

By Dana Bagshaw



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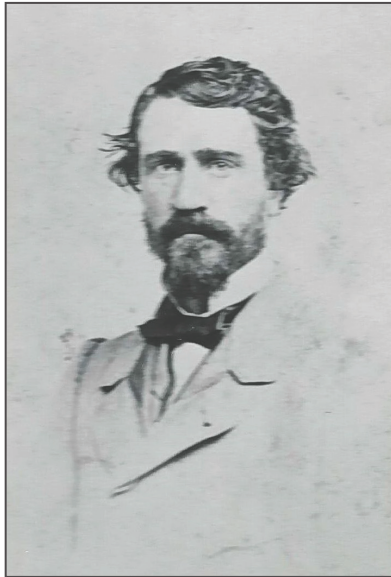
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Editor's note: This 2023 update by the author, of a 2022 Online History Journal article, includes new material in an Addendum. The 2022 article was an update of an article that originally appeared in Santa Cruz County History Journal, Issue Number 8 (Do You Know My Name?), 2016.



Portrait of Joseph Boston circa 1855
(Courtesy of Jos. Boston Store,
Monterey Historical Museum,
Monterey, California)



Portrait of Eliza Boston, nee Bull, circa 1855
(Courtesy of Dave & Nancy Hayden,
Ontario County Historical Society,
Canandaigua, New York)

In the early 1860s Joseph Boston, a forty-niner entrepreneur and tannery owner in Santa Cruz, met and married a recent arrival from upstate New York, Eliza Bull. Together, they founded a church and produced five offspring. Persevering through both success and tragedy, they became notable leaders in a fast-growing pioneer community.

On June 21, 1860, Joseph Boston, an enterprising man, was returning from San Francisco where he had business, to his home in Santa Cruz. A newspaper reported that en route to Santa Cruz on the steamer *Sophie McLean*, Joseph tried to commit suicide by jumping overboard. The article described him as an “invalid” with “severe dyspepsia” and said he cursed the people who rescued him.¹ Two days earlier, a telegraphic dispatch from San Francisco to Mr. Boston’s relatives in Santa Cruz had informed them that he was “laboring under an attack of brain fever.”²

Nine days later, on June 30, a judge in San Francisco committed him to a state hospital in Stockton, where he was held until September. The hand-written record states:

39 years of age, single. Been insane 11 days, cause fever, Religious mania. Has suicidal tendency [sic]. Has property. Released September, improved.³

This “improved” man threw himself back into the commercial life of Santa Cruz and apparently thrived for a while. He married and had five children; yet in the end his illness overtook him, having a profound impact upon the family.⁴

Joseph’s Early Years

Joseph B. Boston came from a capable family. His father, also named Joseph, served as an officer in the British navy and emigrated from England with his wife, Alice.

They first settled in Philadelphia, where in 1824 Joseph was born, and where his father learned to be a pharmacist. The family moved to New York City when young Joseph was four years old.⁵ Joseph Sr. died in 1832 when Joseph was only eight. Joseph then went to England where his father's family lived, and obtained an "above average education." Upon his return to New York, he became a clerk in the Isaac Lomen drug firm.⁶

In 1848, Joseph sailed on the ship *Rome* around the Horn, arriving in Monterey in early 1849 with a 200-pound safe. He came as an assistant to the sutler (one who sells goods to the military) with two U. S. Army companies.⁷

Joseph's contacts served him well when he later opened his own general store:

The store came to be called Casa del Oro because miners kept their bagged gold and gold dust, placed in condor quills, in the store's safe, . . . the first in Alta California. The store goods were delivered from the nearby Custom House and passed through an opening on the second floor for storage . . .⁸

The building is now a museum in the Old Monterey Historic Park, still bearing the name "Jos. Boston" painted on its front and side. Joseph's safe still sits in one corner of the store, crowned with the only known photo of him. The twelve-inch-wide planks of the floor are still there too, the steps into the store well worn down after one hundred sixty-five years of use.

"An important component of the original store was its stock of dried medicinal herbs, virtually the only pharmacopoeia in the region."⁹ Outside the store an herb garden grew, where one still grows. The museum docent says that Joseph took a great interest in the traditional herbal remedies used by the local Indians such as yerba buena.

The Family Joins Joseph

The Monterey business was booming and Joseph needed help. He wrote to his cousin Edward Williams, a bookkeeper in New York, and his friend Edmund Jones, engaged to his sister Helen, urging them to join him at the store. The two young men joined him in 1850 and helped Joseph turn the store into a flourishing business.¹⁰

In 1852, Joseph's mother, Mrs. Alice Boston, his sister Helen, and his two younger sisters, Alice and Josephine, embarked on a journey from New York to Monterey. Mrs. Boston's sisters, Anna M. Wells and Helen Williams, and Mrs. Williams' younger son, Charles, also accompanied them. Joseph's sister, Helen was engaged to his friend Edmund Jones; they were to be married as soon as the ship sailed into port.

However, Helen apparently wasn't strong enough to withstand the rigors of many months at sea and died of an unknown disease on-board ship, supposedly as they entered the Golden Gate.¹¹ She is buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Santa Cruz.¹²

The Bostons settled in a home on Van Buren Street in Monterey, with a view of the bay. Joseph served as a councilman, and the family invited Bishop Kip from San Francisco to perform an Episcopalian service at the courthouse. Anna Wells described his visit in 1854 articles to *The Protestant Churchman of New York*, as well as a subsequent Protestant Sunday school she helped to create in this Roman Catholic community.¹³

The character of the once-busy port of Monterey began to change as shipping business and trade shifted to San Francisco.¹⁴ In 1852 Joseph, Edward, and Edmund opened a second store in Santa Cruz at the head of Willow Street (now Pacific Avenue).¹⁵ But in 1854, the Santa Cruz branch of Boston & Williams ran into financial difficulties and closed down.

About this time Joseph's mother, his sister Josephine, and his aunt, Anna Wells, moved to Santa Cruz and into Joseph's home on Church Street.

Anna never married. Like her brother Joseph, she stands out as a person of talent and drive. At age forty-seven, she embarked on a career of her own when, in 1856, she began the Select School for Young Ladies. The first art teacher in Santa Cruz, she gave instruction in English, Spanish, music, and drawing.¹⁶ An excellent artist, she eked out an income by giving art lessons. Later, Wells helped found the Society of Decorative Art "for the promotion of art in Santa Cruz" with the establishment of "a depot where artistic products might be displayed and sold."¹⁷

In 1855, Joseph and his friend Edmund Jones went into the tanning business in Santa Cruz with Richard C. Kirby on Mission Hill at the new firm known as Kirby, Jones & Co.¹⁸ Joseph at that time became increasingly involved with work in a San Francisco office where he purchased goods for several stores, acted as a general commission agent for imports and exports, as well as running the tanning business.

Kirby soon opened a new tannery on Laurel Street and left Joseph and his friend Edmund on their own. Edmund Jones married Annie Ellis of San Francisco on December 16, 1858.¹⁹

In contrast to his driven cousin Joseph, who cashed in on the gold rush, Edward Williams seemed content to record it. He kept the books for both stores and later published some of the more interesting and entertaining log entries from the store in an article for the *Santa Cruz Surf*.²⁰

In 1856 Edward married Narcisa, daughter of James Watson, one of the more prominent citizens of Monterey.²¹ Edward learned Spanish and promoted an understanding of that language in his book *Nomenclature of Early California*. He studied law in Monterey County, was admitted to the bar, and served in public office in Santa Cruz.²²

Edward ran the Boston Store in Monterey into the 1860s. In 1859 the city of Monterey had declared bankruptcy, and it wasn't long thereafter that the Monterey branch of the Boston store also closed.²³

The Boston family remained in Santa Cruz, where Joseph prospered in his other enterprises that by now included buying and selling property. He was a true entrepreneur—what Leon Rowland once called a “pioneer merchant.”²⁴

But all was not well for Joseph. By now the two men closest to him, Edward and Edmund, were married. Perhaps the pressures of business and the lack of a wife contributed to feelings of inadequacy and led to his suicide attempt in 1860. Once the story was known, he probably was not deemed desirable as either a business partner or a marriage partner. Then, in 1861 one person arrived in Santa Cruz without knowing the stories about Joseph. She met a handsome, prosperous man, and she believed in him.

Eliza Clark Bull

Born in 1832, into a well-known family back East, Eliza grew up at the top edge of Canandaigua Lake, the westernmost of the major Finger Lakes in upstate New York. Her mother died when she was only three, but she still had her father and older siblings, James, Thomas, and Mary (“Mollie”). Both Mollie and James, a Colonel in the Civil War, remained in Canandaigua,²⁵ but Thomas migrated to California and became a banker in San Francisco.

In the early 1860s Eliza's brother, Thomas Bull, left his banking business in San Francisco and moved in with the Cornelius Cole family, on the corner of what are now Soquel and Pacific Avenues in Santa Cruz. He may have had both gold and lime on this mind when, in 1862, he purchased land near a creek in Felton that still bears his name—Bull Creek.²⁶

But the demand for lime overtook gold fever. As historian Frank Perry puts it, “The story of Santa Cruz County's lime kilns is one of adaptation, creativity, experimentation, and the economical use of resources.”²⁷ Thomas became one of the leaders in this endeavor—first to install the new “monitor” kiln, which allowed continuous operation.²⁸

In 1861 Eliza joined her brother in California supposedly to take advantage of the warm, dry climate which would do wonders for her poor health. Whether this is true or not, it became the official Eliza story. A hundred years later a feature article appeared in the *Sentinel* that opened with these words: “A frail girl, who came to California for her health . . .”²⁹

Within a year of her arrival, on May 15, 1862, Eliza married Joseph. Her choice raises intriguing questions. Did she know about Joseph's attempted suicide before she married him? If so, who told her? How did she meet him? Most likely they met while attending church services at the Calvary Church. Church records, however, show that Joseph was not confirmed until 1863, after their marriage.

It is also possible that Joseph and Eliza met through their common support for the abolition of slavery. Historian Phil Reader places both Eliza and Joseph on a list of abolitionists in Santa Cruz in 1861.³⁰ While Eliza was still living in Canandaigua, she had changed her church affiliation from Congregational to Episcopal because the Episcopal Church supported abolition.³¹ She probably retained her interest in the cause when she moved to Santa Cruz.



The Calvary Episcopal Church in 1864. This is the simple white church built by the Bostons; it is now the sanctuary of today's "little red church" in downtown Santa Cruz.

(Courtesy of Calvary Episcopal Church, Santa Cruz, California)

Eliza and Joseph had a honeymoon in the British Isles, where they may have visited Joseph's English relatives. Upon arriving home, they set themselves to a new task: building a church.

Joseph and Eliza Build a Church

Eliza herself tells the history of her struggling congregation in a hand-written document kept in the church archives:

... The first services were held in the Courtroom in 1863. These were followed by the use of Temperance Hall, which was given up when an amateur Dramatic Society, without permission, used the sacred books and vestments, in one of their public exhibitions. An old flea-infested schoolhouse sheltered the wandering flock for a brief time...³²

Like her brother and her husband, Eliza was interested in buying Santa Cruz property. However, she now had a different venture in mind. Fed up with the fleas in the schoolhouse, Eliza wanted a sanctuary for her homeless congregation. Church lore says Eliza donated property for the church, and that Joseph Boston drew up the plans. But how did Eliza come by this property? In the 1860s

women could buy and sell property but, if they were married, it became a joint possession.

The County Recorder's Office holds the original property transaction records. On January 15, 1863, Eliza purchased property for the church from Pauline Williams Van Hoeter, heir of James Williams.³³ Eliza is recorded simply as Eliza Clark Boston, with no reference to Joseph. She sold the same land to the church on July 2, 1864; it was recorded in a deed entitled "Joseph Boston & wife to Calvary Church."

Joseph's Cousin, Edward Williams, was at the time a notary public; he recorded each of the two separate transactions with a statement identical except for the women's names.

Williams wrote that:

Pauline/Eliza acknowledged to me on examination apart from and without the hearing of her husband, that she executed the same freely and voluntarily without fear or compulsion or under influence of her husband and that she did not wish to retract the execution...³⁴

In 1938, Robert Burton of the *Sentinel* wrote that after Eliza “donated the money . . . under the leadership of Joseph Boston, the [church] group set to work with a will.” He described Mrs. Eliza C. Boston as “a woman who early became associated with the finest movements for moral uplift in Santa Cruz.”

He went on to discuss Joseph:

Joseph seemed to have been the architectural genius, and the prime moving spirit. Although a tanner by trade, Boston was, nevertheless, somewhat of an amateur artist and surely a lover of the beautiful and symmetrical. He surrounded himself with books and languages, and made a study of them.³⁵

Burton agreed with the church history that said Calvary Church was built to resemble one in England. However, John Chase in his book on Santa Cruz architecture identifies the Calvary plan as a copy of one found in the 1852 book *Upjohn's Rural Architecture*, which offered low-cost designs for struggling congregations, championing a Gothic Revival style.³⁶

The first service in the completed church held on Easter Sunday, 1865, was meant to be a joyous celebration. Instead, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, and the church was draped in black and filled with mourners.³⁷

Eliza helped lead the church through that difficult time and with Joseph's backing, remained active in the church:

[Eliza] was gifted musically and organized the church choir, which attracted many to the Episcopal congregation. Joseph donated a melodeon to the church in 1864 at Eliza's request, and was eventually reimbursed. She owned one of the first Steinway pianos brought around the Horn to California, . . .³⁸

Once the sanctuary was built, Joseph no longer seemed to be involved in church life. His focus remained on his business.

The Boston Homes and Children

Joseph and Eliza probably started their marriage in the W. E. Miller cottage at 81 Church Street (where Bret Harte was alleged to have visited). After a short time, Joseph built a home at Mission and Walnut. A few years later Eliza and Joseph moved nearer to his tannery, settling into an adobe house erected by the Castro family in the late 1830s, and later (with a wood-framed second-story addition) used as a

boarding house for the first tannery workmen.³⁹

Ernest Otto remembered visiting the Boston residence on Mission Hill:

[The house was] somewhat modernized and in the center above the entrance was a small picturesque porch, a portion covered with wisteria. The large living room had recessed windows characteristic of the adobes. It later became the Anthony home where a Congregational/Presbyterian Church was formed.⁴⁰

The partly-adobe house was home to three July babies: Alice Mary, the Boston's firstborn in 1863, William Trowbridge—their only son—in 1865, and Elizabeth (Bessie) Wedgewood in 1870.

Then, tragedy struck:

One morning, March 18, 1871, to be exact, little Willie Boston was playing with some other children at his father's tannery. John Soper, an employee of Mr. Boston, had just driven back from the wharf with a load of hides. Willie asked to ride on the wagon as it crossed the tannery grounds, assured of receiving permission to do so . . . being the adored only son in the family, [but] Mr. Soper refused and drove on. Little did he know that Willie had defied him and tried to climb onto the wagon from behind. He slipped and fell beneath the wheels and was killed instantly. It is said that Mr. Soper never recovered from the incident, nor perhaps did Joseph Boston.

The sudden death of the only son made quite a stir in Santa Cruz. The papers published long, eloquent eulogies and made the most of this headline-making news.

He was buried in Evergreen Cemetery. That autumn, the family took a vacation to the Great Salt Lake and perhaps to Europe,⁴¹ to try to ease the pain of loss. On returning, Eliza again involved herself completely in the church, trying to seek comfort; Joseph buried himself in his work at the tannery, trying to push the nightmare from his tired mind.⁴²

Two years after the death of William, a fourth daughter (fifth child), Beatrice, was born. The joy of her birth was marred by more difficulties.

The Panic of 1873 and the resulting economic stagnation and decreased prices likely affected Joseph's tannery. Joseph suffered a further blow in February 1874, a year into the economic depression and three years after the death of his son, when his close friend Edmund Jones, his partner in the tannery, left for another job.

What led to the departure of Joseph's long-time friend is unknown, but Edmund remained in the tannery profession. The *Weekly Sentinel* reported:

Mr. E. Jones heretofore of the firm of Boston, Jones & Co, tanner in Santa Cruz, is preparing to take charge of and superintend the tanning department of the Soquel Wool and Leather Company.⁴³

Another indication that Joseph was not himself occurred in September 1874, when Eliza's brother Thomas Bull and his business partner H. T. Holmes invited a number of Santa Cruz "gentlemen" to tour the new monitor kiln works.

The champagne ordered for the inaugural occasion was hardly touched as many of the guests were abstainers. In a "surprise presentation," Bull's efficient foreman received an "elegant" gold watch and Bull gave one of the speeches. The guest list for this so-called "gentleman's occasion" included Mrs. Joseph Boston and her daughters, but not Joseph.⁴⁴

The very next month, on October 17, 1874, Joseph's troubles caught up with him, and he took his own life. Different sources give different explanations of this. An item in the *Daily Alta California* reported that Joseph had a new partner by the name of Grey, and in the same sentence that Joseph committed suicide by taking poison.⁴⁵ With a pharmacist's knowledge of drugs, this is a possibility.

Ian McPhail reveals a different view. The notes for his history of the Calvary Church, taken on a yellow, blue-lined, legal-sized tablet, reside in the church archives. Among many paragraphs penciled from interviews with C. D. Snow (rector from 1927 to 1956), a single statement appears, set apart on its own line, written in blue ink: "Joseph Boston hung himself."⁴⁶

So which is true—did he poison or hang himself? The Calvary parish register is not much help, stating the cause of death simply as "insanity."

Sandy Carlson wrote that:

Whatever the cause, Joseph was dead, leaving three little girls and a wife carrying his fifth child. His streak of "temporary insanity" had reappeared fourteen years after his plunge into the bay.⁴⁷

Joseph was buried next to his son William in Evergreen Cemetery. Cemetery records state that Joseph's death was a suicide. The church records also state that, although Joseph died on September 17, he wasn't buried until October 19.

The clergy officiating at the burial was A. L.

Brewer, not G. A. Easton, the rector at Calvary who officiated when the Bostons' son was buried and who performed two other funerals in 1875. Did Easton perhaps refuse to bury Joseph because suicide was considered a sin? A memorial service for Joseph was not performed until seven years later.

The newspapers, very respectful of the widow and her children, made no mention of suicide, but emphatically praised Joseph and his contributions to the community, saying:

Mr. Boston's business career in California has been distinguished by rare probity and industry, and an unswerving perseverance toward the success of the work he undertook; but . . . he has found time for the careful cultivation of his mind; he has assisted liberally, both with his purse and in earnest labor in the religious and moral advancement of his fellow beings, and has endeared himself to every man by his charitable and kindly deeds.⁴⁸

Joseph left his family well provided for. His will, written six months before his death revealed an estate valued at nearly \$130,000.

Eliza asked Horace Gushee, a member of her church, to administer these funds, and through him began selling off the tannery properties, taking only about \$230 every third month to care for herself and her daughters. Despite the fears of her doctor, Eliza gave birth to a fourth healthy daughter, Agnes.⁴⁹

Problems with brother Thomas

While still in the throes of widowhood, and with a new baby to attend, Eliza soon had her brother Thomas on her hands as well. In the spring of



Eliza Boston's three surviving adult daughters; left to right: Agnes, Beatrice, and Bess. (Courtesy of C.J. Fette and Sandy Carlson)

1875, a horrific accident occurred at Thomas' lime kiln and a worker was badly injured.⁵⁰ Most likely, Thomas felt responsible.

A year later in March 1876, Thomas was still expanding operations,⁵¹ but then, in August, he sold his lime works to Eliza for \$10,000.⁵² "If this is confusing," historian Frank Perry suggests, "it is for good reason. Bull was going insane." He adds that during this time, Bull moved in with his sister.⁵³

On October 4, 1878, an item appeared in the short-lived *Santa Cruz Weekly Courier* entitled "Adjudged Insane." It describes how Dr. Knight (the doctor who attended the Bull lime works accident) and Dr. Vaux (a member of Calvary Church) examined Thomas on the charge of insanity and a judge committed him to the Napa Insane Asylum:

Mr. Bull, while considered harmless, has not been accountable for his actions for a year or two, could not sleep well at night, and frequently wandered away from the home of his sister Recently the disease has increased, and he has threatened the lives of those around him, and once attempted to destroy himself!⁵⁴

The "disease" symptoms sound like what we know today as Alzheimer's, possibly "early onset" as Thomas was only fifty years old. Three months later a short item appeared in the same paper announcing Bull's death on Christmas Day in the asylum, stating that "Mrs. Boston, sister of deceased, went up to attend the funeral of her brother."⁵⁵ A small death notice in the *Sentinel* said he died of "paralysis."⁵⁶ And that sounds like a stroke. Was it Eliza who made the charge of insanity? Was caring for him too much for her? Perhaps, as she now had other responsibilities. In that same year Eliza was appointed to fill a vacancy on the school board, the first woman to do so in Santa Cruz:

Many of the men were too busy to bother about the school board and acknowledged that women, without steady, paying jobs could handle the school's business just as well as they could. She held the position through the 1880s.⁵⁷

Eliza's Daughter Alice

While Eliza took on her new civic duty, her oldest daughter Alice seemed to take on the family spirit. The *Sentinel* reported:

Alice Boston is the type of a girl to have at home, for when this Miss of fifteen caught a vicious lad stealing pipe from her mother's premises [at the adobe home on Mission Hill] she simply took him by the ear and led him down town and gave him over to the Mayor.⁵⁸

That mayor was Frank Cooper, whom Alice had grown up knowing at Calvary Episcopal Church.

In 1880 Alice and Eliza attended an invitational ball at the Ocean House in honor of the Governor.⁵⁹ The next year Alice served on a reception committee for a party.⁶⁰ But she engaged in more serious endeavors as well. In May 1881, she participated in a debate reported in the *Sentinel*, "Resolved: That the intellect of males is superior to that of the females." Three young men, including Harry A. Cooper (Frank Cooper's son) took the affirmative; Alice and two other young ladies took the negative. "Both sides advanced very good points, but especially was this true of the ladies." The judges, however, decided in favor of the men.⁶¹

A year later, on the Fourth of July 1882, Alice was described as a "swimming nymph, who struck out from the shore and swam beyond and around the yachts three-quarters of a mile out."⁶² That same year, a society column reported: "Miss Boston and Master de Lamater came down from the state university to spend their Thanksgiving in Santa Cruz."⁶³ Did Alice have a suitor? She had just been admitted to the University of California at Berkeley and things seemed to be going well for her.⁶⁴ She did not, however, graduate from Berkeley. Two years later, on May 3, 1884, the *Sentinel* reported, "Miss Alice Boston has suffered a relapse, and is seriously ill in San Francisco. Her mother is with her."⁶⁵ A week later the paper stated that Alice had been brought from San Francisco "to her mother's residence."⁶⁶ By the next January Alice was recovered enough to attend a costume party as Juliet, wearing "a pretty costume of white satin."⁶⁷ However, it seems she did not return to university.

Three years later, in 1888, Alice was visiting her mother's sister in Colorado when she died "suddenly and inexplicably" on October 9, at the age of twenty-five.

The *Santa Cruz Surf* reported:

Miss Alice Boston, a native of Santa Cruz, died suddenly on Tuesday evening, in Denver, Colorado, where she had been visiting relatives for some months. The news came with a shock to

her mother and sisters and to many friends here and in other parts of the state. She was the eldest daughter of Joseph Boston, who died [fourteen] years ago and was one of our most highly respected pioneer citizens.

She was a young lady of strong will, independent character and magnanimous disposition – a firm friend in sorrow or in joy and ready to sacrifice herself to those she loved.

Mrs. Boston, one of our highly esteemed citizens, whose benevolence has relieved scores of aching hearts and suffering bodies, has the deep sympathy of the community in her bereavement. Interment will take place in Denver, where Mrs. Boston's sister resides.⁶⁸

Why had young Alice gone to Colorado in the first place? Had she been sent there because of her health? And, what was her earlier “relapse”? Was she really ill? Was she pregnant? Once there, did she suffer, like her father, from overwork, followed by depression? Could this have been another suicide?

The Ones Who Lived On

Eliza and her three remaining daughters, Elizabeth (Bessie), Beatrice, and Agnes lived together for many years in their Santa Cruz home. Each of the girls married late in life; only one had a child. They had their Aunt Anna as a role model of a self-sufficient woman. But perhaps, underneath, they (or potential suitors) were afraid of passing on the strain of insanity from both sides of the family.

Bessie

Eliza's eldest surviving daughter Bessie graduated from Santa Cruz High in 1888. After graduation she went to San Francisco to attend art school. Returning to Santa Cruz in the 1890s, she wrote for the *Santa Cruz Surf* and grew dahlias as a hobby. When the clock tower atop the Odd Fellows building burned in 1899, she proposed a dahlia show to raise the funds needed to replace it.

The show was a big success, largely because of the enthusiasm and good reporting of Bessie Boston.⁶⁹ Later, Bessie moved back to San Francisco and wrote for the *San Francisco Examiner*. In the fall of 1920, at the age of forty-nine and shortly before her mother's death, she met and married Charles Lymbery. Bessie and Charles settled in San Mateo and established a dahlia farm, winning many awards and commendations for their beautiful flowers. An article that appeared in *Sunset* magazine in October 1920 could have led to Bessie's meeting Charles that autumn.

The article said Bessie moved to North Beach because “her health had failed,” and described this charming incident:

Sitting in her garden one day, she remarked to the Japanese boy who did the garden work, “Osam Shudow, when I feel better I will get a house down the peninsula where it is sunny and warm and spend all my time in the garden. I'm going to sell cut flowers.” The boy . . . smiled and said, “I'll help. We'll raise dahlias.” Osam Shudow is no more. But they did raise dahlias, and the largest and most beautiful dahlias today which Bessie Boston has created is called Osam Shuda, for the faithful boy who helped her . . .⁷⁰

Bessie and her husband moved back to Santa Cruz, where she died on December 21, 1946, aged seventy-six. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery along with her grandmother Alice Boston, her father, and her brother.⁷¹

Beatrice

The next daughter, Beatrice, graduated from Santa Cruz High School in 1891. Like her mother, she had a beautiful soprano voice, performing in operas, musical programs, and with the Calvary Episcopal choir. In 1909, at the age of thirty-six, Beatrice, married Clarence Fette, who was employed by the Sperry Flour Company. A 1920, census shows that Eliza and her five-year-old grandson, Christian Joseph, lived with them on Walnut Street, where Clarence was listed as head of household. Shortly after Eliza's death in 1921, Clarence Fette was transferred to Hawaii where Beatrice continued her singing and helped in the Fette family Oriental rug business. Beatrice died in Honolulu on January 21, 1941, shortly before her sixty-eighth birthday, and was buried there.⁷²

Eliza's only grandchild, Christian Joseph Fette, married Margaret, a native Hawaiian, who was a packer in a pineapple company. They had a daughter named Tanya who obtained a B.A. in speech and drama from Seattle University, married Barrett Pinard in Santa Clara, California, and had children—raising them in the Seattle area.⁷³

Agnes

Eliza's youngest daughter, Agnes, was a top graduate of her high school class in 1894. She entered the University of California, Berkeley in 1900 and graduated in 1904 with high honors. She

received her teaching credentials and taught in Santa Cruz where she lived with her mother.⁷⁴

Later, perhaps tired of academic life, she went to Nevada and became a cook in a mining camp during the Tonopah gold rush. There she met William Burge, an ex-professional baseball player. They married in 1919, when she was forty-four, and continued to live in Nevada. They returned to Santa Cruz sometime in the 1950s, where Bill worked for a cement company and Agnes for the Santa Cruz Land Title Company. Agnes died January 22, 1955, a month before her eightieth birthday, and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery.^{75,76}

Thus, each daughter made a contribution to her chosen community by following her own unique talents with a determined independence not common at the time.

Eliza

Eliza continued to devote most of her time to the church, writing its history, singing in the choir, and helping out at dinners, bazaars, and other social functions. She befriended the Chinese when it was unpopular to do so and worked to end their persecution. She wrote regularly in the newspapers, spoke at church meetings, and remained active in the community.⁷⁷

When Eliza died on October 27, 1920, fifty years after her husband, her obituary, “A Tribute to Mrs. Boston’s Noble Character,” appeared on the front page of the *Evening Sentinel*. It described how her faith stayed with her to the end, her last words, “heaven, heaven, heaven,” like a mantra.

Amongst the praise was this interesting account:

She befriended the Chinese during the days of their persecution; when she feared for their safety, she opened her large adobe residence on Davis Street, and a large part of the population remained in her house all night. When asked by the Chinese if she was afraid, came the quick answer from one of such a keen sense of humor, “A woman’s tongue and broomstick are a match for any mob.”

⁷⁸

Wessendorf undertakers shipped Eliza’s body to Cypress Lawn, Colma (near San Mateo where Bessie lived) to have it cremated. Her remains were returned to the undertakers and buried at Evergreen Cemetery, along with her mother-in-law, Alice Boston, her husband Joseph Boston, and three of her children: William, Bessie, and Agnes.⁷⁹



Eliza Boston (standing at far left in 2nd row) taken circa 1890 in a group outside the Calvary Episcopal Church.

During her time in Santa Cruz, Eliza suffered a series of very public humiliations: the depiction of her future husband as insane; his eventual suicide; the possible suicide of her eldest daughter; her brother committed for insanity.

Was she subject to the gossip of the time, a time less accepting of mental disorders? Or were they more accepting of such troubles? The custom of keeping publicly quiet about scandal may have helped. And certainly, when she and Joseph suffered the tragic loss of their only son, the community mourned with them. Through it all, Eliza held up her head, contributed to society, and was loyal to her church and family.

Despite their infirmities and difficulties and the lack of living descendants to keep their memory alive, the Boston legacy lives on. Thanks to historians like Sandy Carlson, the archives of Calvary Church, and the newspapers of the day, we gain many insights into the early days of Santa Cruz County.

Joseph played his part as an entrepreneur and land owner. Many homes were built on the tannery property Eliza parceled out. The beautiful sanctuary Eliza and Joseph built still stands over 150 years later—the oldest church in Santa Cruz County, and the only original church still active in downtown Santa Cruz.

About the Author

Dana Bagshaw grew up in Arkansas. She received a BFA from San Jose State, where she studied playwriting. She worked in the computer industry (ten years in Silicon Valley and ten years in the UK) before retiring to Santa Cruz. Upon arriving she began collecting oral history in her Neary Lagoon neighborhood and joined Researchers Anonymous. In 2015 her play, *Lincoln's Eulogy*, was performed at Calvary Episcopal Church; it was based on events that occurred at that church in 1865.

Notes

1. *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 22, 1860, 2:4.
2. *San Francisco Herald*, June 19, 1860.
3. Stockton Hospital Commitment Registers, 1856-1934. MF8:10, 34 volumes, Department of Mental Hygiene, California State Archives, Sacramento, California.
4. In 1975 Sandy Carlson, while a student at UCSC, wrote a paper entitled *The Boston Family*, (Santa Cruz: Oakes 99, 1975). Carlson became a professor of paleo-biology at Davis. Her hand-typed and illustrated document, with all its sources appended, now resides in the archives of the Museum of Art & History of Santa Cruz County. With her permission I have scanned and transcribed it, and will occasionally interweave her statements with my own.
5. "Died: Boston", *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, Saturday, October 24, 1874, 2:5.
6. Elkinton, Mrs. A. W. and Mrs. Wm. M. O'Donnell, eds, "Joseph Boston . . . Merchant of Monterey," *Noticias del Puerto de Monterey*, a Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by the Monterey History and Art Association, September, 1970, 19.
7. *Ibid.*
8. "The Joseph Boston Store in the Casa del Oro," *Casa del Oro*, Historic Garden League brochure, Monterey, California, 2015.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 1.
11. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 38; "A Foolish Agreement," an undated, unattributed clipping from the Monterey County Library, by Mayo Hayes O'Donnell; death notice in the *Daily Placer Times and Transcript* (San Francisco), August 9, 1852, 2.
12. Evergreen Cemetery Files, Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History.
13. Elkinton, Mrs. A. W. Donald, M. Craig, and Miss Ethel Solliday eds, "Through a Woman's Eyes," *Noticias del Puerto de Monterey*, a Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by the Monterey History and Art Association, September, 1957, 1.
14. "The Joseph Boston Store . . .," *Casa del Oro*.
15. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 2.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Laura Rawson, "Resigns After 40 Years Head Art Exchange: Interesting History," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 13, 1932, 7:3. One of Anna Wells' works, *Ruins of the Old Adobe Mission Church, after the Earthquake, 1859, Santa Cruz*, can be seen in the collection of The Society of California Pioneers.
18. E[dward] Sanford] Harrison, *History of Santa Cruz County, California*, (San Francisco: Pacific Press Publishing, 1892), 26.
19. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 3. Edmund and Annie are buried side-by-side in Evergreen cemetery.
20. "The Early Days," *Santa Cruz Surf*, February 20, 1895, 4:2-4.
21. An Englishman by birth, Watson came to Monterey in the early 1820s. His wife, Mariana, was the daughter of Thomas Escamilla, a Spanish soldier, who came to Mexico when it was still under Spanish rule and married a Mexican lady, Ygnaciade de Alba. Source: Donald Thomas Clark, "Watson Creek", *Monterey County Place Names*, (Carmel Valley, California: Kestrel Press, 1991), 600-601.
22. Edward went to Watsonville and studied law under Judge R. F. Peckham. On his admission to the bar, April 14, 1860, he began to practice in Watsonville, but in 1862 returned to Santa Cruz. Later he contributed two chapters to the *History of Santa Cruz County, California*, published in 1892 by E. S. Harrison. Source: *Santa Cruz Surf*, July 7, 1905, 4:3.
23. "The Joseph Boston Store . . .," *Casa del Oro*.
24. "Rowland card files," *The Rowland Collection*, University Library, University of California Santa Cruz.
25. Caroline Cowles Richards, *Village Life in America, 1852-1857*, (New York: Heritage Books, Inc., Henry Holt and Company, 1913), 153, 201.
26. Frank A. Perry, Robert W. Piwarzyk, Michael D. Luther, Alverda Orlando, Allan Molho, and Sierra L. Perry *Lime Kiln Legacies*, (Santa Cruz: Museum of Art and History, 2007), 86.
27. Perry et al., *Lime Kiln Legacies*, 39.
28. Perry et al., *Lime Kiln Legacies*; 40, 86-87.

29. Margaret Koch, "Eastern Girl Helped Start Episcopal Church," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 27, 1966, 4:1-8.
30. Phil Reader, posted to the Research Forum, Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History website, viewed May 15, 2015 [no longer online].
31. Caroline Cowles Richards, *Village Life In America*, 93, states that on April 5, 1857, "Miss Lizzie Bull told us in Sunday School today that she cannot be our Sunday School teacher any more, as she and her sister Mary are going to join the Episcopal church." According to conversation with the historian of the Ontario County, New York Historical Society, on Aug. 20, 2015, Eliza joined the Episcopal Church because it supported abolition.
32. Calvary Church archives.
33. *Deeds*, vol. 6, page 11, Santa Cruz County Recorder's Office. James Williams once owned a large parcel of land in that area of Santa Cruz, and after whom Williams Street (now Lincoln Street) was named.
34. *Deeds*, vol. 6, page 708, Santa Cruz County Recorder's Office.
35. Robert E. Burton, "In Search of Santa Cruz: The Churchiest Church," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 25, 1938, 2:2-4.
36. John Leighton Chase, *The Sidewalk Companion to Santa Cruz Architecture*, Third Edition, (Santa Cruz: Museum of Art and History, 2005), 75.
37. The author's short drama *Lincoln's Eulogy*, written to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Calvary Church, is based on this event.
38. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 3.
39. Leon Rowland, "Circuit Rider," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 14, 1943, 4:4-5.
40. Ernest Otto, "Old Santa Cruz," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November, 14, 1943, 4:1-2.
41. Elkinton, Mrs. A. W. and Mrs. Wm. M. O'Donnell, eds, *Joseph Boston . . . Merchant of Monterey*, 22. This article confirms the trip to Europe: "Boston was so grief stricken his wife feared for his life, and she suggested a sea voyage. The family traveled to England, Ireland, France, etc. and he seemed to recover his good spirits."
42. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 4. The death was also reported in an article titled "Died: Willie Boston," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 20, 1871, 2:6.
43. "Soquel News," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, February 7, 1874, 3:5.
44. "A Day At The Kilns," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, September 19, 1874, 3:2.
45. "Brevities," *Daily Alta California*, October 20, 1874, 1:2.
46. Soquel attorney Ian D. McPhail compiled and wrote *One Hundred Years, a Calvary Church History*, while waiting for his bar exam results in 1964.
47. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 5.
48. "Died: Boston," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, October 24, 1874, 2:5.
49. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 5 and 11.
50. "A Perilous Ride," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, May 1, 1875, 3:2.
51. "Lively Times," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, March 18, 1876, 3:3.
52. "Real Estate Transfers," August 5, 1876, 2:2.
53. Perry et al., *Lime Kiln Legacies*, 89.
54. *Santa Cruz Weekly Courier*, October 4, 1878, 3:3.
55. *Santa Cruz Weekly Courier*, January 3, 1879, 3.
56. "Died," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, December 28, 1878, 2:4.
57. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 5.
58. "Brevities," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, May 18, 1878, 3:2.
59. "The Governor's Reception," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, August 7, 1880, 4:7.
60. "The Bony-Part Party," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, October 8, 1881, 3:7.
61. "H. S. L. and Debating Society," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, May 14, 1881, 3:7.
62. "Old Papers Tell Of Early Fourth," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, July 9, 1942, 2:3 (referring to a *San Francisco Chronicle* article dated circa July 4, 1882).
63. "Boston . . .," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, December 9, 1882, 2:4.
64. "Social and Personal," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, August 19, 1882, 3:6.
65. *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, May 3, 1884, 3:6.
66. *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, May 10, 1884, 2:4.
67. "The Electric Light," *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, January 3, 1885, 3:4.
68. "Alice Boston," *Santa Cruz Surf*, October 11, 1888, 5:3.
69. *Ibid*.
70. Maybel Sherman, "Interesting Westerners," *Sunset, The Pacific Monthly*, October, 1920. Clipping in Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 24.
71. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 9 and 23 (an age chart showing the relative ages of the family deaths and who was buried at Evergreen); "Funeral Rites . . .," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 24, 1946, 1:1-2.
72. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 9 and 26.
73. Sandy Carlson had the privilege of communicating with C. J. Fette while he was still alive in the 1970s.
74. 1910 U. S. Census.
75. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 9 and 29.
76. "Mrs. Agnes B. Burge . . .," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, January 23, 1955, 1:7-8.
77. Carlson, *The Boston Family*, 5.
78. "A Tribute to Mrs. Boston's Noble Character," *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, October 28, 1920, 1.
79. Although Carlson did not place Eliza's burial in Evergreen, a telephone conversation with Nichelle Sevier at Cypress Memorial Lawns, February 2, 2015, indicated that she was buried at Evergreen.

The Bostons

Addendum: More Is Revealed

by Dana Bagshaw

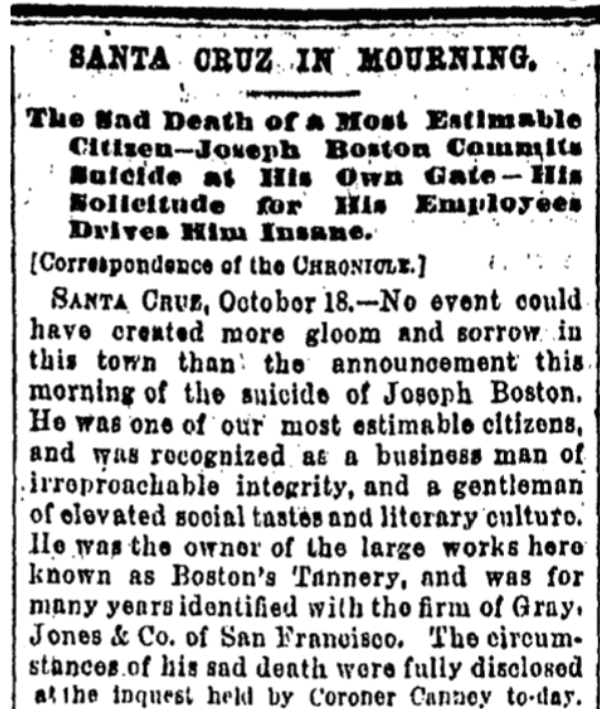
The Scott connection and Joseph's death

In 2020 Jay Topping, Scotts Valley historian, contacted me with information that Agnes Scott (of the family for whom Scotts Valley was named) was one of the first members of Calvary Episcopal Church. Sure enough, in looking at the church records, there she was at one of the first services, held in 1863 at the court house on the upper floor of the Flatiron building. A year later, her firstborn was baptized during the same service in which Joseph Boston was confirmed.

Because there was no Episcopalian priest or church in Santa Cruz, Agnes and Hiram Scott were married by a priest from San Francisco at a fire station in San Jose. In going through the family history, graciously sent to me by a Scott descendant, Karyn Leisz-Foley, I read that Agnes, a dressmaker, had fashioned a wedding dress for Eliza Bull when she married Joseph.

I had written a play about the founding of Calvary—"Lincoln's Eulogy"—for the church's 150th anniversary, with Eliza as the central character. All this new information inspired me to write another play, this time adding Joseph (who was only mentioned in the first play but never appeared) as well as Agnes and Hiram, calling it "Empty Chair." It dealt head-on with Joseph's death by suicide which I had avoided in the first play. A video of "Empty Chair" is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9PhlpZLCdM> (see cast photo farther on.)

The play employs the version of Joseph's death found in the Calvary church records as well as in Sandy Carlson's biography of the Bostons: that he hung himself. While I was producing the play, Karyn Leisz-Foley sent a melodramatic article from the *San Francisco Chronicle* (dated 10/20/1874) describing how Joseph poisoned himself, left a suicide note, and went to the tannery gates to die (see right.)



Above: excerpt from an article reporting on the death of Joseph Boston; as seen in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on October 20, 1874.

The article reported that Coroner Canney had held a "jury inquiry" in which a composed Eliza had been present. I could find no record of this inquiry at the country courthouse or the sheriff's office and since the article got his age wrong, I discredited it.

I did find several other articles in the *Sentinel* in that year reporting on other jury inquiries held by the coroner, Dr. Canney, a local physician. So these inquiries were apparently a common practice at the time and, according to local historian Frank Perry, I can rely on a newspaper report of a poisoning, even if it was sensationalized.

Finding a living descendant

In my more than ten years of research on the Bostons, I had been going by the history compiled by Sandy Carlson in 1975, and her conclusion that the Boston line ended with their grandson, Christian Fette (see her lovely family tree later in this addendum). In my mind, the Bostons were my “adopted” family. In fact, with members of the church, we erected a wooden grave marker in 2017 for Joseph Boston, to replace the one missing from Evergreen cemetery (see photo to the right).

To keep track of my research, I created a Boston family tree on Ancestry.com. While the play was in production, I received an automated “tip” from Ancestry of a new family member. I put it aside. But after the play, I went onto Ancestry at the local library, and lo and behold I saw the 1950 census record stating that Christian Fette and his Honolulu wife Margaret Ku’uipo Ahakuelo had a daughter named Tanya!

I hurried home and on Linked-In I found her, discovering that she had a B.A. in speech and drama from Seattle University, a career at United Airlines for 33 years, followed by employment at REI.

I also found that she had children. Bingo! I picked up the phone and dialed the number I found, and she answered! She was very receptive to my call, and was delighted that I had written a play about her ancestors. For me it was like finding a long-lost sister. Then she told me she was in ICU and that I should try again in a few days when she felt better, but ended with, “You made my day.” I texted her a week later and she was still in ICU, then rehab, and finally stopped responding.

I was grieving that I had lost contact with Tanya, but decided to see if I might be able to reach her son, Paleka Pinard. And I did! He was just as excited as me because he had just the night before come across a letter to Joseph Boston from King George VI with an official stamp and seal. But it had to be Joseph’s father who served as an officer in the British Navy, before he immigrated to America.

Paleka said his mother was home from the hospital, he had refurbished the basement for her, and she was back on the job, working from home. I hope to be in touch with them sometime in the future. He expressed an interest in coming to Santa Cruz to visit.



Above: a group of Calvary church members, including the author (far right), at Evergreen Cemetery for the 2017 installation of the Joseph Boston grave marker.

Dean Silvers reveals more on Joseph and Eliza

Finally, I happened to attend a talk on Santa Cruz history given by Dean Silvers. Included in his presentation was an 1865-66 photo of the Boston & Jones tannery that I’d heard about, but never seen.

Located between High Street and the coast road (today’s Mission Street), the tannery was much much bigger than I imagined. Its smokestack could be seen by all from downtown Santa Cruz (see the photograph on the next page).

Silvers has compiled an excellent overview of early geography and history of the tannery area into a book titled *The History Of The Creeks And People Of Rancho Tres Ojos De Agua And Vicinity*. To contact Dean, email: dsilvers “at” cruzio.com.

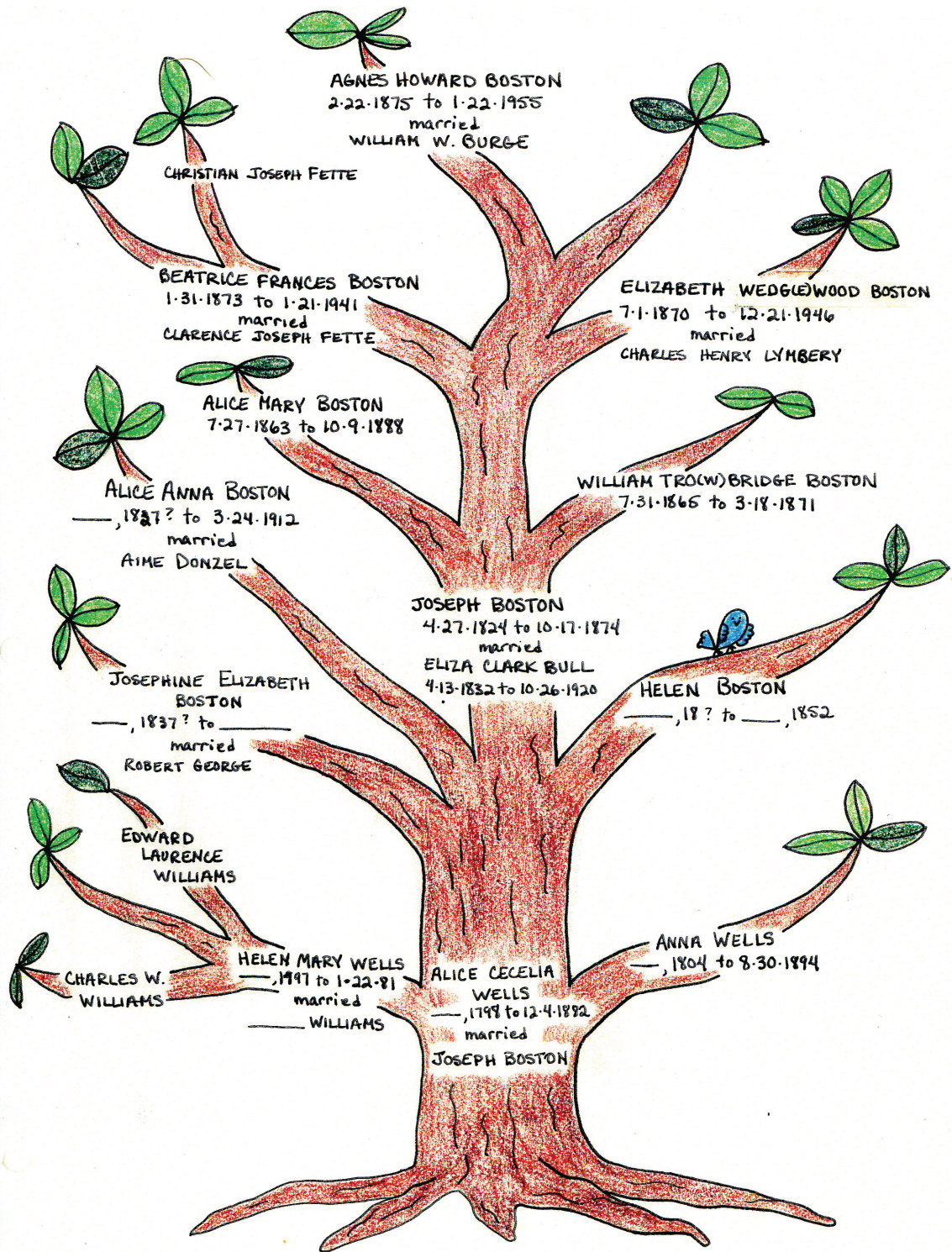
One of the joys of doing research in Santa Cruz is the way we share, learn from, and build upon each other’s work.



The cast of “Empty Chair”, outside Calvary Episcopal Church where the play was performed



This 1865-66 photograph, by Lawrence and Houseworth, looks south over the Boston & Jones tannery with its tall smokestack, toward Santa Cruz and the Monterey Bay. The dirt lane in the foreground is today's High Street. (Lawrence & Houseworth Album, image #31, courtesy of The Society of California Pioneers)



The Boston family tree illustration above was created by researcher Sandy Carlson.