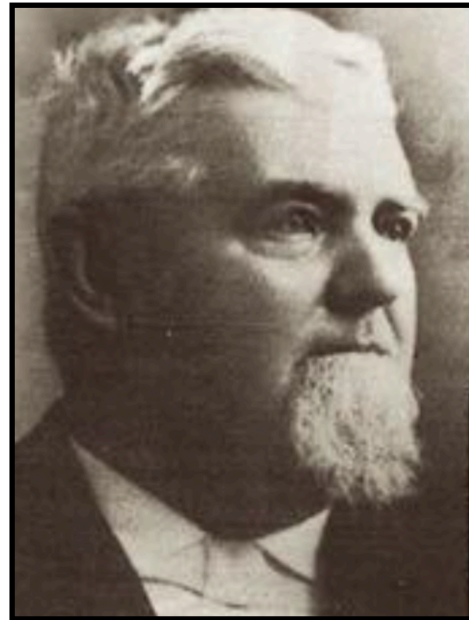


Frederick W. Birdsall



Frederick W. Birdsall
1828 – 1900

Birdsall was born in Peekskill, New York. At age twenty-two he made his way to California for the Gold Rush. He mined on the Foresthill Divide and then was part of the Comstock Silver Boom in Nevada. He was very successful.

In 1875, Birdsall bought the expansive Bear River Ditch Company. By consolidating several other ditch companies, his water system would cover over 300 miles of ditches and watercourses by 1880. While running the ditch company he also was President of the Sacramento Bank and involved in the San Joaquin & Sierra Nevada Railway. He built the Dayton, Sutro & Carson Valley Railroad. In Placer County, he improved and expanded his water company. In 1887 he built a reservoir on Huntley Hill to bring more water into Auburn. With this system in place he was able to install fire hydrants in the town for the first time. In 1888 he subsidized the building of the first firehouse in Auburn and used the top floor for his Ditch Company office. That same year, he and a partner developed nearly seventy acres above the American River Canyon, they named it Aeolia Heights.

The Birdsall family spent their summers at their “ranch” in the Heights. In 1897 Birdsall planted about eight thousand olive trees in Aeolia. He produced and sold premium olive oil with his award winning Birdsall Olive Oil Company. Birdsall’s extensive waterworks supplied water for irrigation and home use as far south as the Loomis basin, he sold everything to the South Yuba Water Company in 1890, South Yuba would eventually sell to Pacific Gas & Electric Company. His water works were the foundation of the huge utility company that serves the area today.

Birdsall file – Placer County Archives, Argus 5-8-1875, 1-7-1888, 9-10-1887, findagrave, History of the Bear River Ditch, Van Norden P. G. & E. magazine