

FISH, MELANCHTHON 1828-1891 (Copied from records written by Frances Grate.)

Melanchthon Fish was named after a 15th/16th century cleric who served as, what we would now describe, the chief of staff to Martin Luther. Fluent in both ancient Greek and Latin, as well as his native German, he took the name Melanchthon which was a translation of his German name into Latin, as a sign of his piety and devotion to the reformation.

We know that Fish was born in New York in 1828 into what must have been a very religious family, given their choice of the child's name. He received his medical degree from the Chicago Rush Medical Collage and by 1856 had courted and married Emily's sister and set off for China as a medical missionary for the Episcopal Church.

Upon arriving in Shanghai, the secular life overcame his good intentions and he resigned his position as a missionary to become Vice Council of the United States for that city. "Dr. Fish, who reimbursed the Committee for the expenses to which that had been subjected for his passage and outfit." (Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. 1856)

Life in China at those times was not without risk for westerners. A study done of the lives of missionaries during the 1800's found that fully 25% were to die while on their mission. Emily's sister's death, be it from child birth or other factors was apparently not that unusual.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1862, Fish resigned his position and set sail for the United States with his new wife of two years and young daughter. Joining the Union Army, he mustered out February 5, 1865, having served as a surgeon in Company S, 11th Missouri infantry, attaining the rank of Captain.

Available records indicate he took up a position with the U.S. Government, probably the Army, at the Benicia Arsenal. He resigned that post and entered private practice and joined the University of California College of Medicine as part of the first operational faculty, as Professor of Physiology in the early 1870's. When the curriculum expanded to include a school of dentistry in 1882, in addition to medicine, Fish taught in both fields at the San Francisco campus.

University professors at that time were compensated at a rate of \$3000 per year in neighboring Nevada and we can probably assume that California's salaries were comparable. This was a healthy income when a laborer would receive one or two dollars per day and a lighthouse keeper's salary was about one-third that of a professor.

The San Francisco Calls society page lists Mrs. Fish, Emily, as being a member of society who did not live in San Francisco proper, but was a resident of Oakland. She was listed as an avid horticulturist who spend a good deal of time touring Europe. When you are in competition with the society matrons whose husbands' incomes were undoubtedly greater than that of a university professor, it is probably not surprising that Emily might have had to get a job several years after her husband's death just to make ends meet.

Melanchthon was a member of the Grand Lodge of the Ancient Order of United Workmen, a fraternal order that provided \$1000 to the heirs of members upon death. Other than that, it appears that he did not leave Emily a very large estate on which to live.

Me-lanch-thon (mə-langk'thən), **Philipp**, Hellenized name of **Philip Schwarz-erd** (shvārts'ärt), 1497–1560, German religious reformer, associate of Luther. Also **Me-lanc'thon**.