

QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE CALIFORNIA PIONEERS
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY
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JACKASS MAIL

Henry J. Calloway

Jim Birch was the "Kingpin" of California staging and president of the California Stage Company in the 1850 era. Mr. Birch was no stranger to Santa Clara Valley, his lines were well represented here. The company "cobwebbed" most of the state, even accommodating the hectic mining traffic throughout the Mother Lode. The California Stage Company worked as far north as Portland, Oregon.

Early in 1857, U. S. Postmaster General Adrian V. Brown was looking for a mail route to serve the southwest, with San Antonio, Texas as the eastern terminal and extending 600 miles west to San Diego.

This was a challenge for Jim Birch; he placed a bid and it was accepted. This took courage in a country that was subject to all kinds of weather, violent and rugged terrain--a region well established for being rough.

As some termed it, the line ran "from no place, through nothing, to nowhere."

In August 1857, just a few weeks after the company was under contract, Mr. Birch was already dispatching mail west from San Antonio.

Mules were used rather than horses to pull the coaches. The last 180 mile stretch from Fort Yuma to San Diego was tortuous and the mules from this point were used as pack animals the remainder of the way.

Birch's "Rural Route" became known as the "Jackass Mail."

This demanded a vast amount of equipment and manpower. Mr. Birch had the best, he had to, to survive. This was a \$150,000 yearly contract. Jackass Mail was of short duration. The happy victim of better roads and the railroads.

This beloved man was a pioneer in the wagon service and most capable -- Jim Birch will long be remembered for his contribution to early day freighting and mail service.

The western hills and valleys well etched by this wagoner were not to be the final resting place for Mr. Birch. He was drowned at sea!

* * *

WE SANG WITH MADAM SCHUMANN-HEINK

Ruth M. Heath

February 12, 1912 the children of San Jose were dismissed from school and with their teachers, marched to the old barn-like structure which extended from South First to Market Street that was known as the Auditorium.

The occasion was one of the finest concerts ever given in our city, a gift to the children of San Jose by one of the greatest concert and opera singers in music history, the celebrated contralto, Ernestine Schumann-Heink.

The ceremony had been arranged by her personal friend, Bertha M. Rice, whose brother, Charles Davison, was mayor of San Jose. The mayor had made Madame Schumann-Heink an honorary citizen of the city.

I can remember the march to the Auditorium and the delay after we arrived. This was because so many adults had usurped our places and they had to be asked to vacate their seats so that we might have them.

We had been told that Madame Schumann-Heink had eight children and an invalid husband and that she was their chief support. She had been born in Prague, Bohemia, but had become an American citizen.

When she appeared on the stage everyone applauded with vigor. She stretched out her arms to us and said, "I love you all."

We loved her too. She was a large motherly looking woman. I have heard that she was unconcerned about her dress, but we didn't think that. Her very appearance radiated friendliness.

She sang several songs for us. One was a song with which she was identified over the years. It was Ethelbert Nevin's "The Rosary."

At the close of the concert she was presented with a large bouquet of roses. Then she spoke to us, "join me," she said "in singing "America."

So we did. It must have been impressive. I have never forgotten this occasion when a gracious lady, inspired by her great love for children, gave of her musi-

cal talent to give them a day of pleasure never to be forgotten.

* * *

HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY

Curtis Bailey

The following was copied from S.J.H.S. Songs & Yells published in 1913-14 and given to me by Bernice Roe:

"San Jose High School has been in existence since December 12, 1865 when it began in a small one room house on San Antonio and Fourth Streets, with but a few pupils and one instructor. Later another school, consisting of two rooms was established on Santa Clara Street between Second and Third in what was known as Armory Hall.

The attendance gradually grew until in 1867 the Board took measures to purchase six lots on the north side of Santa Clara Street on which the Horace Mann School was built and used for a grammar, as well as a high school. Here the first graduating exercises were held in 1873. In 1877 the high school course was extended from two to three years and a new school house of brick was built on Washington Square to meet the increasing enrollment. All modern improvements were installed and the building strongly constructed for the buffets of the following years.

The earthquake of 1906 completely demolished the building, forcing the students to take temporary quarters in the Lincoln School, where half day sessions were held. A bond election granting \$200,000 for the first new building was held and passed.

Exercises in the Washington Square structure were held for the first time in 1908, when a class of 100 received their diplomas. The faculty membership was increased from 20 to 50 and the students from 400 to 1125 during the next five years and this year (1913) has been set down as the most successful in our school's career. 1908 marks the time when Prof. L. B. Avery took up the principalship of the school and it was through his careful supervision and farsightedness that San Jose thrived so well. The Herald was taken up and proved to be a great success.

Owing to the resignation of Principal Avery the Board was obliged to appoint a new man to take his place. In the selection of Prof. C. M. Osenbaugh they showed excellent choice in getting a man who could represent the students best. His first day began the greatest campaign for the athletics of the school that was ever attempted.

The athletic field is just what the school needs and this is just what he is going to get, and with the help of the students, Board of Education and Playground Committee that are supporting the project, he is sure to make the affair a success." (Reed Field)

* * *

ARE YOU AN OLD "SQUARE?"

F. Ralph Rambo

Do you remember when--Top-coats were overcoats?..... A sanitary engineer was a plumber?.....A custodian was a janitor?.....Rest-rooms were privies?.....Underwear was a pair of drawers?.....A T-V dinner was a warmed up cold lunch?....A scarf was a muffler?....Motels were Furnished Cabins?.....Recordings were phonograph records?....Bloomers were daring?.....Sporty transportation was a rubber tired buggy with the top down?....."Legs" applied only to tables and chairs?.....A stereoscope and the family album furnished an evening's entertainment?.....When cigarettes meant hand-rolled Bull Durham?.....When a cop was a policeman?.....Sneakers were tennis shoes?....."Sparking" meant necking?....We knew what the lower door of the bedroom commode hid?....If these have a very familiar ring--then you are ready for Social Security.

* * *

MUSIC THERAPY

National Association for Music Therapy in their April 1972 Newsletter paid high tribute to Mrs. Alma Andrews one of our older members. and I quote: "Mrs. Alma Andrews has devoted over 15,000 hours since 1950 as a volunteer at the VA Hospital, Palo Alto. In 1970 the hospital recognized her outstanding service by awarding her its highest volunteer service award, a gold trophy. A retired teacher, Mrs. Andrews earned a baccalaureate degree from Central Missouri State College at Warrensburg and an M.A. degree from the University of the Pacific. B. J. Rudquist, Director of Voluntary Service at the hospital, in acclaiming her contributions wrote, 'Her services have been so outstanding, so unselfish and so meaningful that our commendation seems far too inadequate in recognizing her priceless and heartwarming gifts, her talent and skills, and her effectiveness in her interpersonal relationships....Yes, she is a wonderful person!' We thank you for your dedication, Mrs. Andrews, and may your life be an inspiration not only to those privileged to know you, but to those who know of you through the testimonials of others."

VAN GUNDY

The following information was received with the application for membership from Ross G. Van Gundy and his wife, Marion:

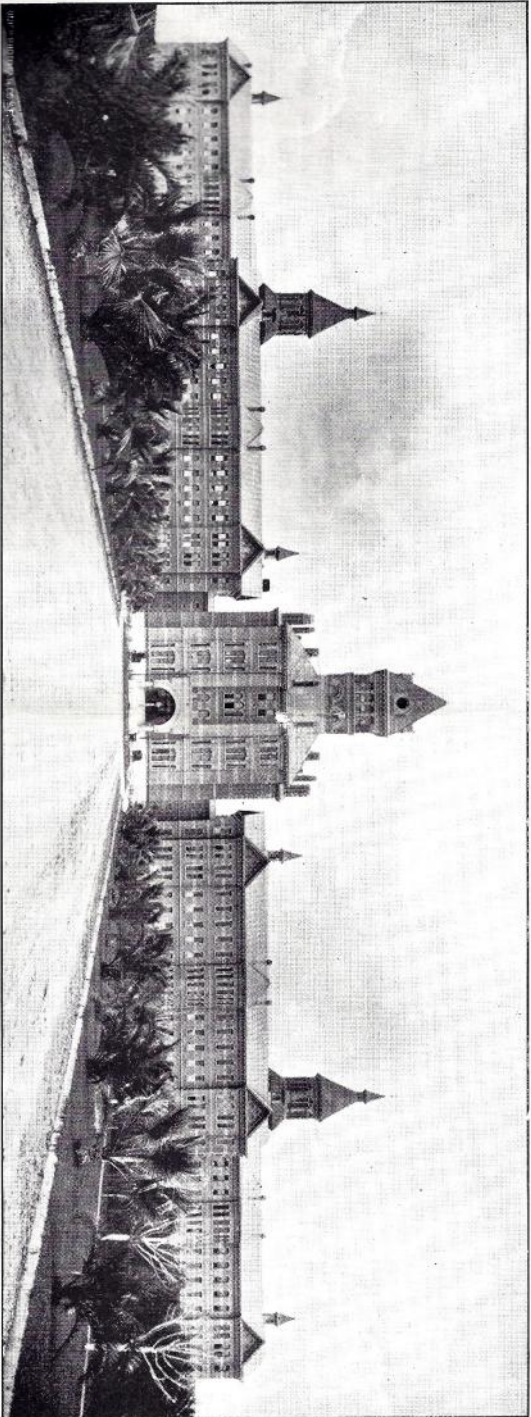
"My grandfather, Rev. Hiram Van Gundy, came to California from Illinois in 1852. He was a Methodist Circuit Rider and preached in the Santa Clara and Salinas valleys and traveled on horseback from place to place. My grandmother's family came across the plains in covered wagons and about one thousand people in the train; the Captain's name was Applegate. They traveled over the Lewis and Clark Trail and received aid from Dr. Whitman, one of the first Missionaries sent to Oregon City in November 1843. My grandmother and her sister came to California in 1851 and lived in Gilroy. My grandfather met my grandmother in Gilroy where they raised their family. My grandmother's sister married William Furlong, who was one of Santa Clara County's first Supervisors. My father was a nurseryman and raised and supplied hundreds of prune and apricot trees to orchardists in the area known as Prunedale, near Gilroy and the Watsonville area. Most of his life was devoted to the fruit industry and he was well known by the canning industry. I was educated in Santa Clara County and graduated from the old Lincoln Grammar School, San Jose High School and Stanford University. I served in both World Wars with the U. S. Marine Corps and retired as a Major. Bernice Van Gundy is one of my sisters."

Mrs. Van Gundy adds this bit of information:

"My ancestors settled in New England; among them are listed Governor William Bradford and Steven Hopkins, both arriving in the United States on the same trip of the Mayflower. I am pleased to blend this bit of early New England ancestry with the California Pioneers."

* * *

San Jose State College received its seventh name in June of this year. From a humble beginning in 1857 it was known as Minns Evening School, in 1862 it became California State Normal School, new buildings were erected in Washington Square in 1870 and it became known as California State Normal School at San Jose, another change was made in 1887 and it became San Jose State Normal School, in 1921 it became San Jose Teachers College, another name was selected in 1935 and it was known as San Jose State College, in 1972 it becomes California State University at San Jose. ***



THE GREAT ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE, AGNEWS STATION, SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. (Circa 1890)

AGNEW'S

Arthur M. Fisk

Agnews Station area located north of San Jose and about three miles northeast of Santa Clara was at one time owned by Abram Agnew. This was a highly productive farm and contained 115 acres with four artesian wells that furnished an abundance of water for his live stock and irrigation for his farm. Agnew was born in Ohio in 1820 and had learned the blacksmith trade before he began his long trek across the plains to Oregon in the Spring of 1846. He returned to Ohio in 1847 where he remained until March 1850 when he returned to the west coast, arriving in California in August of the same year and engaged in mining and blacksmithing in Placer County. In 1853 he again returned to Ohio and stayed until 1874 when he came back to California and settled permanently on the above mentioned farm. (The name Agnews was given to the station by the Southern Pacific Company, but it is properly spelled without the s).

About 1885 the State of California purchased 276 acres just east of the Agnew farm for the purpose of erecting buildings and maintaining a farm for an insane asylum, as it was called at that time. The original buildings were composed of stone and brick and completed in 1888. They used the post office name of Agnew.

The following quote from Santa Clara Valley by Eaton, "Among the public institutions located in Santa Clara County, the great asylum for insane, located at Agnews Station, five miles north of San Jose, is one of the largest and most important. This magnificent building is three stories high in the main, while the administration building is four stories, and the entire structure is built of stone and brick. It has a frontage of 750 feet and presents a most imposing appearance. Every room has sunlight and fresh air, not withstanding that the combined depth of the administration and kitchen buildings is 330 feet. This was accomplished by constructing the buildings in the shape of a cross and so segregating

the different sections that sunlight could be secured without interfering with hall-ways and other means of communication. The buildings cost in round figures \$750,000. The original structure was completed in 1888."

"The asylum, aside from its main purpose, is of great commercial benefit to the county, as local merchants secure many of the contracts for furnishing supplies. The total contracts and payroll amounts to \$135,000 annually. The wages range from \$30 to \$40 per month for waiters and attendants and from \$50 to \$90 per month for skilled labor, board included."

"There are now 915 patients, of whom 340 are women and 575 are men. The cost per capita for maintaining the patients varies from 39 to 48 cents per day, the average being about 40 cents. Water for the entire plant, and for all uses about the establishment and farm is supplied by artesian wells, of which there are eight."

At 5:13 a.m. April 18, 1906 the earth shook and twisted and moments later the stone and brick buildings at Agnew Asylum lay in a pile of rubble from the irresistible force of the earthquake. The big clock in the main office stopped at 5:13½ a.m. probably not more than half a minute off. More than a hundred inmates and a dozen keepers died under the falling walls of the institution. The total death count was 119, the greatest single disaster ever to occur in Santa Clara County.

* * *

NEW ALMADEN MINES (era 1856)

Henry Calloway

Miners named different passages throughout the mines after their patron saints and they knew them as readily as the streets of a city. ***

Wages were three dollars per day for "tenateros" who carried ore from the mines; sifters and weighters two dollars and fifty cents per day; blacksmiths and bricklayers five and six dollars while carpenters were paid eight dollars per day. No provisions were made for sickness and old age. ***

Ore was placed in a flat leather bag called a "talégo" with a band two inches wide that passed around the forehead the weight resting on the shoulders and back. Over one hundred pounds of ore was carried up almost perpendicular steps, flight after flight. ***

In a 24 hour period more than 60 pounds of candles were used by the miners for light.

* * *

BY-LINES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lynn L. Vermillion

It is a privilege for me to serve as your president for the coming year. We have lost three fine people from our Board, Esther Adams, Madeline Smalley and Leland Boruck. They have contributed many hours to our organization, we will miss them and we wish them well. We welcome Otto I. Schmaelzle, Imogene T. Clark and C. Kelly Canelo to the Board. We know they will contribute their best.

Sunday, July 2, New Almaden celebrated Independence Day in an old fashioned way, with a small parade, flag raising ceremony, speeches, barbeque and just a lot of participation by the citizens of the community. I thought how fortunate I was to be able to sit under the shade of an oak tree and listen to two state senators, Alfred E. Alquist, Clark L. Bradley; Assemblyman Richard D. Hayden and Congressman Charles S. Gubser. Also on the platform were two Pioneers, Clyde Arbuckle and Laurence Bulmore. Laurence's talk of past Independence Days in New Almaden was excellent. As I listened, I felt we may have to become more active and vocal to keep some of the freedoms and traditions we respect. We can have changes in our government, but first, before we throw out all that is old, let us have something better and worthwhile to replace it.

* * *

LOOK FOR IT HERE

The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County is a member of the Conference of California Historical Societies. ***

The speaker at our last quarterly meeting was Sister Anne Robb, D.C. Sister Anne is a graduate of the Boston College School of Nursing and holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree in Nursing. At present she is President of O'Connor Hospital. Her talk on the History of O'Connor Hospital was both interesting and informative.

Our next quarterly meeting will be held at Lou's Village at high twelve on Saturday, September 2, 1972. The chairman promises us a good program. ***

The Social Club of our society meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. For further information call Mrs. Frances Grant, 292-3852. ***

Someone sent their dues to Mrs. Smalley and paid with two \$1 bills, but with no name attached. The envelope was addressed in red ink. Who is the anonymous member? ***

Erratum--On page 7, line 3 of the Spring 1972 issue of the Trailblazer it should have read Sainte Claire instead of San Carlos Hotel. ***

Clyde Arbuckle, San Jose Historian, was honored for his long-standing record of community service without concern for publicity at a Gridiron Dinner held at the Hyatt House. The presentation was made by the San Jose Newspaper Guild who awarded him its gold-plated tpeystick this tabbing him San Jose's outstanding citizen for 1972.

Mrs. Myrtle Hawkins, one of our members, received the much coveted Le Foli Award from the San Jose Department of Adult Education in appreciation of her outstanding article writing in the creative writing class of Mrs. Hoyler. Five awards were made from a student body of over 40,000. ***

The beautiful "Bear Flag" displayed at our quarterly meetings at the end of the head table was given to the Pioneer Society by the Native Sons at our quarterly meeting March 4, 1972. The California State Flag was presented to our society by Richard Ritchison, Past Grand President of the Native Sons of the Golden West and accepted for the Pioneers by Lynn Vermillion and Anthony Sapena, president and vice president respectively. ***

In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt planted a redwood tree in the school grounds of the Campbell Grammar School. It thrived for 60 years reaching a height of 70 feet and a diameter of 31 inches. In 1964 the land was sold for a service station, the street widened, the sidewalk set back and the redwood tree had to go. It was cut down and the stump hauled to the dump. Mrs. Lilyan Brannon thought it might grow again and with the help of the Campbell Garden Club the County Park Department was persuaded to retrieve the stump and plant it in the County Park at Vasona. The Theodore Roosevelt Tree did sprout again and is now a healthy tree 12 feet tall. ***

The old San Jose post office building at Market and San Fernando streets, later the San Jose Public Library and now the San Jose Civic Art Gallery has been recommended to become a state historical landmark by the California Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee. ***

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors have asked the State to preserve the old E. J. Parrish House on the northeast corner of Mary Avenue and Stevens Creek Road in Cupertino as an historic landmark. It was originally owned by Enoch J. Parrish, who came to California in 1879 and later purchased 15 acres at this location where he built his Victorian-style home in 1890. ***

WELCOME

Congratulations to our new members: Nellie George Bartle, Rachel Carter, Marie H. Craig, Richard H. DeVoe, Doris M. Donatelli, Virginia Donatelli, Lillian E. Flaker Albert M. Foster, Lydia Grunwald, Harold C. Hale, Fairis L. Hansen, Nellie E. Hershey, Edna K. Hoover, Charles L. Ianne, Zora Ianne, Eva M. Loney, Claire Macdonald, Jerome Macdonald, Eva H. MacMillan, Tina Mallance, Beatrice L. Miller, Marie M. Oliver, Ethel M. Payne, Almira M. Robbins, Eunice A. Rogers, Marie W. Rogers, Ruth M. Rucker, Thelma Solari, Theodore R. Solari, Evelyn M. Stern, Freda Weersing, Evelyn Whitbeck, Roberta Glenn Worden, and Wilbur W. Worden.

* * *

UNDER THE WEATHER

Mrs. Lovene Luhrman and Mrs. Marjorie Fisk wish to thank the members for so many "get well" cards, but neither will be able to answer them all.

* * *

BEYOND THE SUNSET

Mildred E. Robinson
November 15, 1879 - January 30, 1972

Mary Jane Barrett
- April 1972

William G. Woodfint
August 18, 1894 - May 8, 1972

George Hodges
- June 1972

Annie C. Walker
January 11, 1888 - June 1972

Louise G. Hardwick
August 18, 1882 - June 26, 1972

Mark Lucas
September 23, 1883 - July 11, 1972

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.

THE TRAILBLAZER

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Associate Editor, Marjorie B. Fisk
Assistant Editor, Henry J. Calloway
Staff Artist, Ralph Rambo
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1st Vice President C. Kelly Canelo
2nd Vice President Laurence E. Bulmore
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Moxley, Anthony R. Sapena, Otto J. Schmaelzle, Henry C.
Stout, A. Bernice Van Gundy and Austen D. Warburton.

* * *

SEND APPLICATIONS for membership and address changes to
Bernice Van Gundy, 561 Fuller Ave., San Jose, CA. 95125.
BUS TOUR INFORMATION for members of the Pioneer Society
may be obtained from Mrs. Esther M. Adams, phone 264-8119
9 a.m. until 12 noon, Monday through Thursday.
SICKNESS and DEATHS please notify Doreen Magud, 819 State
Street, San Jose, CA. 95111. Phone 293-0242.

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