

The Close Family Property

San Ramon Valley Historical Society Plaque # 12

The Close family of Danville was an important one, beginning when James E. Close moved to town and purchased the original Danville blacksmith shop in 1875. Close was born in Canada and came to the United States when he was 18 in 1865. He married Lillian Ramage in 1875. Their only surviving child, Clarence W. Close, was born in 1877.

Close became a naturalized citizen in 1877. A blacksmith by trade, he built a thriving business then purchased eight other Danville parcels over a 21-year period, which extended from Front, up Diablo Road to Hartz Avenue



Close buildings on Front Street, Danville

When the Southern Pacific arrived in town in 1891, many merchants including Close updated their businesses. He built a new blacksmith shop with all the modern conveniences in 1892. A two-story building at the corner of Front and Diablo built by Close hosted several groups on the second floor: the Odd Fellows, the Alamo Masons and temporary public high school classes from 1914-17. A second two-story Close building on Front housed the Close general store, the first telephone exchange, the first library and the post office.

The large 10-room Close home was built in 1894 facing Diablo Road and had an expansive back yard. They had a lovely, large garden which was often the scene of local parties, including the annual Presbyterian Church ice cream social.

Lillian Close was an active force in the village. She was one of the first librarians, helped run the Danville Improvement Club and was President of the

Danville Equal Suffrage Club which campaigned successfully for woman suffrage in California on Oct. 10, 1911.



Lillian (Ramage) Close

Clarence Close was a general merchant who married Josephine Wilson in 1900. They raised a family of four children in Danville. He was very active on behalf of the community, serving as a Danville Grammar School and SRV High School Trustee, a Mason, a volunteer fire fighter and manager of the Danville Branch of the SRV Bank beginning in 1911. The couple was involved in the Grange and supported the Presbyterian Church.

Their son Dr. Wilson E. Close graduated from SRV Union High School and became a podiatrist. He was devoted to the area and served on many committees such as the County Highway Advisory Committee and the Danville Renewal Corporation. Always interested in local history, Dr. Close was one of the founders of the SRV Historical Society and purchased the Close Property plaque which was dedicated on Sept. 22, 1996.

By Beverly Lane, 2018

Sources: Essay by Irma M. Dotson, Virgie V. Jones' "Historical Persons & Places In San Ramon Valley", museum archives, various Wilson Close essays, two Contra Costa County Histories (1882 and 1917).