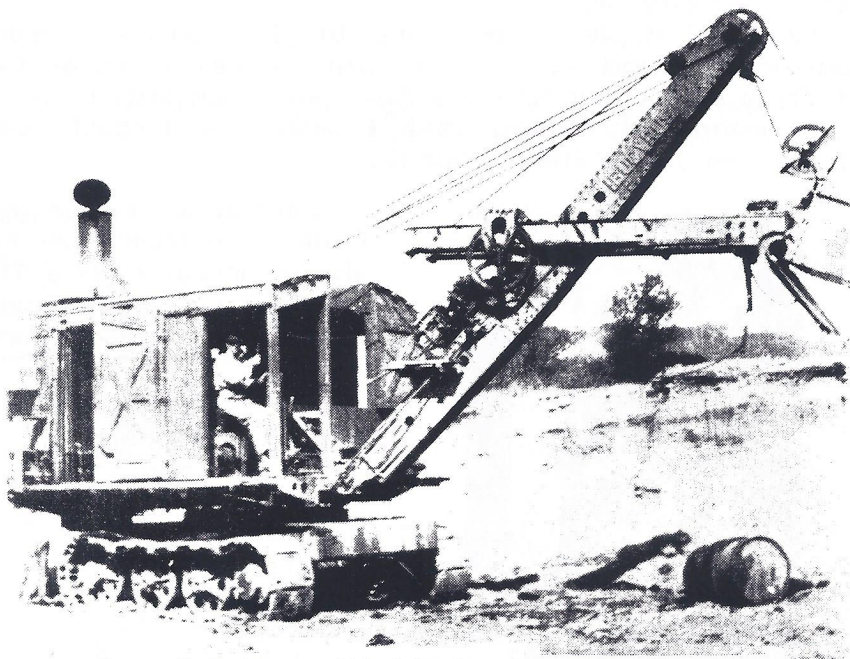


THE END OF AN ERA FOR STEAM POWER

The year was 1926, it was Earl W. Heple's very first job when he started in the General Contracting business, and Gene Helstrom was the engineer of the Bucyrus 30-B REAL STEAM shovel that he operated for the Pacific Coast Aggregates, Inc. of Coyote, to load Heple's trucks.

This steam shovel was retired at the end of 1929, and it was the end of an era. It was a real steam shovel, run by live steam. It had a big steam main engine, steam swing engine, and a steam crowd engine mounted on the boom to crowd the dipper in and out of the dirt bank.

continued to page 2



*Gene Helstrom with his hand on the throttle
of the Bucyrus 30-B steam shovel*

It burned thick black crude oil in the boiler to make steam, the same kind of fuel oil that the Southern Pacific Railroad used in their big steam locomotives. This crew consisted of the enginner, Gene Helstrom; the fireman, Buck Mayes; and the pitman, Chet Bradford. The fireman had to arrive one hour ahead of the others to build a wood fire in the firebox of the boiler in order to get a full head of steam (125 pounds).

The boiler had 240 tubes 1-3/4" diamter which had to be poked-cleaned once a week. The boiler had to have hand hole covers removed and washed thoroughly each month, especially the crown flue sheet. If enough sediment was allowed to settle on the crown sheet, it could cause the boiler to explode.

It was the responsibility of the fireman to keep his eye on the water gauge glass at all times to make sure that the water level did not drop too low, for if the water level was allowed to get below the crown sheet, it would explode.

The City of San Jose had a strict steam boiler license law. There was a Board of Examiners consisting of three members. If the candidate steam shovel engineer was not thoroughly experienced and knowledgeable of the equipment, he would not be issued a license to operate a steam shovel within the city limits.

Earl W. Heple became one of San Jose's prominent contractors, and was active until he was killed on October 27, 1950, while building the Austrian Gulch Dam in the Santa Cruz mountains, named Lake Elsan, the largest reservoir of the San Jose Water Company.



California Pioneer member Gene Helstrom, a retired shovel operator, is a 57-year member of Operating Enginners Local Union No.3



Gene Helstrom at last year's Christmas luncheon



Ruth Patton



President's Message

I would like to begin this message with a "thank you" to those people who so capably carried on the business of this organization while both the First Vice-President and the President recovered from accidents. Miriam Clark suffered a badly broken leg at the end of the Labor Day weekend, and I fell just before the holiday and fractured my shoulder. I understand that Robert Oliver, our Second Vice-President, very ably conducted the June Luncheon meeting.

We welcome Mary Wahlberg back as a member of the Board of Directors. She began her activities early when she, along with Treasurer Sara Millar, distributed name tags at the last luncheon. The Board has decided to continue this activity, and Mrs. Bernice McCall has volunteered to take on this responsibility.

It seems that I have been negligent in not letting you know my phone number when I request your help or advice. Beginning with this issue the telephone numbers of the Board of Directors will be listed with their names. Just to make sure -- my number is 258-6257.

Unfortunately, I am aware of the illnesses of a number of our friends and members. I sincerely hope that by time this issue of the TRAILBLAZER reaches you that these people are on their way to recovery. Our best wishes are extended to all of them.

I fully expect to be at the December 5, 1992, luncheon and hope that I will be able to greet many of you in person again. I wish you all the happiest of Holidays!

CALL 554-7587 BY DECEMBER 2ND TO MAKE
RESERVATIONS FOR THE DECEMBER LUNCHEON



WHALE BLAZERS

SAN JOSE, 1905 The dry goods house of Stull and Sonnickson entertained its employees at the club house of the South Bay Yacht Club at Port Alviso. The event was delightfully spent row-boating as well as games and dancing. At high noon an elaborate repast was served. Clams from the area were in evidence as was its roast duck. A special train had been chartered for the outing.

SANTA CLARA, March, 1918 "Early Giant" Charlie Graham of Sacramento had just purchased the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League. Graham was one of the best known men in baseball for he not only held an enviable record as a player but managed several teams. He formerly lived in Santa Clara gaining his knowledge of the sport at Santa Clara University.

SANTA CLARA, 1920 Following their policy of keeping abreast with the times in all banking matters, the local branch of the Bank of Italy had ordered the installation of an electric burglar alarm.

1925 Captain Robert Dollar, head of the steamship line bearing his name, had the honor of piloting the first ocean-going vessel up Stockton's deep water channel upon its completion.

SAN JOSE, 1927 A saddle, a luxurious Mexican model, the property of C. S. Garcia from Elko, Nevada, was on display at Kocker's Jewelry store here. It was insured for thousands, having been awarded first prize at the St. Louis Worlds Fair in 1904, and again at the Lewis and Clark Exposition the following year.

It was ridden by Teddy Roosevelt and every Nevada governor from the time of its manufacture 30 years before. The neck of the horn was covered with solid gold and all leather edges were bound with solid silver. Indeed a delight to the heart of every stockman.

SANTA CLARA, 1925 The First Presbyterian Church here had secured a very interesting speaker for the evening. Hew was R. W. "Razor" Felton, a former pickpocket and thief who had been addressing business groups and high schools on the prevention of crime.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON FAMOUS LOCAL AUTHOR

The following is an excerpt from the essay LITERARY FIGURES OF THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY submitted by Patricia Smith from Los Altos, CA. Ms. Smith's essay won an honorable mention.

Gertrude Atherton, daughter-in-law of mining hardware magnate Faxon Dean Atherton, wrote "Daughter of the Vine," an expose of an alcoholic neighbor, while living on the Atherton estate between El Camino Real and Valparaiso Avenue on the Menlo Park-Palo Alto border. It was the first of 56 novels she wrote before her death in 1948 at age 91.

As one of California's first liberated women, San Francisco-born Atherton scandalized prim and proper Peninsula society. Stephen Franklin, Atherton's doting maternal grandfather, and Gertrude, her beautiful but irresponsible mother, inked an indelible mark of self-will and determination on young Gertrude, setting a standard for her unorthodox behavior.

Her earliest childhood memories were of life on Rincon Hill. Her mother and father, Thomas Lodowick Horn, divorced after three years of marriage, and she and her mother moved 60 miles down the Peninsula to live on her grandfather's country ranch. Her autobiography, "Adventures of a Novelist," recalls the seemingly endless hours of ranch life. Her grandmother, a frail, "prematurely old" woman, knew the value of education and used the idle hours to instill in young Gertrude a love of learning and books, although it was unfashionable at the time. Gertrude could read and spell by age 4.

Five years passed, and Gertrude gained a stepfather, John Fredrick Uhlhorn, a wealthy New Yorker, disliked the child intensely and referred to her as a "spoilt brat." The dislike was mutual. Blinded by the desire for happiness and a bulging bank account, the new Mrs. Uhlhorn viewed her precocious daughter as a stumbling block to her re-entry into San Francisco society. She sent her off to a small boarding house on Ellis Street.

Gertrude was subsequently enrolled in a string of boarding schools - and promptly dismissed. Performing somersaults in the classroom was not acceptable behavior for young ladies. She was sentenced to remain at home with nannies and nurses parading in and out the door at an alarming rate. None could care for the unmanageable urchin

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until her sister, Aleece, was born. Rose Stoddard, secured for a short time as a wet nurse, won young Gertrude's affection and interest with a hearty dose of stern discipline flavored with fun. What Stoddard expected to be a short stint stretched into 35 faithful years with the family.

Wealth brought with it a life of social frivolity in the Uhlhorn home. As Gertrude grew up, she mingled with the literary figures of the day such as Bret Harte and Mark Twain. But when misfortune struck the family (John Uhlhorn was involved in a scandalous forgery and sent off to South America), Gertrude was sent to St. Mary's Hall, a boarding school in Benecia. Eventually she continued her education at Sayre Institute in Lexington, Kentucky.

Her mother attracted numerous suitors, one of the most eligible being George Atherton, son of wealthy Faxon Dean Atherton. George planned to marry Gertrude's mother, although she was 14 years younger. But his attentions soon focused on 19-year-old Gertrude. When he proposed to young Gertrude, she replied "Oh well, I don't care. One has to marry sometime, I suppose."

Both families were horrified to find that George and Gertrude had married secretly with the blessing of the Rev. Varsi, a Jesuit. The Atherton home, located on 650 acres of Rancho de las Pulgas, was bought in 1860 from the widow of Luis Arguello, first Mexican governor of California. George and Gertrude took up residence, and the spacious home suddenly seemed too small to house free-spirited Gertrude and her straight-laced Chilean mother-in-law, Dominga Goni.

Much to Gertrude's dismay, her 5-foot, 200 pound mother-in-law monitored her activities. She was expected to join the verandah sewing and embroidery group because "intellect had no place in woman" and "ladies in Spain do

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Happy

continued from page 6 ATHERTON

not write." Gertrude listened, but didn't subscribe. Twelve years later, she published her first book - a highly controversial novel about female alcoholism called "Daughter of the Vine."

A move to the uninhabited Milpitas Ranch, a 45,000-acre area 80 miles south of Monterey, and the birth of her two children - sickly George Jr. who died at 6 years old, and a daughter, Muriel - did nothing to help the mismatched marriage.

Eventually, Gertrude moved to San Francisco to pursue her literary career, and George sailed for his native Chile. Muriel was left in the care of her grandmother, Dominga Goni. In 1887, word was received of George's death, leaving widow Atherton with few tears and freedom. She became a world traveler, living and writing in New York, England, Germany, the West Indies, Greece and Alaska. By the early 1900's she yearned for California. Upon returning, she focused on writing local history. "California: An Intimate History" was written for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition.

Her friendships were legendary. A bantering correspondence with cantankerous editor Ambrose Bierce and a 15-year relationship with civic leader and U.S. Senator James Phelan at Villa Montalvo in Saratoga caused tongues to wag far into the '20s.

Atherton remained active and productive until age 91. She died in San Francisco on June 14, 1948. Her fame and notoriety throughout Europe and the United States was mostly due to her opinions on controversial topics concerning women. Recently, scholar Emily Wortis Leider authored the most comprehensive work on Atherton. Published by Stanford University Press, "California's Daughter" is a must read for valley history buffs.

Holidays





Tommy Warren

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ATTENTION!

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On behalf of the members of the California Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County, THE TRAILBLAZER extends sincere sympathy to the relatives and friends of our departed members.

Welcome New Members

Kathryn C. Aiello
Janine Carlson
Donald S. Carlson
Jeanne M. Hamilton
Donald Kielsmeier
Marlene Kielsmeier
Jay Ladine

Madelyn Rendal
Josephene C. Roby
Julie Ann Rowinski
Margaret E. Salmon
Florence V. Sandretto
Pearl W. Stephen
Joanne M. White

Please join us for our Luncheon on December 5th.



UNDER THE WEATHER

Kindly keep your officers informed as to the condition of any ill member and report any sickness or death to the chair of our SUNSHINE Committee -- Leah Warren, 2032 Emory Street, San Jose, CA 95128
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After the December Luncheon, flyers may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed, legal size envelope to:

THE CALIFORNIANS
1365 Lindsay Way
San Jose, CA 95118



Nancy Hill

For reservations, call
Nancy Hill, (408) 258-3449
Monday thru Friday,
preferably in the morning.





GREAT OPPORTUNITY ON DECEMBER 5

Local authors, and authors of books with local settings, are invited to make available their books at the December Luncheon. A table will be provided. This will be an excellent opportunity to secure autographed copies for one's own enjoyment as well as to purchase that special Christmas gift.

Come early and take advantage of this opportunity!

Authors, please contact Miriam Clark at (415) 968-3059 or Robert Oliver at (408) 867-3255 for further information.



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