

"Next improvement to San José's firefighting capability was the steam fire engine. During the heyday of the steamer, spanning half a century of the city's history, San José owned a total of seven machines of five different makes. The first one was a Silsby, costing \$6,215.20, which was received on June 6, 1867, and placed in service with Empire Company. Empire's old hand tub, which today would be a priceless historical relic, wound up during the '80's at the County Almshouse, then disappeared -- probably junked.

Arrival of the Silsby steamer naturally caused the old engine used by the rival Torrent Company to present "a very insignificant appearance," and the boys cast about for something better. The indefatigable Gourley again came to the rescue. In San Francisco, he located a handsome Hunneman end-stroke engine which was available for \$1700 cash. Not one to buy a pig in a poke, Gourley spent some time testing the machine to be sure of its value, then reported back in satisfaction.

The hitch was that San José, strapped by the huge outlay for Empire's steamer, had only about \$1200 available for fire purposes. It was agreed, therefore, that the purchase would be made only if the balance needed could be raised by subscription. Members of Torrent Company gathered solemnly together and with much head-shaking they concluded such a sum was impossible for them to raise.

Gazing around him at the circle of downcast faces, James Gourley threw down the gauntlet. Tossing \$50 on the table, he cried, "Tis the last dollar I have, but it shall go for the new engine!" He dared the others to do as well. Immediately the coin began pouring on the table and in less than twenty minutes the



required amount was raised. The Hunneman was bought, serving first Torrent, later Franklin Company, until 1880 when it was sold to the town of Turlock. It, too, has apparently long since been junked."

Pages 10 and 11 from  
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