

THE TRAILBLAZER

Quarterly Bulletin of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County

Volume 4 Winter 1964 Number 1

ATOP MOUNT HAMILTON

Lovesta Dorwin Davis

James Lick reserved the right to choose the observatory site when he made his bequest of \$700,000 for the "most powerful telescope ever yet made." Someone suggested that he consult an authority, but Mr. Lick proceeded to consider six separate locations, uninformed as he was about the requirements for an Astronomical Observatory. His was not the last word, however, when Mount Hamilton was eventually selected--by experts.

According to reports "Mr. Lick originally intended to allot \$1,200,000 to erect an observatory on his lot at the corner of Fourth and Market, in downtown San Francisco. It required months of careful discussion to change his views."

Since it was elevation and freedom from noise and fog that was needed, Mr. Lick then specified his lots at Lake Tahoe. Again he was dissuaded because of their inaccessibility, and the severity of the winters. Mount Diablo was his next choice, but it was found to be not high enough.

After an illness Mr. Lick went to Napa County for a rest. From his room in the Calistoga Hotel he contemplated Mount Saint Helena. Frail though he was he insisted upon looking over the site. He rode on a mattress in the back of a spring wagon. As they went up the hillside the end-gate catch failed, "spilling Mr. Lick upon the ground." It is said, "He cursed all Napa County--he anathematized the location," and went home.

Back in San Francisco Mr. Lick sent his business agent to examine the peaks in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The highest, Loma Prieta, proved not only 200 feet short of the required 4000 feet, but it was often shrouded with coastal fogs.

When asked why he had not already considered the Mount Hamilton Range Mr. Lick is reported to have been surprised to learn that all three of the highest peaks were above 4200 feet. Lick's business agent, in the company of San Jose's mayor, then explored the possibilities of Mount Hamilton.

Three drawbacks presented themselves: the foremost peak, the best site, was very rugged and would have to be leveled off at considerable cost; the only available water was a spring 300 feet below the summit, which would require 4300 feet of conduit to lift it to the building site; there were no roads, so the observatory could not be visited by the public.

The first two objections were not insurmountable in Mr. Lick's opinion. He then stipulated, as a condition to his acceptance of the location, "a first class wagon road, over which a good team could trot with ease."

Once begun the work went forward steadily, but Mr. Lick had been in his borrowed tomb in Lone Mountain Cemetery for more than two years when astronomers from the University set up their small instruments to make rigid tests. They demonstrated to everyone's satisfaction that the site was indeed a suitable one.

Nearly ten years later Mr. Lick's body was brought to the summit and entombed beneath the pier which supports what was once "the most powerful telescope ever yet made," atop Mount Hamilton.

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DEATH VALLEY

Its Discovery and Historical Tie with Santa Clara County
Clyde Arbuckle
(continued from the Fall issue)

They worked their way to the floor of Death Valley by Furnace Creek Wash and Jayhawker Well (McLean Spring) routes. Then they more or less divided into their original units and got out as best they could, following at least four different routes.

And on their way out, they gave the valley its name. Just as they topped the last rise, they looked back and, with heartfelt thanks, exclaimed, "Good-bye Death Valley!"

In general, their discovery was no more important than many other discoveries of the Gold Rush period. Yet it concerns all members of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County, because four of those discoverers became prominent citizens of this county. They were: William Lewis Manly, Lorenzo Dow Stephens, Thomas Shannon and Harry Wade.

Manly was greatest of the four. When his party got stranded at what we now call Bennett Wells, he and a companion named John Rogers hiked over the Panamint Mountains and across Mojave Desert to Mission San Fernando in quest of relief. They also returned with that relief--

pack animals loaded with provisions, etc.-- though they could easily have escaped their obligation. The round trip took them 26 days.

After wandering about the state for ten years, Manly settled in San Jose, where he farmed almost until his death in 1903. In 1894 he wrote DEATH VALLEY in '49, the book that is still top authority on the valley's discovery. (Every history of Death Valley begins with it, and none could be written without it.)

Stephens tried his luck at mining and farming until 1883. Then he, too, settled in San Jose, where he died in 1921 at the age of 93--last of the Jayhawkers.

Stephens wrote a book called LIFE SKETCHES OF A JAY-HAWKER OF '49, published in 1916. It proved a valuable collector's item, and is still referred to by historians. But its account of his party's overland journey to California is not so comprehensive as Manly's.

Shannon mined for some years in Yuba County and served in the Union Army during the Civil War. After his discharge from the army in 1866, he took up Government land in the Union District northeast of Los Gatos, where Shannon Road was named after him. He died in 1903.

Wade, whose baptismal name appears variously as Henry and Harry, was the only one of the four to get his wagons out of Death Valley. He was also first of the four to settle in Santa Clara County. He went to the mines, but soon left them for Alviso, where he engaged in teaming until his retirement in 1865. He died in Alviso at the age of 83 in 1884.

Incidentally, three other Santa Clara County men--Henry Chapman Skinner, Ransom Grove Moody and Alexander Combs Erkson--accompanied the Death Valley Party across southwestern Utah. But instead of attempting a guesswork shortcut to the San Joaquin Valley, they stuck to the Salt Lake-Los Angeles Trail. Thus, they missed stumbling into Death Valley and sharing the fame of its discovery.

Skinner, who mixed farming with justice of the peace duties, developed the Skinner Seedling apple at his home on what is now 19th and Julian Streets in San Jose.

Moody, whose family left its name on Moody Gulch, became a San Jose real estate dealer.

Erkson appears to have been a man of means who retired early, for every issue of the Great Register of Voters listed his occupation as "None." In this, he had much in common with Benjamin F. Moore, delegate to the First Constitutional Convention of California, who listed his occupation as "Elegant Leisure."

By-lines from the President

Alice M. Vetterle

With the holidays behind us, we are ready to greet the New Year and make plans for the months to come.

As the months go by we see more of our historic buildings yield to the demolition crews in the name of "PROGRESS". Some members of the community are gravely concerned with this and are doing all they can to influence the local governments. Recent state legislation enacted can be utilized to help stem the destruction of our historical landmarks throughout the county and perhaps our posterity may still be able to view these.

Our bus tours of necessity are curtailed during the winter months due to weather conditions. I'm sure our Tour Leader will have much to offer us in the coming months as the spring weather arrives. The most feasible way we have found to let the majority of the members know of the tours is by passing out the schedules at the Quarterly meetings, and a brief mention in the Trailblazer. Mailing out individually would be too expensive, and also the prospect of learning about the tours may be an incentive to come to the luncheon meeting.

At our March Quarterly Meeting we plan to have Miss Irene Simpson as our speaker. Miss Simpson is President of the Conference of California Historical Societies, as well as Director of the Wells Fargo Bank History Room in San Francisco. I'm sure she will have lots of interesting material to give us, however her topic has not yet been determined.

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State Seal of California

The seal of the State of California is as old as her statehood itself. The seal had its origin in and was adopted by the Constitution Convention which met in Colton Hall in Monterey during September and October 1849.

The seal of the State of California was designed by Major Robert Selden Garnett. Final action on adoption of the seal came October 11, 1849.

Around the bend of the ring are represented thirty-one stars, being the number of states of which the Union will consist upon the admission of California. The foreground figure represents the goddess Minerva having sprung full grown from the brain of Jupiter. She is introduced as a type of the political birth of California. At her feet crouches a grizzly bear feeding upon the

clusters from a grapevine, emblematic of the peculiar characteristics of the country. A miner is engaged with his rocker and bowl at his side; and the snow clad peaks of the Sierra Nevada make up the background. Above is the Greek motto "Eureka" (I have found it). It was later resolved, that the words "The great Seal of the state of California" be added to the design.

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PIONEER DAYS

88 Years Ago

(From the files of the S. J. Mercury, September 21, 1876)

The Pioneers of Santa Clara County enjoyed a Social-A Witty and Wise address by Judge Belden--And a grand feast of music, with table luxuries and rounds of dances in Music Hall last evening under most pleasing auspices.

The Secretary, Alex P. Murgotten, gave a brief statistical review of the life, the present purposes and future prospects of the Society. The Pioneer order in San Jose, at present numbers 372 souls.

The first social of the "Santa Clara County Pioneers" as earnest of the good times coming in the convocations of that body of hard and brave people, was most gratifying.

* * *

54 Years Ago

A notice sent out to the members of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County, April 25, 1910, read as follows: "All the faithful and true will assemble on Saturday, May 7, A.D. 1910, at ye Alum Rock Park, to celebrate ye Annual Outing and Basket Picnic; to greet thy friends and associates and enjoy thyself. Bring thy basket well filled. We know it will be good. There will be a band of musical boys, called the Sodality Band; we will have to refresh them with food. Some of the brethren may need food. Bring your car and pitcher to hold thy coffee and cups to use. After May 2nd car tickets for round trip 25 cts; under 12 yrs. 15 cts, can be obtained at Farmer's Union, Home Union, Millard Bros., Wagener's and Laughlin's Drug Stores, News store cor. 2nd, and Rice's, corner Santa Clara and 10th Sts. You can board the cars anywhere when you have tickets."

* * *

For that rundown feeling - try jay-walking!

LOOK FOR IT HERE

Clyde Arbuckle was honored by the Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Masons in Washington, D.C., with their highest Degree, when the rank of Inspector General Honorary 33rd Degree was conferred upon him on October 22nd. Also named to the 33rd Degree was Astronaut Leroy Gordon Cooper.

If you are mailing dues to our Financial Secretary, Mrs. Jessie E. Black, her new address is: 82 South 9th Street, San Jose, California.

Bulldozers recently wrecked the old Friendly Inn at the corner of 101 Highway and W. Main Avenue in Morgan Hill. The Friendly Inn was originally built for a community center that would turn no one away. The land was donated by Mrs. A. F. Cochrane and funds for the building were collected in a door to door campaign. In recent years it was used as a roadside rest, and motorists stopped by the rambling old hall to eat picnic lunches.

Trustees of the Gilroy Elementary School District have turned over the three-acre Adams School site to Santa Clara County for a roadside rest. The property is at the intersection of Watsonville and Day roads on Uvas Creek five miles west of Gilroy. It has been the site of the Adams School since 1859.

The Benjamin Morse house at 1267 Franklin St., Santa Clara will be demolished for redevelopment as a "downtown" shopping area. It was one of Santa Clara's grand old mansions built about 1870. Benjamin Morse was at the head of the Morse Seed Co., and died in 1906. His widow lived to be 98 and resided in this house for 64 years.

Six members over 85 years of age were honored at our quarterly meeting on December 7th. Those present were: Emma Rutan, Harriet Burnett, Elizabeth Berberich, Josephine Franklin, Una B. Hughson and Martha A. More. Those that could not be present were: Flora G. Brooks, Alice Harris, Lavinia Lindemann, Mabel G. Luce, Edna Clinton Ridley and Minnie F. Sicotte our oldest member.

At our December quarterly meeting Mr. Laurence Bulmore gave a very interesting narration of the Mexican Christmas at Spanish Town on the hill, during the early days of New Almaden.

A Western Union cable from Dr. Cecil Todd, Penzance, Cornwall, England, reads: "MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL PIONEER MEMBERS."

Miss Donna Senini of San Jose State College has been selected for our 1964 scholarship award. Her topic will be San Jose during the Civil War.

Welcome

Congratulations to our new members: Robert O. Atkinson, Mary J. Barrett, E. Aileen Brown, Frederick M. DeMeza, Alma I. Gard, Florence E. George, Eleanor Mary Hawkins, Carl Heredia, Olive Heredia, Wellington B. Hewitt, Muriel H. Lester, Mabel Lietz, Virginia Montgomery, Lida O'Bannon Peck, Anna Picetti, Irma E. Ruth, Leo W. Ruth, Bruno L. Schulz, Mildred M. Schulz, Mabel H. Sheffield, Edith A. Smith, Eloise B. Statler, Hal C. Statler, Edith E. Van Every, Alma Von Waaden.

* * *

Under the Weather

Sara Smitherum, Evelyn R. Sloan, Ellen T. Flynn and Annie T. Peters have been reported ill. Our best wishes and hope for a rapid recovery are sincerely extended.

Kindly keep your officers informed as to the condition of any ill member, and report any sickness or deaths to the Chairman of our Sunshine Committee, Mrs. Lovene Lührman. Phone 292-0070.

* * *

Beyond the Horizon

Kate E. Williams
1880 - 1963

Vern B. Towner
November 18, 1895 - October 14, 1963

Lorena M. O'Fallon
May 24, 1890 - October 28, 1963

Irill V. Crowe
September 25, 1895 - November 12, 1963

Sarah Jane Drew
December 3, 1870 - November 17, 1963

Roy L. Shively
August 18, 1888 - November 26, 1963

In behalf of the officers and members of the California Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County, The Trailblazer extends their sincere sympathy to the relatives and friends of our departed members.

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* * *

The Social Club of our society meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday afternoon of each month. Card playing and various activities highlight each meeting. For further information concerning Club activities call Mrs. Kate L. Owen, 295-1153.

For information concerning chartered bus tours for members of the Pioneer Society, phone Gertrude A. Bernhardt, 293-3087.

Any items for the Pioneer scrap book may be sent to Mrs. Elsa Jensen, 520 Bradley Ave., San Jose 28, Calif.

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