

QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE CALIFORNIA PIONEERS
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

INCORPORATED 1875

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SAN JOSE BROTHERS JOIN THE ALASKA GOLD RUSH

by Irene McDaniel Johnson



On May 21, 1900, two young men stood at the foot of Broadway in San Francisco, eagerly awaiting, along with a throng of others, the blast from the whistle of the *Zealandia* which would allow them aboard. This steamship would be their home for the next twenty five days and take them to the black and ruby sand beaches of Nome and the greatest adventure of their lives. These two young men were my father, Wilfred, and his older brother, Edmund McDaniel, who lived on the family ranch at Naglee and Union, later called Park Avenue. Their father, Josiah, had been a Colonel in the Confederate army who came west after the Civil War and finally settled in San Jose where he operated a dry goods store at Santa Clara and Market Streets before turning to farming and the building trade. Their mother, Amanda, had crossed the plains from Missouri in 1849 when she was six months old with a wagon party led by her father, Morgan Fine. He acquired part of a Spanish Land Grant and took up farming in Santa Clara where she grew up.

Alaska was particularly intriguing to the brothers. Still single, they had tried their hands at several careers, even some mining in the worn-out placers of northern California. After finishing at Hester School, Will went to the California Normal School for a short time and then became an apprentice to Dr. DeCrow, a prominent dentist in downtown San Jose, until eye problems made him abandon that profession. When the news of gold in Alaska reached San Jose, it was an irresistible opportunity for both of them. Ed had spent the summer of 1899 in the Golovnin region of Alaska with a group from San Jose. Returning no richer, but much wiser, he had no difficulty persuading Will that the two of them alone could do much better in Nome. Taking the hardships of the steerage accommodations, rough seas and nearly becoming icebound in their stride, Will and Ed arrived at Nome which had exploded into a population of fifteen thousand people. They staked a claim on the beach about five miles north of town, set up their tent and began their

search for gold. They faithfully wrote to their parents and sister Lulu describing in detail their impressions of this land and its people. They also wrote of their many adventures, some humorous and some tragic. Will lugged a big Kodak camera with him and took many fascinating and beautiful photographs.



They were fortunate to have as a friend, a small Eskimo boy who was not shy of the white man as were some of his elders. They all learned much from the other. Will even compiled a small dictionary of Eskimo words spelled out phonetically so he could converse with his new friends. Native craftwork, tools and utensils interested the brothers greatly and their "curio" collection was brought home and became the source of entertainment for family and friends.

Their habit was to mine from June to October, then return home for the winters. This they did until 1904, when Ed fell in love with the attractive Jessie Drake. Ed and Jessie were married June 1st in the Central Church on North Second Street and the newlyweds and Will sailed for Nome the next day. The new situation called for a larger cabin and this hardy bride helped make it cozy with carpet and wallpaper. She enjoyed picnics, made books of pressed wildflowers and treated the "boys" with mossberry

pies. She became the third white woman in the vicinity and was the object of much interest to the Eskimo women who came by to see her. The number of women later grew to seven, and included a young lady from New York who came to assist her aunt at the nearby roadhouse and was a frequent companion on their outings.

They had left the worn out beach sands by this time and moved farther from Nome and a little inland where ancient beaches proved more lucrative. They also were staying through the winters. To make good use of their time during those winters, they sank shafts to the bedrock, painstakingly thawing the ground with "steam points." They piled the sand and gravel into large dumps which were sluiced when warmer weather arrived.

In the fall of 1906, Jessie received word that her father was dying. The three hastily dropped their work and took the last boat out for the states. Will returned for a last time in 1908 to sell the claim and equipment. Ed and Jessie settled in Sunnyvale while Will continued on at the family home until his marriage in 1914.

Yes, they did find enough gold to pay off the mortgage on the ranch and go into the building trade. However, the true riches lay in their memories and the wonderful record of their lives on that new frontier.

Note- A new book, *Alaska Gold*, containing excerpts from the letters and memoirs plus 125 of the photographs taken is due out in September, 1997, which marks the Centennial of the Alaska Gold Rush. It is co-published by the California Historical Society and Scottwall Associates, edited by Jeff Kunkel of Oakland with the foreword by Kevin Starr. Jeff was the minister of the Methodist Church in Tracy where Irene's brother, Wilford Alonzo McDaniel, Jr, lives. Her brother invited him over to view the boxes and boxes of photos and letters from the Alaska Gold Rush. The Johnsons also came to discuss what to do with their inheritance. Kunkel agreed to edit the volume.

He is also a writer and writing teacher. He recently published a volume of short stories about his boyhood in Wisconsin entitled, *Warming Fires*. Jeff Kunkel will be our speaker for the September meeting.

Hardcover copies will be available by the September meeting, according to Jim Heig, Publisher. They will sell for \$34.95. both Jeff Kunkel and Irene Johnson will be available to autograph your copy. There are 176 pages with 125 photographs.

An exhibition of the McDaniel Collection of photographs will be shown at the California Historical Society Museum, 678 Mission St., San Francisco from September 4, 1997 to January 3, 1998. Other places the traveling exhibit is scheduled to date include the de Saisset in Santa Clara and a museum in Alaska. The Californians tour to the California Historical Society showing will be on Friday, September 19. See The Californians Listings.

1997 CALIFORNIA PIONEER ESSAY CONTEST

Helen Mac Carthy reported that 13 essays were submitted, 7 from students and 6 from the general public. Six were students of Kathryn Philps' classes at Willow Glen High School and one from Oak Grove High School. Mrs. Philps has been sponsoring entries for the last 10 years and her students have won a total of 13 prizes.

First Prize winner of \$500 was Katie McGovern from Willow Glen High School on "The Life and Memories of Larry Arnerich," her grandfather. His family founded the Oyster Loaf Restaurant in downtown San Jose.

Second Prize of \$250 went to a member of the general public, Ryvsona Qoreyva. In "Golden Threads of Santa Clara County," she traced her own lineage and that of Austen Warburton to early California explorers.

The Third Prize winner of \$125 was Marilee Serrania from Willow Glen High School on "Bellarmine College Preparatory," where her brother attended and her

mother taught.

First Honorable Mention of \$60 was given to Michael Cho for "Hakone Gardens and Taiko Drumming." Second Honorable Mention of \$40 was won by Kevin Wagner for "The Eternal Quest-The Lives of Paul F. and May Roberts Clark of Willow Glen." Third Honorable Mention of \$25 went to April Halberstadt for "Orchard Tractors."

Subjects of the other essays included: "Charles Herrold, Radio Pioneer," "Petit Trianon at De Anza College," "San Jose Sharks," "History of Villa Serena Retirement Community," "San Jose Lasers," and "The Lynching of Jack Holmes and Harold Thurmond"



President Bob Fisher and
1st Prize winner, Katy McGovern



Teacher Kathryn Philps & 3rd
Prize winner, Marilee Serrania

GONE TO THE GOLDEN HILLS
Olive Engwicht, March 6, 1997
Gloria Muller May 6, 1997
Eugenia McClay, May 18, 1997



Touring With The Californians

ROSE CRIMI-DIRECTOR

NANCY HILL-PHONE RESERVATIONS-258-3449

BEFORE NOON

FERN MC LAGGAN-TREASURER

60 PALOMAR REAL, CAMPBELL, CA 95008-4207

HELEN BROOKS & PAULINE HAWKINS-

LUNCHEON SIGN UPS-554-7587

Register for our Fall Trips at the September 6 Luncheon or call Nancy Hill beginning September 8. Guests and non-members may register beginning September 16.

SEPTEMBER 19- FRIDAY-GOLD RUSH DAYS

We will go to the new San Francisco Historical Society Headquarters to view their "Alaska Gold" exhibit which Features the Memoirs of Irene Johnson's Father. (She and Bob are Membership co-chairs) They have put together the memoirs and the book will be available about the first of September, in time for the opening of the show. Our included lunch will be at Tadich Grill, California's oldest restaurant in continuous operation, founded during the 1849 Gold Rush. After lunch, we will tour the Wells Fargo Museum for the story of Wells Fargo Stagecoaching days. The small museum has an excellent display of artifacts from the Gold Rush Period including some Emperor Norton items, Black Bart, the PO8 robber, his nemesis, Detective Harry Morse, an original stage-coach and many historic "covers" of interest to stamp collectors.

LEAVE 8:30 AM RETURN 3 PM PRICE \$35

OCTOBER 22 WEDNESDAY ELKHORN SLOUGH

An autumn outing to Monterey Bay takes us to Elkhorn Slough, one of the few undisturbed coastal

wetlands in California. The Slough covers 2500 acres of marsh and tide flats, which are home to small animals, birds and fish. Many species of waterfowl and shorebirds rest and feed here on their migrations. A guided tour over the trails gives us an opportunity to observe some of the inhabitants of this unique area. Our guides will divide us into two groups. We have a choice of a two mile walk taking about two hours, with rests along the way, or a short walk close to the Visitor's Center. A picnic lunch in the park picnic area is included. Our scenic bus ride takes us through the Santa Cruz Mountains on Route 17 and along the ocean on Highway 1.

Depart 10 a.m.

Return 5 P.m.

Price \$26

NOVEMBER 4-15, 1997

CARIBBEAN AND PANAMA CANAL CRUISE

We sail on the Holland America Line *Noordam* from Acapulco with ports of call in Costa Rica, San Blas Islands, Cartagena, Grand Cayman Islands and Tampa, Florida.

Price \$2400 including airfare, port taxes and baggage handling. Brochure is available.

DECEMBER CHRISTMAS TRIP Watch for complete information at the September luncheon. Tentative plans include spending the day at San Juan Bautista on Sunday, December 7th, with lunch, a performance of La Pastorella, an historic Passion Play, produced by El Teatro Campesino in the San Juan Bautista Mission Church, and the Annual Holiday Open House at the quaint shops in the downtown area.

Christmas season is a good time to visit San Juan Bautista Historical Park which commemorates California during the late Mexican Period. The Breen house will be ready for Christmas, including items they brought over the pass in 1846 with the Donner Party.

As a Sesquicentennial Project, the California Federation of Women's Clubs will replace the historic El Camino Real Trail Bells, January, 1997-January, 1998.

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT BOB FISHER

June 28, 1997



Dear Pioneers,

At the June, 1997 luncheon meeting, awards were made to the winners of the annual essay contest. I would like to express my thanks to those members who gave their time to read the 13 manuscripts and judge the merits of them. This was done in about a two week time span and the winners selected. Those judging the manuscripts were: Bud Amaral, Marie Amaral, Carol Arnoldy, Helen MacCarthy, Bob Oliver and Evelyn Ucovich. Many thanks to these dedicated Pioneers.

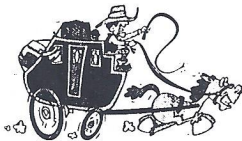
Our July 14, 1997 Board of Directors meeting will include new member Hal Messimer who volunteered to join the Board, for which we are very grateful. We still have several other vacancies and we hope that others will step forward to fill them. Give it a thought and you will find it a very fulfilling experience.

See you September 6, 1997 at Lou's Village.

Bob Fisher

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

MELITA KELLY,
NANCY LEUNG,
JO ANN UTZERATH
& EVELYN VAGGIONE



Jim Arbuckle, luncheon arranger has contacted Lou's Village about wine with your lunch. Bring your own bottle to share and Lou's will charge \$8 for glassware and opening the bottle. (corkage)



CHECK YOUR MAILING LABELS-

55 of you will no longer appear on our mailing list as of December. Postage is going up soon & so will dues. We are not covering costs of your Trailblazer.

**SESQUI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS
OF CALIFORNIA'S GOLD RUSH AND STATEHOOD
1997**

September 6 ADMISSION DAY IN COLUMBIA- as celebrated during the Gold Rush- at Columbia State Park 209-532-0150

September 13-14 Fiesta de Merienda at Angel Island as celebrated by Don Antonio Osio in a festive picnic of 1847. Our host welcomes Coast Miwok vaqueros, English, Yankee and Russian guests. 415-435-1915

September 18-21-Route 66 Rendezvous in San Bernardino 909-888-5998

September 20-Rancho Day in Pacifica's Sanchez Adobe Relive life in an 1847 Rancho. San Mateo County Historical Association 415-574-6468

September 20- Hattie's Tea Party in Placerville to celebrate the opening of her father's Gold Bug Mine at Hangtown's Gold Bug Park 916-621-1662

September 20-Sutter's Fort Living History in Sacramento 916-445-4422

September 26-28- Goldfest at Ironstone Vineyards-Murphys 209-728-1251

October 3-5 Conference of California Historical Societies Northern Symposium at Yreka-Siskiyou's Resources, Then and Now. 916-842-3836

October 4-5 Gold Rush Days at Coloma-U.S. National Gold Rush Panning Championships-Marshall Gold Discovery Park 916-622-6198

October 25-Living History Days at the Empire Mine State Historical Park in Grass Valley 916-273-8522

November 15 Sutter's Fort Living History-Sacramento 916-445-4422

December 5-12-19- Cornish Christmas Celebrations-Grass Valley 916-272-8315

December 2-21-Victorian Christmas at the Columbia City Hotel 209-532-1479

December 11-13-Christmas in the Adobes-Monterey 408-649-7118

1997 OFFICERS - CALIFORNIA PIONEERS OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Robert G. Fisher-- President

3435 Yuba Av. San Jose, CA
95117-2966 408-241-0224

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Jim Arbuckle, 2nd V.P.

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Doris Herschbach-Recording Sec

Telfer Av, San Jose CA
95125-3346 408-294-1509

Mimi Wells-Treasurer

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& President Emeritus

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Paul R. Bernal-Legal Advisor

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Campbell, CA 95008-3625
408-299-7400

Californians-Tours

Rose Crimi

1289 Martin St, San Jose 95126-2628
408-293-0896

Submissions to the Trailblazer For the Dec. issue must be received by
Nov. 1 Mary Lou Lyon- Ed 879 Lily Ave, Cupertino, CA 95014-4261
(408-253-9514)

Audit Committee

Hal Messimer-253-3888
18950 Sara Park Circle
Saratoga, CA 95070-4177

Joseph (Bud) & Marie Amaral

6001 Vera Cruz Av
San Jose, 95120-4864
408-268-4078 95125-2619

Sunshine Committee

Ruth Savage

3195 Calaveras Road,
Milpitas, CA 95035-7207
408-531-8496

AND

maybe you?

Marshall

maybe you?

Parliamentarian

maybe you?

Hacienda Cemetery

Richard Hill

10393 Doris Court,
San Jose CA 95127-3449
408-258-3449

Bud & Marie Amaral

6001 Vera Cruz Av,
San Jose CA 95120-4864
408-268-4078

Californians -Reservations

Nancy Hill 408-258-3449

Californians Treasurer

Fern McLaggan 60 Palomar
Real, Campbell, CA 95008-420

PIONEER LUNCHEON
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 199
AT NOON-LOU'S VILLAGE

554-7587

For Reservations **BEFORE**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1997

\$14

Breast of Chicken, mushroom sauce
tossed green salad
fresh vegetables, potato
rolls & butter, Sherbert & coffee

RICHARD M & HILL, L
10393 DORIS CT
SAN JOSE, CA 95127-3013

Come hear JEFF KUNKEL, EDITOR
of *ALASKA GOLD* about Irene Johnson's
Father and Uncle in the Alaska Gold Rush
1898-1906

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