



Charlene Duval, Executive Secretary

cduval@sourisseauacademy.org

Leilani Marshall, Archivist

lmarshall@sourisseauacademy.org

Phone: 408 808-2064

Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive presents:

Andrew Putnam Hill, Photographer

1853-1922

by Thomas Layton

Les Amis (The Friends)

November 2015

Your donations help us purchase historic photos. Thank you!

<http://www.sourisseauacademy.org/>

Oil Paintings

Studio of **ANDREW P. HILL**

ARTISTIC PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIEWS

DOUGHERTY BUILDING,
SECOND ST.

You are cordially invited to visit our new **PHOTO STUDIO**
and inspect samples of the work. All the latest styles, including
PLATINUMS, CARBONS and ARTISTS' PROOFS.

TELEPHONE BLACK 636 85 S. SECOND ST SAN JOSE, CAL.

[133] **Hill's letterhead.** Judging by the size of the lettering on Andrew Putnam Hill's florid stationery, one might conclude that oil paintings were his primary source of income. Not so! Although his paintings comprised the foundation of his identity and his fame, the less lofty "trade" of photography enabled him to support his family



[134] **Hill's Painting of Mission Santa Clara.** Hill possessed a considerable natural talent for art. After one year at Santa Clara College, he worked for the Army Corps of Engineers where he learned drafting and map-making. He then studied painting for a year at the California School of Design. From 1876 until 1883, Hill tried to earn a living as a portrait painter. Meanwhile, he began to paint the historic landscapes that would bring him fame. In 1882, he painted this now-iconic image of Mission Santa Clara as it might have looked in 1849.



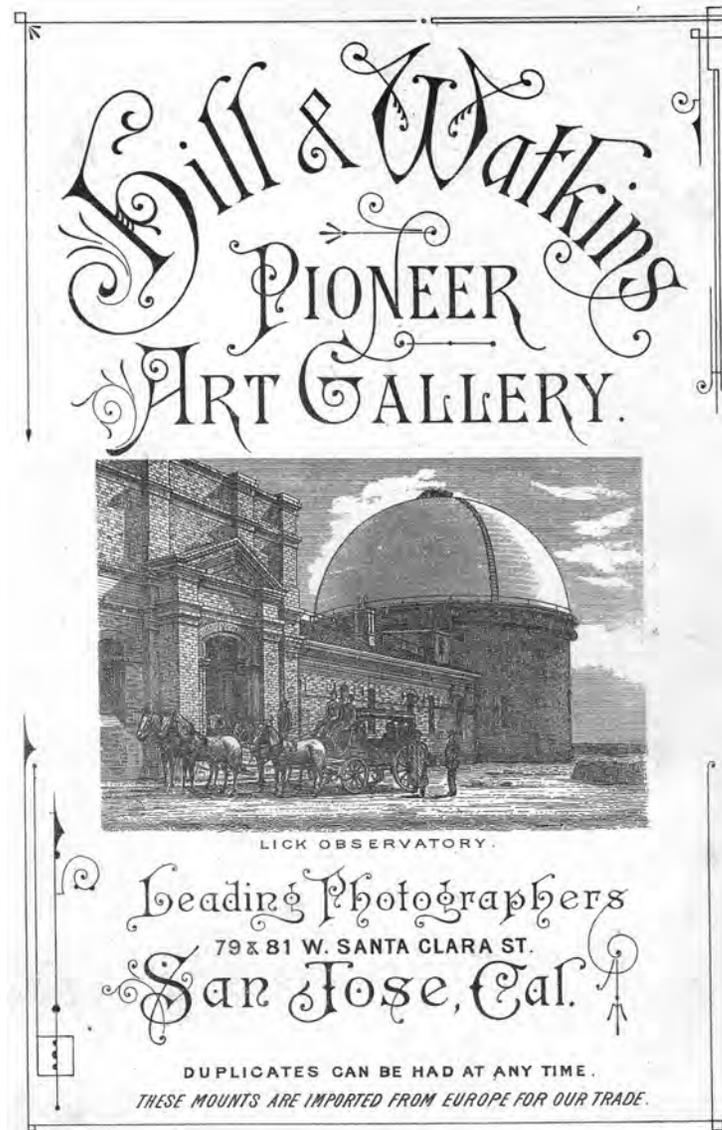
[135] **Andrew Putnam Hill and Laura Watkins.** But, Hill was barely earning a living as a painter. Not enough, in the view of Laura Watkins, his wealthy mother-in-law, shown here, to adequately support her daughter, Florence, whom he had married in 1883.



[136] **Chinatown.** Meanwhile, the technology of photography was progressing, and the business of photography was burgeoning. We do not know where Hill received his photographic training, but he was already producing professional quality photos by 1884, when he photographed San Jose's Chinatown.



[137] **Hill and Franklin.** In 1889, probably at the instigation of his mother-in-law, Hill partnered with John Franklin to open a photographic studio in San Jose. Hill's social connections as a portrait artist brought work from Leland Stanford who wanted to document his horse ranch and its transition into Stanford University. The elegant building in the center of this photo, known today as the Stanford Red Barn, is among the oldest structures on the Stanford campus



[138] **Hill & Watkins.** Less than a year later, Laura Watkins bought Franklin's half of the partnership. In addition to her capital, she brought marketing skills. Probably at her urging, Hill designed an eye-catching advertisement for the firm (with no mention of paintings) to be printed on the reverse side of all Hill and Watkins photos. Laura Watkins used the partnership as an opportunity for her younger daughter, Jettora Watkins Hyde, to train as a photographer. The welcoming feminine presence of Watkins and Hyde attracted business from women, and it fostered a subtle naturalism in the images produced.



[139] **Hill and Yard climb the Electric Light Tower.** In February 1892, Laura Watkins sold her half of the partnership to Sydney Yard, a skilled photographer, who could actually share the work of operating a photographic studio. This enabled Hill to expand the firm's offerings from studio portraits to landscape photography — such as their eight-photo panorama taken from the 207-foot platform near the top of San Jose's Electric Light Tower. However, when Hill and Yard filed for bankruptcy in 1894, Jettora Watkins Hyde, Hill's sister-in-law (perhaps funded by Laura Watkins) purchased the entire firm.



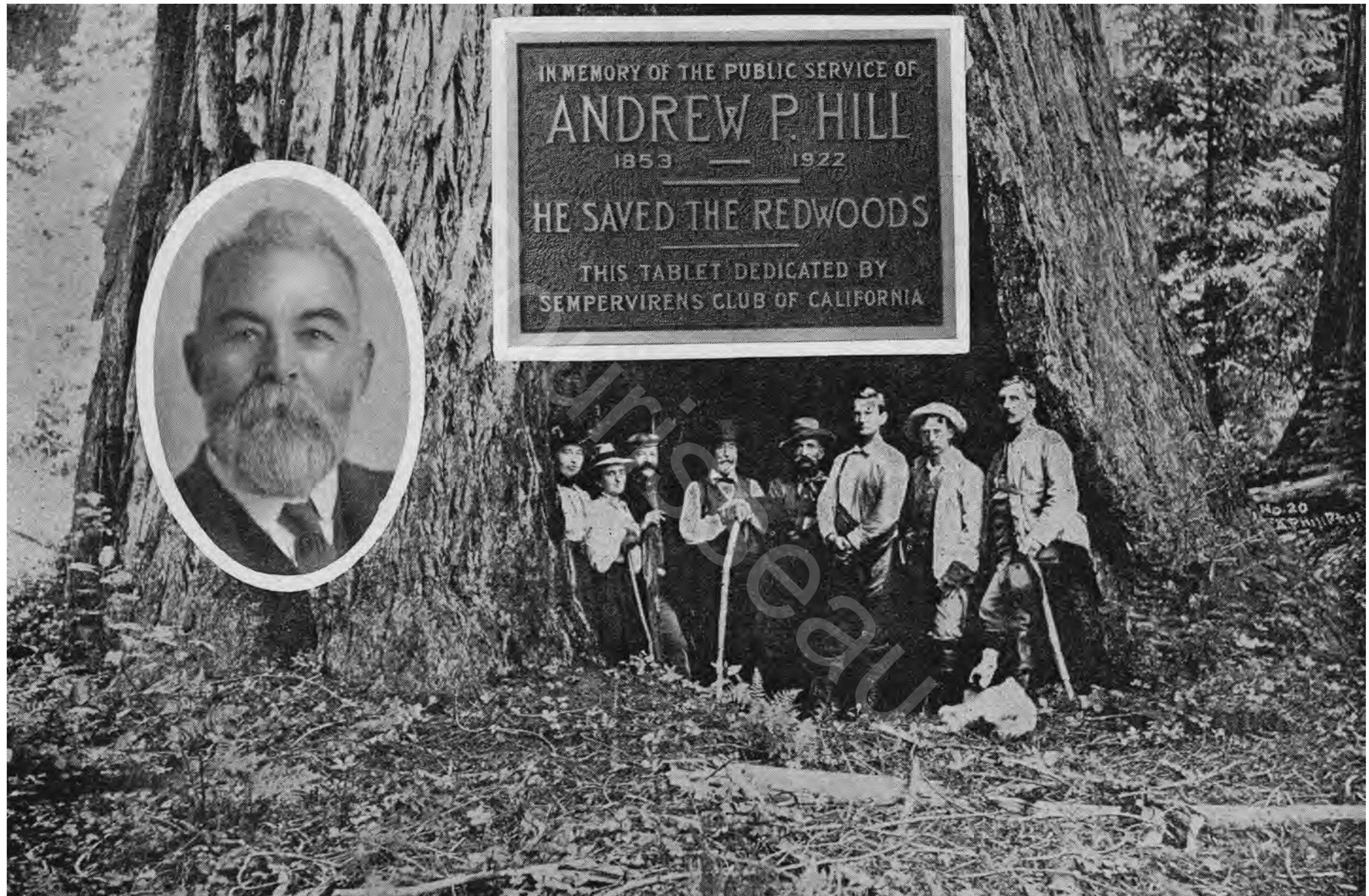
[140] **The Williams' Ranch on Stevens Creek Road.** Freed from the Hill & Yard partnership, and now again working for himself, Hill was able to follow his artistic inclinations — often turning a paid commission to photograph a farm or ranch into an opportunity to frame a landscape as he would for a painting, such as this view east across the Williams Ranch on Stevens Creek Road, facing San Jose.



[141] **Hill and DeJoiner.** In 1898, Hill partnered with Oscar DeJoiner in a firm that lasted barely long enough to have cabinet card mounts printed with their names. This carefully framed photo of commerce at Wright's Station in the Santa Cruz Mountains documents that short-lived partnership.



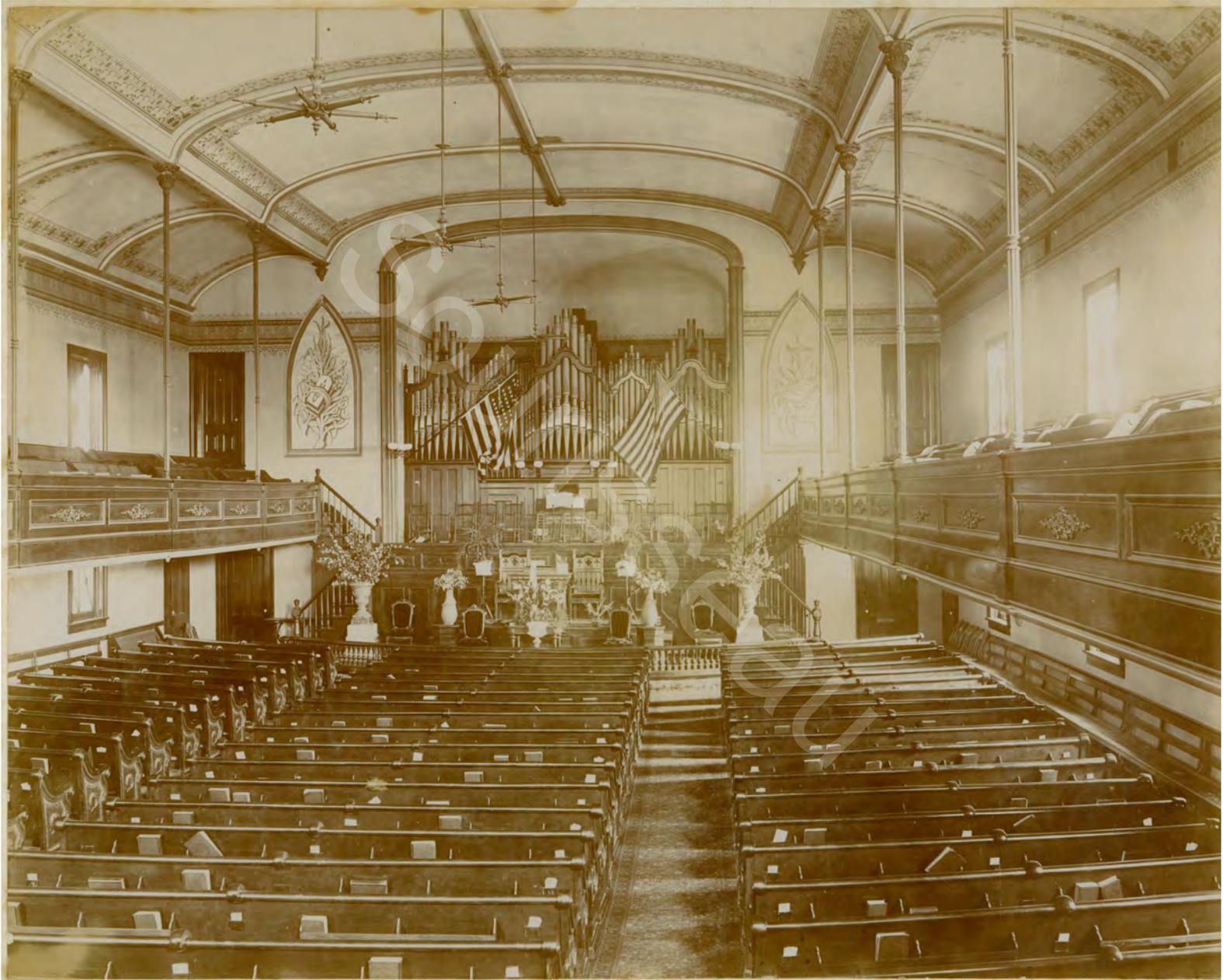
[142] **Dousing the Mar Vista Winery fire.** By 1899, Hill was again working alone when he received a commission to illustrate a magazine article about the Mar Vista Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains, that was famously saved from a forest fire by its wine. Hill photographed the winery, then added flames and men pouring buckets of wine onto the burning roof — anticipating Photoshop by almost a century. This job would be a turning point for Hill. He had discovered The Big Trees.



[143] **The Big Trees.** Hill now began to use his artistic, photographic and personal skills to "Save the Redwoods." In 1900, he helped found the Sempervirens Club and began lobbying to preserve the relict grove in Big Basin. California Redwood Park — the first California State Park — would open in 1904. In 1927, the name was changed to Big Basin Redwoods.



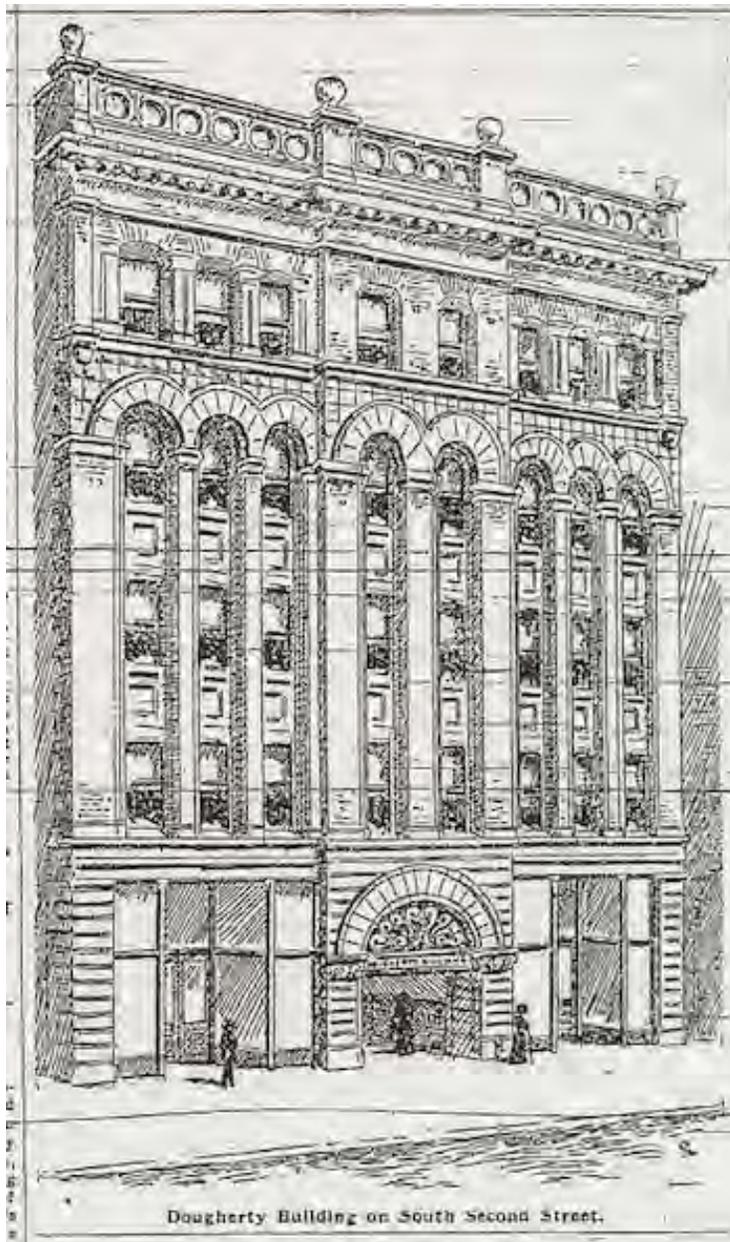
[144] **The Enterprise Grocery Store.** Meanwhile, Hill was perfecting his technique for illuminating the interiors of large buildings, by balancing reflected light from carefully placed trays of magnesium flash powder — such as this tricky view of the long, narrow interior of the Enterprise Grocery Store, at the corner of Second and San Fernando Streets.



[145] **The First Methodist Episcopal Church.** Hill's most challenging inside photo was probably the cavernous interior of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, destroyed only a few years later by the 1906 earthquake.



[146] **Hill's studio in the Dougherty Building.** In 1903, Hill moved his photographic negatives, prints and paintings to a modern studio on the top floor of the Dougherty Building on Second Street. At this location a skylight provided natural illumination, not only for his portrait painting and photography, but also for this portrait of his wife, bathed in light, beside a wall of painted portraits.



[147] **The 1906 Earthquake.** Then came the massive earthquake of April 18th, 1906, and the Dougherty Building burned to the ground. Hill lost everything.



[148] **Redwood Park.** Devastated, Hill moved his studio to his home; and in 1911, he opened a small store in Redwood Park to sell his images. He continued painting and photographing the Big Trees until his death in 1922.

Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History
November 2015



[149] **The Andrew P. Hill House.** In 1995, as part of a cultural resource evaluation, local historian Glory Anne Laffey (also then the Executive Secretary of the Sourisseau Academy), discovered that Andrew P. Hill's house at 1350 Sherman Street was still standing. The Victorian Preservation Association bought the house to save it from destruction, and it was moved to History Park in 1997. In 2010, this magnificently restored house was opened to the public. House-moving photo by Franklin Maggi. Photo of restored house, by Tom Layton.