

HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Peter Aloysius Forrester



Peter A. Forrester in his National Guard's uniform, with sword. This undated photo is the only known image of P.A. Forrester.

A Day Like Any Other

Peter A. Forrester was born in Pennsylvania in 1837. He is mentioned in two contemporary news articles as being a native of Philadelphia. His father is believed to have been from Ireland, but research into Forrester's antecedents has yet to be done.

Forrester came to San Luis Obispo, California as a very young man in 1856. He had been well educated and had studied Latin and Greek. He was also trained in the law.

THE CAMBRIA CIRCULAR.—The inimitable and irrepressible Pete, (him of the sylvan surname,) has sent us the first number of the "Cambria Circular," a two-page, quarter-sheet, semi-occasional, printed on a Corliss' toy-press; well adorned with cuts, job-type, advertisements, etc., etc. We trust it may grow to be a first-class daily, in time, and that Cambria may grow with it. Come again.

Evidently Peter Forrester was well-known enough to be referred to in the paper by nickname.

and was knowledgeable about geology and mining. On January 21, 1861, Peter married Maria Josefa Pico, daughter of Jose de Jesus Pico who owned a rancho at San Simeon. Peter and Maria Josefa lived at San Simeon when first married, and went on to have 12 children.

Peter helped establish, and he named, the town of Cambria. Peter and Josefa had a home there for at least 15 years. He was referred to in an undated clipping as "the inimitable and irrepressable Pete (him of the sylvan surname {sic})."

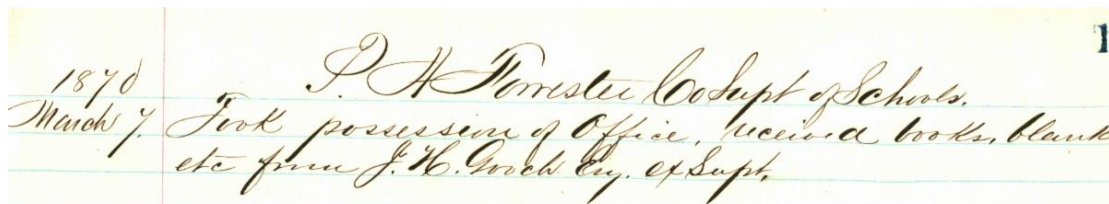
In the early 1860s, Peter became prominent in mining, as owner and manager, with others, of the quicksilver {mercury} mines in the mountains above Cambria.

At the same time, Peter was active in civic life in San Luis Obispo, and the family may have moved to town about 1877. Winifred Atchison recalled her mother, Margaret Forrester, saying that she and her siblings went to school at the San Luis Obispo Mission. Deed records show that the Forresters owned a residential lot in San Luis Obispo (bounded by Mill, Essex, and Peach Streets {Essex Street was eventually renamed Johnson}) a few blocks north of the courthouse, but we do not know where they actually lived in town.

Peter was involved in San Luis Obispo County politics and held various government posts. County Clerk from 1857-1859; District Attorney for one term starting in 1861; Superintendent of Schools from 1865-1867 and again from 1870-1874. He also served as mayor of San Luis Obispo, Police Judge, and City Clerk, the position he held at the time of his death. In 1883 he was appointed Commissioner of Immigration in San Francisco, but he worked at that job only several months.

P.A. Forrester died September 18, 1885 at age 49 "of consumption and gastritis." He is buried in San Luis Obispo. According to his obituary, "during his long residence in this county he has ever borne a worthy reputation and died bearing the esteem of all."

This information comes from a family history prepared by descendants Margaret Forrester Campbell, Mary Josephine Forrester, and Frank E. Forrester and housed at the History Center.



P.A. Forrester's own hand, upon taking office as Superintendent of Schools in 1870

Virtual Tours

We now have three virtual tours to choose from! You can visit the Dallidet Adobe, the Octagon Barn, and the Jack House live via Zoom.

For information or to register, [click here](#).



Dallidet Gardens Open

Have you ever seen a Mongolian Sunflower?
Or a 130-year old Avocado tree? Are you



The Dallidet Family enjoy their garden with some, ahem, minor alterations

looking for some outdoor tranquility? Then you should visit the Dallidet Gardens.

Every Sunday through Labor Day, the gardens will be open from 11 am to 3 pm. The State's [guidelines for Outdoor Museums](#) will be strictly followed, so please bring your mask.

1185 Pacific Street, San Luis Obispo

Mindfulness in the Gardens

We are very excited to announce the return of guided meditation to the Dallidet Gardens. Engage your senses - sound, sight, touch - by sitting, walking and exploring in silent contemplation

Starting August 18th and continuing weekly through the end of September, your skilled guides will help you to enjoy this 1½ hour fresh, yet timeless, approach.

Safety protocols for Covid will be observed, which includes a limited number of spaces.

To learn more or to register, [please visit our website](#).



Looking for more to do?

- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#). With posts like Mystery Monday and Throwback Thursday, we'll be sharing photos from our collection.
- Take a [virtual walking tour](#) of historic San Luis Obispo. These video series feature short vignettes about significant local landmarks.

If you have any ideas of content you'd like to see, share it with us! And if you enjoy what we share with you, and if you are able to, would you please consider [supporting us](#)?

Thank you for being a part of our community. Everybody stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Thomas Kessler
Executive Director

History Center of San Luis Obispo County

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