

THE

TRAILBLAZER

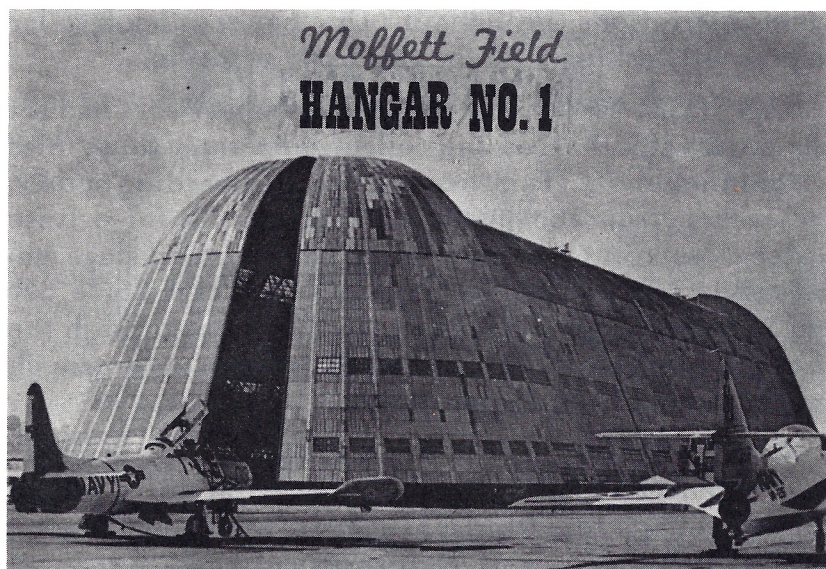
QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE CALIFORNIA PIONEERS
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

INCORPORATED 1875

Volume 21

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Number 4



Moffett Field
HANGAR NO. 1

Engineering Landmark

▼ ▼ ▼ WHALE BLAZERS ▼ ▼ ▼

SAN FRANCISCO, 1862-63: — Leland Stanford, when governor of California, was sporting a private railroad car costing over \$30,000—a birthday gift from Mrs. Stanford.

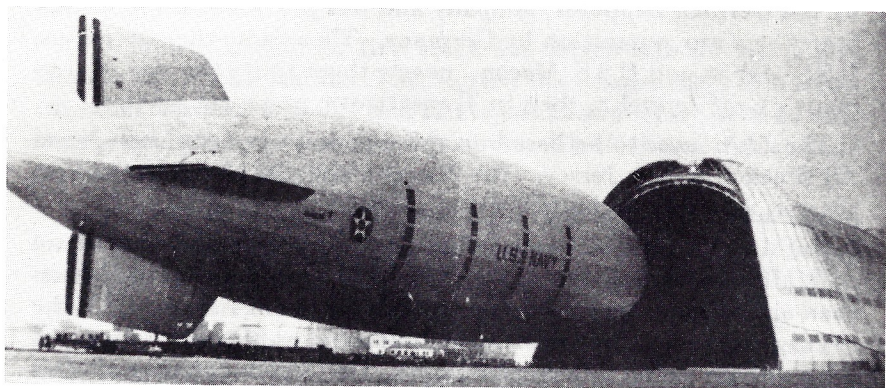
SAN JOSE, 1876: — Publishers, Thompson and West, had just completed their *Santa Clara County Atlas*, a task that began the year before. The superb 115 page edition measuring 15" x 18" was selling for \$15. Every boundary line was shown on maps and the names of owners in full. All roads, streams, mountains, schools, churches and post offices made a flourish. The handsome issue contained vivid inscriptions throughout. One bay area book seller is presently asking \$800 for this early printing.

SAN JOSE, 1881: — The Board of Supervisors had set the water rates charged and collected by water companies within the county. Families and private boarding houses, for each person above five, 15¢ per month; for private water closets, 40¢ per month; for omnibus and stage stables including water to wash the same, for each horse, 50¢ per month; for hack stables, including water to wash the same, for each horse, 75¢ per month; for each water trough on the sidewalk, \$1.25 per month.

SAN JOSE, 1912: — Sir Thomas Lipton, tea magnate and noted yachtsman, accepted an invitation to attend the Port of San Jose Dinner as a guest. Sir Thomas was on his way to Vancouver, B. C. by railroad.

SAN JOSE, Aug. 1914: — Four hundred elk owned by Miller & Lux were to be doled out to cities under the direction of a California agency. Among the 10 cities was San Jose. In 1874 Henry Miller purchased what was said to be the only existing pair of elk in the state. From this pair a herd of 400 had grown.

SAN JOSE, 1914: — The Golden State Film Co., capitalized at \$800,000, was making preparations to locate in San Jose. The construction of studios scheduled to start at once somehow faded off into the sunset. H.C.



Historic Hangar No. 1

BY BILL CHIVERS

Towering majestically in the northeast corner of Santa Clara Valley is Hangar No. 1 at Moffett Field Naval Air Station. It was named a Naval Historical Monument in the early 1950's. This unique building has also been dedicated as a California Historical Civil Engineering Landmark by the San Francisco Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The site was originally known as the Sunnyvale Naval Air Station, and was considered for an air station in 1929 after Congress asked for an investigation to determine the feasibility of establishing a lighter-than-air aviation base on the west coast. The only other one at that time was located at Lakehurst, New Jersey. At this time, the Chief of the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics was Rear Admiral William A. Moffett.

The success of lighter-than-air craft in World War I and Germany's postwar achievements with the Zeppelin inspired the U. S. Navy to develop a fleet of giant dirigibles that they hoped would become battleships of the air, floating high above the reach of guns or airplanes.

The first of two of these massive airships was the U.S.S. *Shenandoah*. It was built in the United States and delivered to the Navy

in 1923, and the U.S.S. *Los Angeles* was delivered in 1924. It was built by the German Zeppelin Company and was provided to the United States as a war reparation by Germany. Then came the sisterships, U.S.S. *Akron* and U.S.S. *Macon*, nearly three times the size of Germany's *Graf Zeppelin*, then in Transatlantic passenger service.

The *Akron* was to be based on the east coast, at Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey. The *Macon* was to be based on the west coast at a base to be built for that purpose.

On May 15, 1929 a board of officers, headed by Admiral William A. Moffett, who was one of the Navy's chief proponents of lighter-than-air aviation, met to study proposals for the new air base. Of the twenty-three sites that were actually located on the west coast, two were quickly taken into consideration. One was one thousand acres of pasture land between the cities of Sunnyvale and Mountain View. The other was known as Camp Kearny near San Diego. Although both sites would eventually be acquired by the Navy, Santa Clara Valley was selected because of its better meteorological conditions.

It was this knowledge that the Navy was serious in acquiring a lighter-than-air base on the west coast that spurred a nearly three year drive by Santa Clara County residents to acquire the site near Sunnyvale and give it to the U. S. Navy. This drive was headed by Mrs. Laura Whipple, and would eventually be contributed to by the Chamber of Commerce of virtually every Bay Area community.

On February 10, 1931 a bill was introduced in Congress by San José Representative, Arthur M. Free, and signed by President Hoover to authorize the acceptance of the land and also an expenditure of five million dollars for construction of facilities at the new base.

The San Jose Abstract and Title Company accepted a check for \$476,064.90 on July 31, 1931 from the San Jose Chamber of Commerce. The deed to the land was officially transferred to the United States of America on August 3, 1931 at a ceremony at the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. The deed was presented to Rear Admiral W. C. Cole, Commandant of the 12th Naval District, for the price of \$1.00.

On August 7, 1931 the Navy invited bids for the construction of the hangar that was to house the sister ship of the ZRS4. The ZRS4 was to be christened the U.S.S. *Akron* the next day, after the city in which she was built. The *Akron*'s sister ship, ZRS5, had been under construction since May. Several communities across the United States were beating the drum to have the ZRS5 carry the name of their fair city. The Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs was Representative Carl Vinson of Georgia, and he used his

influence with the Navy to have it named for the largest city in his district, "Macon."

On October 5, 1931 the first stake was driven into the site where Hangar No. 1 now stands. This started the construction of a structure that would eventually cost \$2,118,066.55 and would be used only sixteen months for its intended purpose. The full cost of the whole air station was \$4,993,500.

On the fourth of April 1933, just eight days before the base was to be commissioned, the U.S.S. *Akron* crashed at sea on the New Jersey coast. On board were seventy-six men, including Rear Admiral Moffett. All but three men lost their lives and with his disaster the Navy lost half of its airship program and one-third of its experienced airship personnel.

The new west coast base was commissioned Sunnyvale Naval Air Station on April 12, 1933 when it was only 80% completed. On May 18, 1933 it was renamed Moffett Field Naval Air Station in honor of the late Admiral William A. Moffett.

Hangar No. 1 was the dominant structure in the South Bay area with its inverted "U" shaped structure, one thousand one hundred thirty-three feet long, three hundred eight feet wide and one hundred ninety-four feet high. The floor alone covers eight acres and could accomodate six football fields. At each end are huge doorway sections composed of two spherical "orange peels" that roll open on circular tracks to provide almost full width openings for airships.

It was on October 15, 1933, after a seventy hour flight from Lakehurst, New Jersey that the U.S.S. *Macon* arrived at Moffett Field. The pilots of three of her four small N2Y airplanes flew their planes cross country. One plane and pilot went aboard the *Macon* for the trip to the west coast.

Shortly after the *Macon* arrived on the west coast, she was employed in the fleet war game exercises that were in operation on the west coast at that time. It was soon learned that the U.S.S. *Macon* was not successful in tactical employment when on November 14th, she was judged destroyed two times by the war game's umpires. On November 16 she was again judged shot down by the umpires.

It was now realized that the *Macon* would never be the "Battle-ship of the Air," but the *Macon* did become a Navy showpiece until on February 12, 1935, not yet two years old, the U.S.S. *Macon* crashed into the sea near Point Sur in a storm. Of the eighty-one aboard, all but two survived. This would be the death knell for the great airship experiment for the U. S. Navy.

Blimps, smaller and without the rigid frame of the dirigibles, carry on in a limited way to this day. In World War II, Hangar No. 1 housed blimps used for antisubmarine patrol.

Hangar No. 1 remains in service today, but as a Naval aviation repair and training facility. Almost forgotten are the great men and their magnificent flying machines for which this unique building and base were built.

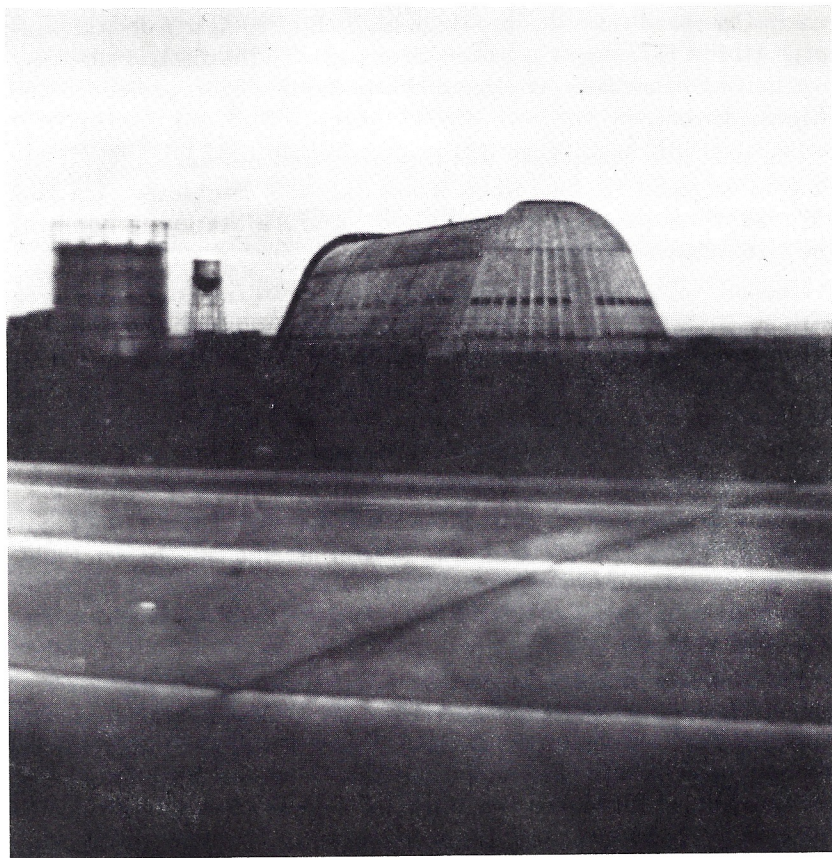


Photo by the author taken in 1934

Editor's note: Hangar No. 1 has recently earned state historic status and will shortly be marked as a California Registered Landmark.

LOOK FOR IT HERE

HISTORIC VILLAGE PROJECT ENDOWMENT FUND

Dear Pioneers,

Due to the uncertainty of a San José City budget our Historical Museum at Kelley Park is faced with additional loss of learned personnel that administers to the archives and to an eager school population including an active volunteer program. The martyrs to this onslaught will be our school children, including those who seek out valuable assistance towards scholarship research and to thousands of museum visitors. This very publication, your *Trailblazer*, could become a victim.

It is necessary that we continue to have the security for our own notable collection now housed and displayed at the Museum. In all, our interests are concerned ones.

This all reflects on an important object of our Society: "To maintain a library, collect and preserve articles of historic value of our state and county and to assist financially for their proper preservation."

Because you care, our annual voluntary Christmas offering at the December Luncheon can light the way towards such preservation. Thank you.

Your Board of Directors

OUTSTANDING FARMING HISTORY EXHIBIT ON AT DE ANZA COLLEGE, CUPERTINO, UNTIL FEBRUARY.....No need to be an agriculture buff to enjoy this fascinating assemblage of our valley's rural yesteryears. All this unfolds from wheat, grain and hay baling to vineyards. See the turn of the century canning label collection of Ralph Rambo. Marvel at handmade tools and the people who tilled the very soil on which your home or firm perhaps sits today. Open Monday through Friday 8:00a.m. until 4:30p.m. Admission is free.

Ralph Rambo, our prolific writer-historian, ceases to visualize a final chapter to his invaluable contribution to our valley's history.

He has authored and hand lettered his entire output of ten amusing books and maps to a long-neglected remnant of our past.

Facing retirement along about 1958 and searching out for something to do he shortly turned a yearning into a busy term of "grateful contentment," as Ralph calls it.

He wrote and illustrated what his friends urged most, the good old days. Today more than 100,000 of Rambo's books have been sold, a number to a third printing, some in braille.

It is gratifying to learn that the Rambo works are to be taped for the blind and disabled. Variety Audio, Inc., a non-profit organization at the San José Public Library, will undertake this history gem due to a grant from Sourisseau Academy Department of History, San José State University. *The Trailblazer* is informed that Mr. Rambo will receive no compensation from this endeavor.

HISTORICAL ESSAY CONTEST ALERT: Our annual Historical Essay Contest is being announced for next Spring. Two categories of awards are proposed: Secondary (high school level) and General which is the general public and college. Deadline will be April 30, 1982. Complete details in February *Trailblazer*...294-1786

THE TRAILBLAZER GOES A CALLING

Our **Lester Darby Morrison** cites his great-grandfather, **Andrew Davidson Firebaugh**, a native of Virginia who served in the Mexican War with the Texas Mounted Riflemen. When peace was declared, he came to California, settling on the San Joaquin River. He served with the Mariposa Battalion when this noted 100-man militia was in pursuit of marauding Indians, they discovered Yosemite Valley. In 1850 he built Pacheco Pass Road and established a toll house. He later located where the present town of Firebaugh stands and there operated a ferry which transported the Butterfield Stages across the San Joaquin. Lester's great-grandfather died in Fresno in 1875.

Wilfred M. Lorge tells on his paternal great-grandparent, **Michael Lodge**, a seaman from Dublin who married **Martina Castro** of the Castro family who owned all of what is now Santa Cruz County by virtue of Mexican and Spanish grants. Wil says **Carmel Lodge**, daughter of Michael and Martina Lodge married **Thomas P. Fallon** who hoisted the United States flag in San José on July 13, 1846. Fallon later went on to become mayor of San José. His home built in 1859 still stands at 175 West St. John Street.

TRIBUTE TO PIONEER MEMBERS 85 YEARS OR OLDER is scheduled for our December 5 Luncheon. A special seating is being reserved for them and their guest. Please notify Mary Simas at 448-6102.



President's Message

JOHN CLARK

I appreciate the opportunity that has been given to me to serve as President of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County. I am honored to have my name placed on the records as President along side those who have served this organization before me.

In addition to the regular events of the Society we have had two outstanding additional programs. The first was the Admissions Day Picnic held Sept. 19, 1981 on the grounds of the San José Historical Museum at Kelley Park. Over 200 attended this very fine event. Since this was the first Admissions Day Picnic held in a long long time I feel that it was a huge success and plans should be made to have it held each year. The other event was held on Sat., Oct. 10, 1981. It was the dedication of the Hacienda Cemetery in New Almaden as a Point Historical Interest. It was my privilege and honor to speak on behalf of the Pioneers of Santa Clara County at the dedication. The Hacienda Cemetery is the property of The Pioneers and it is our responsibility to maintain and care for it.

I hope that this year has been a most satisfying and rewarding year. I pray that the Christmas season will bring each of you happiness and that the joy of the Christmas message will touch each of you.



Admiring the historic marker at the Hacienda Cemetery are Dick Ritchison, Native Sons of the Golden West, Hank Calloway, Cemetery project chairman, John Clark, President, California Pioneers of Santa Clara County and Jim Arbuckle, E Clampus Vitus, Mountain Charlie Chapter 1850.



TOURING WITH THE CALIFORNIANS

MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE:

The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County are given preference over guests with reservations taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations for *MEMBERS ONLY* will be accepted for the first week after each quarterly luncheon meeting. Thereafter, non-members will be welcome. Subject to this rule, anyone may sign on a waiting list. The right is reserved to decline or accept any person as a member of any tour.

TAHITI - February 4-11, 1982: Space still available to this pearl of the South Seas. Send a self addressed legal-size envelope for a full color brochure telling about this French Polynesian spectacular.

PALM SPRINGS - March 15-20, 1982 Indulge yourself with this spirit-lifting holiday. Your 6 days include: Tour of Palm Springs area, Trip to Lake Havasu and see the London Bridge, Trip to Salton Sea and Borrego Springs area. Overnight and authentic Danish Dinner in Solvang.

SOUTH SHORE LAKE TAHOE - Gambling Trek March 30-31, 1982, Thursday—Friday.

By special request of our members we are planning a visit to the *BRITISH ISLES including England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland* in early June of 1982. Send a self-addressed legal-size envelope for a full color brochure describing this adventure to "The Californians" P.O. Box 2007, Los Gatos, CA 95031.

RESERVATIONS for trips will begin at the Pioneer Luncheon Saturday, December 5. Beginning Monday, December 7, for reservations call Ruth Gross at 294-9830 between 9a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday. After Ruth confirms your reservation, make your check payable to "The Californians" and mail it to P.O. Box 2007, Los Gatos, CA 95031.

Welcome New Members

Joseph A. Barbano
Rev. David Cooling
Marilyn Cooling
Bernice G. Frye
Helen Guida

Florence Lee Hawley
Dorothy A. Johnson
Jeanne Lordge
William A. Lordge
Wilfred M. Lordge

Genevieve A. Manning
Evelyn Osborn
Arthur Steele
Louise Steele
Sadie R. Tainter



Beyond the sunset

Milton E. Calder
Catherine Farley

Rudolph E. Hipp
Carmelita Peters
Ludie Pohlman

Maude Sourisseau
Beulah K. Slack

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

To keep your *Trailblazer* coming please notify us in advance. We are penalized 25¢ for each RETURNED *TRAILBLAZER*.

DUES: We tend to lose over 200 members because of non-payment of dues. Please send three dollars (\$3) to Financial Secretary, Bob Armstrong, 751 S. 12th St., San José, CA 95112.



Santa's saving you a
* cozy place at our *

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Menu
Jello Salad
Baked Ham
Yams
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so we can properly prepare for you
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This is a 24 hour Answering Service
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OF CAROL SINGERS
to enjoy.

Low's Village

Doors Open 10:30 AM. Luncheon 12:15

N.C.

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Staff Artist: Ralph Rambo

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Historian .. Clyde Arbuckle Parliamentarian Austin
Warburton

Sunshine Mary Simas, Please notify for
SICKNESS and DEATHS: 1722 Husted,
San José, CA 95124 Phone 448-6102

DUES: \$3 per year (tax exempt) to Bob Armstrong,
751 So. 12th St., San José, CA 95112