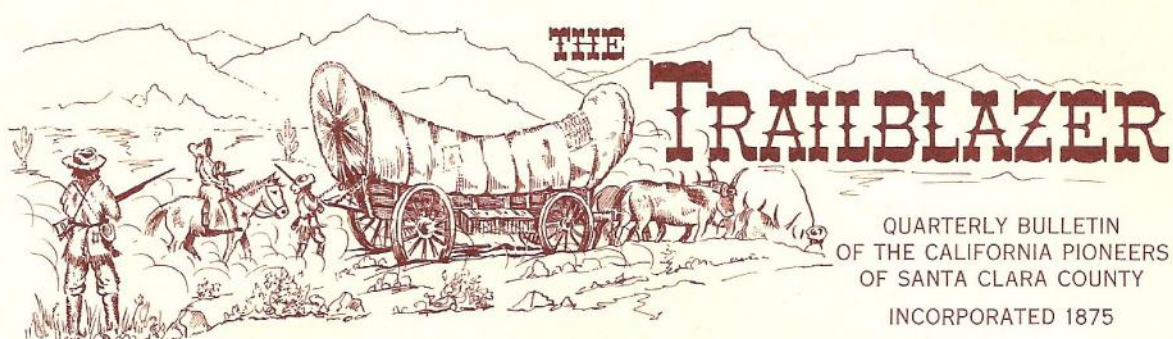




Volume 17

February 1977

Number 1



**SHE WITNESSED THE
ELECTRIC LIGHT TOWER
DEDICATION IN 1881**

WHALE BLAZERS

July 1905:- Congress Springs Park was sold to a corporation known as the Congress Springs Improvement Co. headed by Judge J. R. Welch as president. This transaction went on to stress the sale and consumption of the far-famed Congress Spring water which scooped up first prize at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904 as the best mineral water in the U. S.

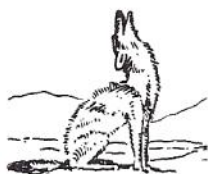
August 1905:- Shall the telephone poles of Palo Alto be square painted white or shall they be round and painted green? This was the harassing question that confronted Sunset Phone Co. officials and the town's Board of Directors. The Telephone Company was to make extensions into residential areas of the town and insisted the only way to go, economy wise, would be round poles painted green. Town officials desired their present pole arrangement, square painted white. This agenda flared for months when the city finally surrendered to round poles painted green and all brought to uniform height.

Feb. 1909:- Article of Incorporation of "The Pacific Coast Eucalyptus Timber Co." were filed. Object: To own, buy, sell, lease land and other property in Santa Clara County to propagate and grow eucalyptus and other wood and timber; To buy, sell, own, erect, and operate sawmills, plants and establishments for the distillation and manufacture of eucalyptus products from leaves, trees, bark and branches." This project was short lived.

May 25, 1909:- The erection and dedication of the first series of El Camino Mission Highway Bells in northern California took place at the corner of The Alameda and Morris Ave. under the auspices of the Santa Clara Women's Club. Mrs. Alice Hare headed the committee which raised funds for the bell and signpost aided by Mrs. Wm. Fleming, Mrs. John Steinhart, Mrs. A. E. Osborne and Father Gleason.

Remember when gypsies set up camp in some nearby pasture and the juvenile sensations that went along with it? Hair-raising comments like, "Yes'n they pickle ya n'ya never come back."

H.C.



Coyote Hunt Holiday

LAURA CALLOWAY

The baying and yipping of the dogs had been echoing in the crags and canyons of the Santa Cruz Mts. nearly a century ago when a group of hunters settled down for an evening of swapping yarns of the successes of the day. The idea of their wives experiencing the thrill of the hounds in cry after the fleeing game was a popular topic. The camp was inaccessible to all but those used to hard riding. The thick brush and rough terrain would be impossible for women in their riding habits. At length someone came up with the idea of taking the hunt to the ladies. A coyote would be caught and taken to the vicinity of San Jose and the dogs unleashed. The women would then have a deluxe edition of the hunt to enjoy from the comfort of their carriages.

Invitations were issued and all was going well except for the committee whose job it was to secure the coyote. They set traps and hunted with dogs hoping to track the wily animal to its lair. No coyote would permit himself to be captured alive. The day before the hunt arrived and the coyoteless pair headed

for O'Donnell's Gardens, an amusement place with cages of birds and animals. From the proprietor one of the exhibit coyotes was purchased.

On Christmas morning the hunt site, the hills south of the cemetery near Monterey Road, was swarming with observers sitting in their carriages, on horseback or afoot. Some forty of fifty dogs strained at their leashes in anticipation of the hunt. The poor coyote was relieved of his bounds. With freedom and his former cave in sight, he sat staring at the frenzied dogs and tense nimrods gathered about. No amount of shouts, kicks or prods would budge him. Suddenly several dogs slipped their collars. In a matter of seconds the coyote was dead.

A couple of men, feeling that the spectators should not be deprived of the thrill of the baying hounds, hastily roped the dead animal and rode a meandering trail of four or five miles before heading for town. In due time the hunt terminated with a Hunt Breakfast at which a lady was heard to remark, "There's no sweeter music in the world than the baying of the hound."



HORSE CAR TROLLEY TRANSIT

The San Jose-Santa Clara Horse Railroad, the West's first interurban horse railroad turned up hobbling on Nov. 4, 1868. According to old published accounts this improved type of public transportation was deemed a welcome relief from the mud and bumps inflicted by stagecoaches serving the two chummy communities. It was to be portly Samuel A. Bishop, a native of Virginia and a gold rush arrival, who with his spirited directors filed articles of incorporation for the line in March of that year. In haste a $3\frac{1}{2}$ mile stretch of narrow gauge slender T-rail track was completed. This original trolley rail ran from Santa Clara's elite Cameron House at Franklin and Main, down The Al-

ameda to First Street, San Jose. By 1869 the line was extended a mile and a half east to Coyote Creek.

Bishop's first horse car pilot was venerable Billy Fitts who had previously operated a stagecoach between the two Alameda separated settlements from 1861 to 1868. It was a more placid Alameda than the one we travel today. The only dwellings Fitts passed on the willow-poplar lined thoroughfare were those of Judge Augustus Rhodes, J. R. Johnson, Judge C. P. Hester, John Morse and a man named Appleton.

This brand new assignment for Fitts proved exciting and of all things, romantic. Mrs. Lillian Brisbin, our Pioneer member, can testify to that. She is the great-granddaughter of Billy Fitts. Lillian says many of her great-granddad's passengers were attractive senoritas of Santa Clara who attended Notre Dame Academy in San Jose. It was to take but a few shakes of his mare's reins when the handsome trolley driver surrendered to the loveliness of one Senorita Dolores Pinedo of Santa Clara who was the granddaughter of Jose de los Reyes Berryessa, owner of the rancho from which the rich New Almaden mines emerged. In blissful time Dolores became the bride of Billy. Fitts later served as superintendent of the horse line until it was converted to electric in 1889 when he went to work for the water company.

In 1924 Mr. A. C. Clevenger of Santa Clara was sa-

luted as one of the few remaining horse trolley men around. Clevenger told how it would take one hour and three quarters to drive his plodding conveyance to San Jose in the 1870's. The one track affair had switches at semi-convenient intervals to allow cars to pass. "Only six cars and six drivers were the whole show," he said. "You collected fares during the switch wait and we knew all the passengers. A through trip from Santa Clara to Coyote Creek cost 10 cents or 5 cents if you traveled to Fredericksburg Brewery, the half way point." Spring's Store sold the trolley tickets to the public. Conductors were forbidden to carry tickets although some used their own money to provide tickets for regular riders.

Dominic Higgins was another notable early horse railer to impart recollections. "The working force of the company," he said, "was made up of 12 to 14 men consisting of six regular drivers, plus two stable hands. Pay was \$40 to \$55 per month. Board and room was provided in back of the barns located near the half way point if you so desired for about \$12 a month. Horses were changed each round trip." According to Higgins delays hardly brought any serious complaints because folks were less concerned about time in those days.

Not all trolley horses tugged The Alameda. By 1875 Dr. Davis Devine's North-Side Horse Railroad line operated from First and St. John to 17th St. and continued out to the north city limits to Mission St. The First Street route ran from the railroad depot, at Bassett, down First to Reed Street.

Jacob Rich, a tailor, acquired the Market St.-Willow Glen Horse Rail, built in 1876 by C. T. Bird. Most of the patrons were Chinese ranch hands and rural school students. Rich also built the Southeast-Side Horse Railroad in 1877 - down 2nd to San Carlos to Ninth to Reed - to give the populace a chance for an outing at O'Donnell's Gardens at Ninth and William. By 1878 optimistic Jacob Rich had laid out a system running from 2nd out Santa Clara St., down Stockton to Cinnabar to Agricultural Park. This line, then known as The Peoples Horse Railroad, later continued to Santa Clara via Stockton Ave., Emory and Union Ave. (now Park Ave.).

H.C.



OUR ELECTRIC LIGHT TOWER BELLE

HENRY CALLOWAY



Mrs. Bessie Gould was just eight years old when she witnessed an event of major importance in San Jose on the evening of December 13, 1881. This great moment was the stupendous lighting of San Jose's titanic 200-foot Electric Light Tower that had just been completed at the galloping intersection of Market and Santa Clara Streets.

Blond lengthy haired little Bessie and her parents, Charles and Lou Wyman, attended this public celebration to render their share of "Ohs" and "Ahs" to a lofty climax to one of the most outstanding landmarks the city has ever known.

The Trailblazer recently called on Mrs. Gould who celebrated her 103 birthday last October in Stockton where she lives in a congenial guest home complex. Our letters and phone calls had already established a warm attachment; so when we met, we scarcely needed an introduction. This warm vivacious centenarian awaited our arrival with the "latchstrings out." Although an obstinate valley fog shrouded the town, this grand lady readily and unknowingly scattered sunshine over our entire surroundings. The well-coiffured prim pioneer sported a colorful slack suit highlighted by a pearl necklace, a combination which enhanced strong inherited features from hardy parents who ox-wagoned an immigrant trail in 1862.

"Now just call me Cousin Bessie," she urged. Our newly-found delightful cousin was overjoyed not only because of our visit but she had just claimed the Bingo Jack Pot, all of a dollar and a half the evening before. "I'm going to open a bank account now just as my friends here suggest," she chuckled.

An interesting gallery of photographs depicting special events in Cousin Bessie's life graced a special niche in her neat studio apartment. We directed our interest to one, the Electric Tower. Cousin Bessie immediately voiced in firm tones her views on why the tower should have been restored after it toppled in a storm on December 3, 1915. "Because of the lack of foresightedness on the part of the town officials who made the mistake by not maintaining the tower properly," she declared, "did San Jose suffer a great loss. It would always have been a great object to draw visitors to San Jose, where my heart has been through all these years."

"I am so glad," she sighed in relief, "there is going to be a remembrance of the tower in the historical area of Kelley Park. As a child I was not much interested in the long speeches but the thrilling moment when the lights were turned on, I shall never forget. Bands playing, flags displayed and ascension balloons all added to an exciting occasion. When horse trolley cars passed under the glowing tower," she recalls, "they too gave a sparkle all their own. When we arrived home, then on the Monterey Road near the cemetery, my father called attention to our shadows cast from the tower. I remember when Dad placed his hand behind my head catching the image of his fanned hand onto my forehead from the huge light so far away."

Bessie, an only child, was born in the San Felipe Valley near Evergreen where her Iowa Overland Trail parents homesteaded on land supposedly advertised as public land in 1865. Here the Wymans were surprisingly informed later their ranch was within the limits of Pueblo lands by a group called The Land Co. who won the suit and authority to eject all settlers on Pueblo lands from their homes and confiscate all holdings to satisfy claims due them from the City of San Jose. Charles Wyman went to court to plead his misfortune but lost. Lacking funds to purchase the property the family was finally evicted being permitted only a span of horses, a wagon and a plow. "My father had worked hard for years," says Bessie, "making the ranch so productive and beautiful. We called our place, 'Cozy Nook'."

"My parents really taught me to read and write. Dad was my inspiration. Many times did I sit on his knee as he tutored and read to me. We were poor," our agile hostess confesses, "but I never knew it. Dad made all our furniture, Mother my clothes. I was no brat or spoiled," she admits. "No, meant No, believe me! I was a real country kid, milked cows, drove a team, worked in

fruit sheds and picked prunes, too."

Bessie started her public schooling at the Reed St. School in 1880. "Later we lived on No. 13th St., close enough to attend the Santa Clara St. School at 6th and Santa Clara Sts., then the high school." She also revealed the Horse Trolley was often her school bus. Bessie earned her teaching diploma at State Normal. She states she was overwhelmed when her first teaching assignment was the San Felipe School where she taught for two years.

Near the turn of the century Bessie moved to Petaluma in Sonoma County where she married and continued to teach part time. After the passing of her first husband, Harold Campbell, Bessie accepted an assignment with the Sonoma County Welfare Dept. that she went on to supervise for over 35 years.

Age is no catastrophe to this twice-widowed childless personality. "The delight and fulfillment she radiates expresses her joy of living," says her devoted cousin and Pioneer member, Mrs. Irma Tourtillotte Cleary. "She is the center of our family."

Bessie Gould is very much aware to the needs of a crumbled and blurred society. "Love thy neighbor is what is needed," she contends. After 103 superb years Cousin Bessie somehow like her beloved by-gone Electric Tower has taken over, bedazzling all who are fortunate to be enriched by this affectionate, soul-stirring human floodlight.

Dues of \$3.00 each for 1977 are now due. Check your ID card to avoid loss of membership. Call or write the Financial Secretary, Byron Bullard, 1085 Tasman Dr. Sp. 404, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 or phone 734-0481.

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE. New active members upon payment of \$1.00 initiation fee will have the option of paying the \$3.00 yearly dues or purchasing a \$45.00 Life Membership, (\$75.00 for husband and wife subscribing at the same time).

The same Life Membership privileges are extended to present members.



Clyde Arbuckle

Fellow Pioneers:

Few of us have ever associated Alaska with San Diego and Salinas. Therefore, Dr. Ted C. Hinckley of San Jose State University has chosen "Town Boomer--Sitka, San Diego and Salinas" as the title of his lecture for our March 5th Quarterly Meeting.

Dr. Hinckley, a recognized authority on this subject, has devoted much time to the study of Alaskan relations with coterminous United States in general and California in particular.

Immediately after the March meeting, we shall prepare for our Annual Santa Clara County historical essay contest whose winners will receive their awards at our June meeting. All persons interested in this contest should promote participation by as many college and high school students as possible. Sponsors should instruct all contestants to submit their papers to Contest Chairman Austen D. Warburton not later than April 29.

LOOK FOR IT HERE

TOUR RESERVATIONS are made at the Quarterly meetings or by phone calls to Ruth Gross at 294-9830 between the hours of 9 and 12 Monday through Friday. After confirmation by Ruth that space is available, THEN send checks, payable to "The Californians" to 100 Serena Way, Santa Clara, CA 95051. Trip brochures are available through Ruth Gross.

Our SOCIAL CLUB meets at the TOWN PARK TOWERS, at 60 North 3rd St., on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month. For further information call Lovene Lührman, 292-0070.

PLANS UNDERWAY June 16-17-18, 1977 will be stirring dates hereabouts. San Jose is hosting the 24 Regions of the California Conference of California Historical Societies at the San Jose Hyatt House. The theme spotlights San Jose, the First Civil Settlement in California. Remember, you are all welcome to this absorbing historical showcase. ----See you there!

Here 'Tis. Deck the halls with ivy and typewriter ribbon, Pioneers! Mr. Frank Freeman has been duly elected an honorary member to our Society. Mr. Freeman's popular Mercury column sparkled with human interest for over 34 years, the longest feature in the local newspaper's history. The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County are indeed appreciative of the lavish exposure extended our activities during the captivating realm of "Here 'Tis." Happy Trails, Frank.

We claim just one other honorary member, Dr. A. Cecil Todd who lives in Warwickshire, England. Dr. Todd authored The Cornish Miner in America. His book descriptively takes in the periods of the ingenious Cornish miner at New Almaden and other Calif. mining communities.

"He Named It Garden City" was a Trailblazer feature in the August 1976 issue, authored by Mr. Laurence E. Bulmore. This interesting account of the affectionate name of San Jose went on to mass continued attention when Journalist Dick Barrett generously devoted it to several of his nostalgic Sunday columns. We are happy to report the article will again be published in "The California Historian," quarterly publication of the Conference of California Historical Societies, early this year, signaling San Jose's 200th Birthday.

The late San Jose educator, lawyer and dedicated historian, Peter M. Waddell made and hammered countless signs identifying the California segment of the Donner Trail in the 1920's. Mr. Clyde Arbuckle with his Metropolitan Adult Education history class are replacing nearly 15 miles of the route markers, many of which have since been scattered by the elements and vandalism.

Mrs. Erna Gaetano tells of a joyful era when she was head fountain girl at the old Hales Store over 55 years ago when it flanked First, Second and San Fernando Sts. George M. Fontaine was the store manager and the stepdad of two pert youngsters by the names of Joan Fontaine and Olivia de Havilland. Occasional store visits with their mother would often bring pleas for Erna's larruping good soda specials.

Your generosity at the Christmas Luncheon to the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center Pediatric ward was \$130.70. GRACIAS!

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