

Volume 24 ²³

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RALPH RAMBO STILL MAKING HISTORY

In 1900 Ralph Rambo was a six year old tike who sported cinched-up overalls and carted a lard lunch bucket to one-room Doyle School on orchard drenched Stevens Creek Road. The student body, Ralph recalls, ranged in ages from 6 to 16. Some were old enough to shave, chew tobacco, roll Bull Durham and plow. "Many of us wore home made clothes, especially our under garments," tells Ralph. "Flour and sugar came in 100 lb. sacks and the sturdy material was never wasted. Many a youngster's shirt tail bore the imprint 'I X L Granulated Sugar' while a breeze or tumble for some little girl might, on her panties, reveal the commercial, 'Pure as Drifted Snow.'" Doyle School is gone now, burried beneath a freeway. "Thank goodness," says Ralph, "we can't bury memories."

With the arrival of May 16, 1983, this esteemed artist-historian was introduced to his 90th birthday. By June 8th the mayor of Los Gatos honored Ralph by declaring a 'Ralph Rambo Day.' This heralded the opening of "Old Valley Rambolings" at Forbes Mill Museum in Los Gatos.

This Rambo feature is a nostalgic and informative revival of our valley's yesteryears. Ralph is asking our membership and their friends to drop by. 'Rambolings' is especially adept for inquiring young people, inquisitive newcomers and old-timers who still remember. Forbes Mill Museum is at 75 Church Street, Los Gatos, off Main, (408) 395-7375. Open Wed. thru Sun. 12 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. Lasting until November the presentation will have a frequent change of scenery.

▼▼▼ WHALE BLAZERS ▼▼▼

SAN JOSE, Sept. 1883: - Patents were issued to three local inventors: A.R. Manley for a roof scaffold and kitchen flour bin and sifter; W.P. O'Brien who contrived an automatic egg boiler and John Williams for his improved window shade.

SAN JOSE, 1902: - The largest electric sign in the state appeared over Spring's Clothing Store at Market and Santa Clara Streets containing one hundred thirty four electric bulbs.

SAN JOSE, June 1902: - The first auto speeding fine imposed here was for \$20 and was dealt to a chauffeur for the San Francisco millionaire, Charles 'Lucky' Baldwin, who violated the eight mile an hour speed limit. The San Jose News accelerated with "The practical usefulness of such machines have been demonstrated and it is certain they will come into very universal use in this section."

SAN JOSE, July 1902: - Local pastors at their Pastors' Union discussed the question: "Why do people sleep in church?"

WEST WILLOWS, 1905: - The residences on Moorpark Ave. had been numbered thus ranking them among suburban streets. It was no longer considered a country section.

SAN JOSE, July, 1911: - Hotel Montgomery was having its grand opening. "Everywhere," it was reported, "there is evidence of luxury and good taste." It promised to be carefully inspected by not only local residents, but by travelers who came this way. A new Kissel Kar depot bus provided for arrivals and departures.

SACRAMENTO, 1921: - By action of the Legislature all Normal Schools in California were elevated to the status of Teachers Colleges. San Jose Normal then became San Jose State Teachers College.

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 1927: - The request of San Francisco for authority to bridge the bay at a site selected by city engineers was referred to the chief of Army Engineers. Naval officials argued such a feat would interfere with the effectiveness of the navy.

SAN JOSE, 1931: - The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to rename the County Hospital "Hillview Hospital" while the almshouse at Milpitas would henceforth be known as "Rest Haven Hospital."

TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF THE MYSTERY HOUSE

By Henry Calloway



*Minnie Yeager Hall
loyal friend of Sarah Winchester*

At one of our recent Pioneer Luncheons a devoted Pioneer member drew us aside and coupled with a warm smile said, "I'm Mrs. Minnie Hall and I knew Mrs. Sarah Winchester."

To most the mention of Sarah Winchester instantly rekindles hideous yarns such as providing an elaborate ballroom and cocktail lounge for her ghostly visitors. Since Mrs. Hall's girlhood she has been determined to make clear why she objects to the untruths and intrusions leveled at Sarah Winchester for generations.

Our sparkling rightist was born in Denver, Colorado in October 1903 and was just six weeks old when along with her parents, Jacob and Caroline Yeager, and older brother Daniel headed for San Jose. Her father, a cabinet maker had by 1909 built a fine home at the crossroads of the San Jose-Los Gatos Road (Winchester) and Moorpark Avenue across from the Winchester property.

Minnie Hall has lived almost her entire life in the neighborhood. She was the playmate and school chum of Carl and Theodore Hansen whose parents, John and Nellie, were caretakers of the Winchester estate. Minnie and the boys attended the Meridian School near Stevens Creek and San Jose-Los Gatos Roads. The Hansens lived behind the main structure adjoining the mansion.

"Oh! What fun we kids had on the place," related Mrs. Hall. "It was a child's paradise, so many places to scamper and climb. We were like monkeys in the trees. The Hansens sort of adopted me because they had no little girls of their own. Mrs. Winchester had a niece about our age named Marion Marriot who would at times come down from the Winchester estate at Atherton."

"From 1909, near the age of seven and for nine delightful years I was on her ranch practically every day. Mrs. Winchester never entertained me in her house but often we sat in her beautiful gardens watching the horses and buggies go by, we had such enjoyable visits. I was always 'Little Minnie' to Mrs. Winchester. She was the dearest old lady to ever come along in my lifetime."

Among other memorable occasions, Minnie tells, when John Hansen, the caretaker, was called away overnight and asked her father to milk the cow. "Dad complied gladly. When Pop went over Mrs. Winchester and her secretary-companion asked if they could watch him milk. Dad said, 'Why, certainly.' So she sat in her canvas chair watching my father milk. During this session she was as friendly as anyone could be. For her thanks she sent my dad several imported oriental trees which he treasured for years."

"Oh! Yes, I've been through the house many times but only when we were escorted by Mr. Hansen. We kids just didn't ramble through the house when we felt like it. We treated everything with the greatest dignity. They have there, I believe, a 'blue room' which Mrs. Winchester supposedly used, they tell, for spiritual meditations. This room," states Mrs. Hall firmly "when I was a child was never completed. I remember when we children would look down from this 'spirit room,' as they call it, observing our friend Kim, the Oriental cook, making his delicious ice cream from pure cream. Many a dish I had there. He always made it whether Mrs. Winchester was there or not. And the story about her spying on her help from this room is another silly thing. Everybody loved her dearly and were loyal to her as anyone could be. There was so much harmony on the place amongst the help.

"In all my years there never did I ever see multitudes of servants and workmen. I knew everyone who was employed on the Winchester place. She really had no servants here, at her Atherton estate, yes, but here was just her cook, secretary and whoever cleaned her bedroom."

"Our dear friend Tom Nishahara, her head gardener, his family and helpers lived across the road in houses contributed by Mrs. Winchester where the Town and Country Shopping Center is today. This was also all her property from Stevens Creek to Moorpark Avenue. It was planted in alfalfa, grain, walnuts and apricots." Minnie remembers the delightful times they had at the Nishahara's. "They were so cordial. On special Japanese holidays they would make such delicious brightly colored candy. Along with Tom's grandchildren, the Hansens and my parents, we all had such fun. I remember Tommy was so grieved when Mrs. Winchester died, he passed away shortly after."

Mrs. Hall cites Mrs. Winchester as being a highly adept architectural artist and was frequently seen in her canvas chair sketching perhaps a staircase or cabinet she desired to see in a special wood. Mrs. Winchester devoted no more time to her interest in architecture than a woman who would cut up yardage to make a crazy quilt.

Mrs. Hall denies Mrs. Winchester was a spiritualist. "So did I sit in a seance or two like so many other people did at the time and I'm no spiritualist. This woman was of the Episcopalian faith."

"And, yes, that belfry bell ringing at odd hours of the night to summon

spirits is another farce," says Minnie. "The only time I ever heard that bell ring was for calling workers in from the gardens and orchards for meals, never at any other times."

"It's just annoying to me to still hear the things said about this dear woman. When my daughter, Betty, was a teenager, she was invited to become a guide there. I just told her I would rather pay her what she would earn over there in being a guide than to allow her to go there and tell the lies she would be required to tell. That woman was too wonderful for that. Betty never did go; just wouldn't do it. There was always a logical explanation for what Mrs. Winchester did — but they go on creating lies."

"Sarah was so heartbroken," says Minnie, "after the earthquake damage in 1906. Everything was so neatly kept and those all so beautiful windows studded with precious stones were damaged. 'Oh! No! We won't tear it down, we will just make a hobby house out of it.' And that's what it went on to be just a hobby house," says Minnie. "She also owned a home at Atherton but spent more time at the San Jose 'ranch.'"

"A Mr. Carroll was her reinsman for her elegant Victorian coach and Fred Larsen drove and maintained her French Renault, a Buick 'town car' and two Pierce-Arrows, one a dazzling lavender and gold. The Carrolls' had two boys and a girl and lived in a stately home provided by Mrs. Winchester near the corner of Winchester and Moorpark Avenues. Fred Larsen lived on the premises."

"After the horse age passed, the Carrolls moved to a prune ranch on Payne Avenue Mrs. Winchester purchased for them. And when the Hansens finally left, she bought them a place in Morgan Hill." "So many nice things could be said about the wonderful lady, but they continue to make things up because they lack the facts," says Minnie.

The late Mrs. Henrietta Severa Noé who served as Sarah's long and trusted secretary-confidant wrote Minnie Hall the following letter in 1951 from Santa Monica: "My precious Minnie, I can never, never tell you, dear, what your dear letter meant to me. I went back and lived those lovely days over and over again. It just made my heart sing to know you understand all that is going on at dear Mrs. Winchester's home which is not the truth. I am the only person left who was closest to Mrs. Winchester. I was her constant companion and secretary for a period of 12 years. My position was a trusted and sacred one. Fondly, Henrietta" Mrs. Hall always kept in touch with Mrs. Noé until her passing.

Minnie Hall contends if Mrs. Winchester had decided on San Francisco instead of San Jose, her mansion would have blended quite well with the elegant dwellings of Huntington, Crocker, Mark Hopkins and Leland Stanford on Nob Hill. "In fact," she remarks, "her house, long before it reached its final stage, gave immense rise to community pride; a place which captured the interest of the population. The town folks were always making it a Sunday carriage activity to see fabulous Llanda Villa, as Mrs. Winchester named her country place."



*John and Nellie Hansen,
caretakers of the estate with
sons, Carl and Theodore.*

The lurid inventive tales of Winchester have been told and retold while the good have been suppressed through the years. Roy Leib, her attorney was instructed to make a \$300,000 gift for her under strict orders not to explore its source. "Yes!" Leib once said, "She was a determined lady when anything stood in her way of business affairs."

In the 1946 Coronet Magazine an account authored by Dean Jennings revealed: "Sarah Winchester was a wise business woman. Because she was heir to the Winchester Repeating Arms Co., after it was reorganized after World War I, her opinions had to be solicited by company officials."

Induced by Mrs. Hall's crusade the Trailblazer takes to an interview in the San Jose News of 1946. The story involved a 76 year old San Josean, Paul Perkins, a former carpenter for Mrs. Winchester during the Grover Cleveland administration. "I want the whole world to know," he said, "Mrs. Winchester was not eccentric. She was a very well educated woman, one who loved music and played brilliantly herself. She was generous and kind, treating us all as members of the family." Perkins failed to accept the legend if she stopped building she would perish. "She loved fine things and when I worked on the house, she wanted nothing but the best in material." Perkins said the number '13' in chandeliers, the number of bathrooms, windows, ceiling panels and other things were certainly put in after Mrs. Winchester died. He enjoyed telling of the one-armed wood carver who often worked with him. Mrs. Winchester paid him \$10 a day and she always wondered what she would have to pay him if he had two arms. Mrs. Winchester had a mind of her own and used it often according to Perkins.

"There was a time the carpenters' union tried to get us two to join the union. They threatened to stop delivery of material if we didn't join. Mrs. Winchester told them if they didn't leave us alone she would spend \$100,000 and put up a mill of her own. She was okay. During one depression when men were making \$1.50 a day, she paid us \$3 a day. At Christmas and Thanksgiving she always gave us turkeys and fine presents."

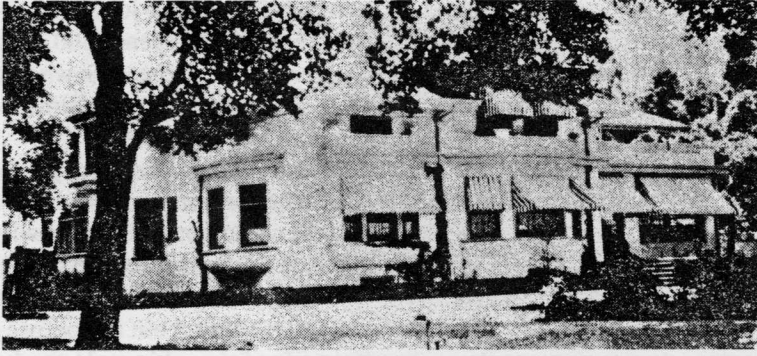
The late Elmer Jensen, a long time prominent San Jose attorney, who as a newspaper boy in 1909-10 served the Winchester home, on several occasions talked to her personally. Jensen said he could not understand why all the secrecy about such a fine lady. She never in the least appeared so to him. As a youngster, Jensen asked Mrs. Winchester if he could hunt robins on her property with his air rifle. Mrs. Winchester refused but not before giving young Jensen the complete story of the life of the robin and how due to the snow and iced elevations of the Sierras sought refuge in the warm valleys such as ours. This made such an impact on Jensen, never again did he draw bead on any feather songster.

Fred Larson, her chauffeur, spoke bitterly about those who believed her insane. "She was an overly smart woman and she just had such people pegged as plain busybodies."

The San Jose Herald published the following on July 16, 1911: "In a sea of apricot and olive orchards five miles west of San Jose stands the Winchester place and is the theme of many weird stories without foundation. Tales at the time captured the younger generation who accepted the mystic from their elders and so the legend grew. Mrs. Winchester was a French scholar and a remarkable business woman. She was a full fledged architect familiar with the building peculiarities of all countries. Her house was merely a workshop and the structure merely a collection of notes taken by a woman of great wealth while educating herself in architecture of selected countries."

The Trailblazer obtained a duplicate certificate of death No. 1293 from the County of Santa Clara which affirms: "Sarah L. Winchester in the town of Campbell on the Los Gatos Road in Meridian District died September 5, 1922 at 10:45 p.m. Cause of death - Chronic Myocariditis (Heart condition) lasting a period of five years. No autopsy. Attending physician - Dr. Clyde Wayland. Widow of William W. Winchester. Father's name - Lenard Pardee. Mother's maiden name - Sarah Burns. All of Connecticut. Place of burial - vault at Alta Mesa Cemetery (Palo Alto, California). Date of burial - September 9, 1922. Undertaker - George W. Tinney, Palo Alto."

This was the year Minnie graduated from high school followed by a position with the First National Bank of San Jose at a salary of \$60 a month. Throughout her years as a youngster, it was her yearning to own the half-acre of Winchester land on the north-east corner of the San Jose-Los Gatos Road and Moorpark, just across from her parents' home. "It took a lot of nerve to be ladened with a \$1,750 mortgage but I did pay \$50 a month in my impatient desire to own it. Of course, a raise later eased the situation."



The turn of the century 20-room Atherton Winchester mansion in 1969 was sold to a developer who demolished it. Six elaborate homes now cover the property.

Minnie went on to be married; a union ending in tragedy when her husband was killed in an unfortunate accident. However, three years later she married her late husband's chum, Homer Hall. "Our marriage was one of true endearment, one of warmth, one with a happy ending."

The San Jose Evening News of December 6, 1922 reported the San Jose firm of Barnett and Phelps was high bidder in probate court for the 161 acres of Winchester property with considerable amount of fruit bearing trees for \$135,531.50. Appraised improvements included the pumping plant, barns, and house all at \$5000. The pumping plant was said to be worth this amount alone — house evaluation almost nothing.

Mr. and Mrs. John Brown who bought the house in 1923 did a lot of changing declares Minnie Hall. Holiday Magazine of February 1947 had taken aim at the Browns as being wise to side-show practices after stints with boardwalk concessions in Southern California.

Courageous Minnie Hall, a true advocate, carries her banner high in a cause to dispel the ridicule and laughter attached to Sarah Winchester's memory. She was certainly quite a lady — no mystery about it.

CLYDE ARBUCKLE'S HISTORY OF SAN JOSE SCHEDULED FOR PUBLICATION

After years of vigilant writing we will soon be introduced to the most meticulously written history work on San Jose ever authored. The first printing of three thousand copies is scheduled for the Fall of 1984. This long sought history will consist of approximately five hundred pages with two color printing throughout. It will be an illustrated hard-bound volume measuring 8½" x 11". The copyright will be city owned with the Forward by San Jose Mayor Thomas McEnery. It will be made available through the Smith-McKay Printing Co. and at all leading book stores including the San Jose Historical Museum Gift Shop. Suggested retail price is presently quoted at \$20.

CALLING ALL PIONEER AUTHORS!

In conjunction with our regular scheduled program at the next Christmas Luncheon, we will present an authors' "Books for Gifts" autograph party. All members of our Society who have authored history oriented publications are invited to participate. A 20% fee from each book sold will be utilized towards this Society's Publication and Historical Essay Fund. Contact our President, John Clark, at P.O. Box 8208, San Jose, CA 95155.

NEW MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

The Campbell Historical Museum Association was incorporated on July 12, 1982 as a California non-profit public benefit corporation to assist the City of Campbell in the operation of the Campbell Historical Museum. This new association is currently soliciting charter memberships.

The museum is now open from 2 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday in the lower level of the Campbell Library, 70 North Central Ave. When it is moved to its new and larger location at 51 North Central Ave. later this year, the hours will be expanded. Call 408-379-3060 for further information.

AREA HISTORICAL MUSEUMS

California History Center, DeAnza College, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd.
Cupertino Open Mon. - Fr. 8-12 & 1-4
Campbell Historical Museum (see above)
Forbes Mill Museum (see page 1)

Gilroy Historical Museum, 195 Fifth St., Corner of Church, Gilroy
Open Mon., Wed., Thurs., Fri. 9-12 & 1-5

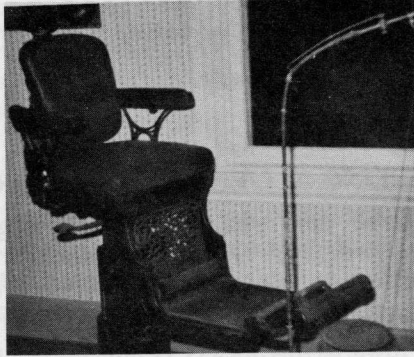
Los Gatos Museum, 4 Tait Avenue, Los Gatos Open daily

New Almaden Mercury Mining Museum, 21570 Almaden Road, New
Almaden Open Mon., Thurs., Fri. 1-4; Sat., Sun., Hol. 10-5

San Jose Historical Museum (see below)

Saratoga Historical Museum, 20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Rd & Oak St.,
Saratoga Open Wed. through Sun. 1-4

Sunnyvale Historical Museum, Martin Murphy Jr. Historical Park, N.
Sunnyvale Ave. at California, Sunnyvale Open Mon., Tues., Thurs.,
Fri., Sat. 12-3:30; Sun. 1-4:30



Dentist's Chair with Handcuffs

Patients years ago were so restrained because novocaine just wasn't available as today when a tooth has to be pulled. Of course, the drill was a foot powered contraption all lending to the patient's anxiety.

For more on local medicine visit your San Jose Historical Museum at Kelley Park, Senter Road, San Jose Open Tues. through Fri. 10-4:30; Sat & Sun. 12-4:30 There is a nominal admission charge.

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Welcome New Members

Mabel Ackerman
Evelyn L. Canfield
Dorothy B. Carlson
Ava Critchfield
Robert N. Critchfield
Virginia E. Feeney
Joe E. Fletscher
A.C. Hanson
Helen Hanson

Juliette M. Hager
Carolyn Hayes
Charles M. Hayes
Jessie Lund
Wilford T. Lund
Geneva McGeorge
William M. McGeorge
Hazel McIntyre

Fern B. Moore
Irma L. Murie
Ilene Pace
Tom Pace
Olga V. Parsons
Hope W. Randolph
Neola L. Somerville
Dr. Douglas Wendt
Katherine Wendt

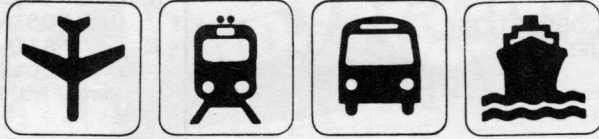


Beyond the sunset

Irvin A. Frasse

Maude Keffer
Florence E. Wool

Mary Louise Zingheim



Touring With The Californians

RESERVATIONS for trips can be made by calling Ruth Gross at 294-9830 between 9 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday. Members of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County are given preference over guests with reservations taken on 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 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.

THE CALIFORNIANS, P.O. BOX 32121, SAN JOSE, CA 95152

October 24-28 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Included: 3 nights Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles; one night Cambria; 3 lunches and one dinner. Tours: action packed Universal Studios, Lawry's Seasoning Center, Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose, Hearst Castle, also Merle Norman's magnificent collection of musical instruments and vintage automobiles — oodles more on this incredible. Space available CALL NOW!

January 20, 1984 THE VATICAN EXHIBIT Sign up at the September 3 luncheon.

April 1984 NEW ZEALAND EPIC Due to technical difficulties, brochures promised previously will be available at the September 3 luncheon.

CALIFORNIANS, Look to these extended treks being brewed for 1984: OREGON In the summer - Embrace timbered mountains and fertile valleys majoring in elbow room. WASHINGTON, D.C. in the fall - The capital of endless and historic delights.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE is always available and especially recommended for the longer trips. Remember, the unexpected sometimes occurs. Request forms from THE CALIFORNIANS, P.O. Box 32121, San Jose, CA 95152 and please enclose a stamped self-addressed legal size envelope.

Don't be shy in signing the waiting list on a "filled trip."

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LUNCHEON

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H.C.

DUES: \$3 Please send a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of your membership card. Make checks payable to California Pioneers and mail to Financial Secretary, P.O. Box 8208, San Jose, CA 95155.

THE TRAILBLAZER issued February, May, August and November. Editor-Henry Calloway, 1899 McDaniel Ave., San Jose, CA 95126; Associate Editor-Laura Calloway; Assistant Editor-Bill Chivers; Staff Artist-Ralph Rambo. Subscription rate to non-members \$2. per year.

CALIFORNIA PIONEERS OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY DIRECTORS 1983-84: Clyde Arbuckle, Helen Arbuckle, Bill Chivers, John Clark, Al Gauger, George Kobayashi, Helen Kuesel, Victoria Malatesta, Bryan Millan, James O'Connor, Tony Sapena, Mary Simas, Mary Wahlberg, Helen Walsh, Austen Warburton.

SUNSHINE: Please notify of SICKNESS and DEATHS: Mary Simas, 1722 Husted, San Jose, CA 95124 Phone 448-6102.