



QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE CALIFORNIA PIONEERS
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY
INCORPORATED 1875

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CHRISTMAS IN THE GOLD FIELDS, 1849

from Joseph J. McCloskey reminiscences in a California Historical Society book, 1959 with the same name.

When the gold stories began to come in there was nothing for it but I must go west...I fell in with a 'hundred' with my little stake and became one of the proud possessors of the Flavius, a full rigged ship, which we bought outright at the dock and stocked within a week.

We had an eventful voyage...and entered San Francisco harbor with American blue-jackets in the forecastle. Early in December, I was a full fledged placer miner at Wood's creek, a tent village which clung and gripped and slipped along the banks of a ravine below the point where the first comers had built a dam. I took up a claim on the sands, and had more money inside a week than I ever hope to see again. The population numbered short of 60, all men and all square men... The men with whom I worked were blue shirted and rough garbed, perhaps, but they were not ruffians. They were judges, lawyers and physicians, yes, and clergymen among them.

Things were going nicely with Wood's creek when the camp turned in on the night of December 21. We were prosperous, we had plenty of provisions, and even a blanket under a tent roof is luxury in some circumstances. About midnight I awoke to find myself swimming under the tent cover, rain beating all about and the roar of a loosened cataract in my ears. The dam had burst.

I crawled up to the higher ground, abandoning my outfit, to find the rest of the camp gathered there, above

the reach of the flood, but drenched and miserable. In the darkness we could hear the rushing tide below us that was sweeping over our sandbars, our flumes and our tools. It looked hopeless to me. My impulse was to leave the whole thing, to close the chapter...I turned to two of the crowd, boys about my own age, and proposed that we push on out of it, to some other settlement or to find some of our own. They agreed and we had finished our scanty preparations by dawn.

...Steve was a red haired little crab of a chap, with a grin broader than his face, a happy, foot loose wanderer, who had left whatever home he might have known as a child and had been kicking about most of creation ever since. Mat was tall, built on the clothes horse plan with a face of chronic melancholy that belied his disposition. He had left his folks back in Vermont somewhere to tempt fortune in the west...Steve rounded up part of a side of bacon and I contributed about a pound of hardtack. With this and a rusty frying pan we started off, heading up the creek. ..

When we made camp that night some 20 miles up from Wood's Creek, in a strange and untraveled section we ate more than half our stock of food in sheer animal improvidence. Next day, we lazed along without undue effort. We were a little more careful of our supplies this time, and went to sleep with a hungry spot inside us...

We were living each moment as it came, content with physical well being, enjoying the new country, the daily change of scene and our own good company. The first annoyance we suffered was the third night out, when we fried the last of our hardtack with the rind of the bacon.

We awoke at sunup. It was a bright morning, with the early chill still in the air, but with promise of a warm ahead. We had thrown our blankets by a clump of bushes near the creek and Steve set about building a fire with the

dead branches he could pick up... "What are we going to have for breakfast?" says Mat. We hadn't considered that part of it. Steve with the empty frying pan in his hand, held it over the fire and laughed, "Well, we've got everything but the food." "Good Lord, boys!" Mat said, "Do you know that this is Christmas?"

We stared at each other a minute and then we all looked away again. It was Christmas. The land was green and pleasant, but it had lost its charm for us...As for me, it was the first time I had ever been away from my mother at that time of year. I'm not ashamed to say that I stepped away from my companions, went around to the other side of the bushes and sat down and cried. I was pretty young.

But right when I was feeling sorriest for myself and thinking about home and how I wished I was there I began to see how selfish and short sighted I was. After all, there were three of us and it was small friendship to comrades to hide myself and mope. So after a few minutes I strolled back. Mat was sitting with his head in his hands, the picture of desolation, thinking about the farmhouse in Vermont, I suppose. Steve was trying to assume a cheerful air and making a failure of it while he fussed around the useless fire.

"Look here, boys," I said, "this is playing it pretty low down on each other. I'm ready to celebrate. Merry Christmas, Steve. Merry Christmas, Mat. Here you two kids, Santa Claus has come."

They stared at me as if I'd lost my senses, but I hadn't. I took out of my belt two heavy little nuggets I'd been saving to send back to New York and gave one to each of them. It was a poor enough gift. Gold was a common commodity with us. They'd have appreciated a hot biscuit a lot more. But it fetched them. The downright absurdity of the idea struck them right, I guess, for I had them smiling.

Then, of course, they had to get in the game with holiday offerings. Steve dug up a broken bladed pocket-

knife for me and a silk handkerchief for Mat. Mat had a jasper watch charm for Steve and a little silver pencil for me. We spread out our gifts and gloated over them and laughed over them, though I guess there were tears back of the laughs.

"Youngsters don't ever eat any breakfast on Christmas morning," said Steve; and we jumped at the suggestion and wouldn't even tighten up our belts for fear we'd break the rules. Perhaps we added to ourselves that if youngsters forget breakfast they come in pretty strong on dinner, and we hadn't much prospect for that. But we started the day right and we stuck to it. After some chaffing we took up our march and followed the creek again.

We kept up the fiction that we were satisfied and tickled to death with our presents for some hours, but under the sun we began to notice the lack of food, and conversation died down. Along about noon we were in the doldrums again, marching side by side and saying nothing. We came to a wooded rise after a while and we began to climb it slowly, resting often and feeling pretty weak. We were stopping for breath about half way up when something happened.

Through that solitude, in the untrained wilderness, 100 miles, as we supposed, from any living soul, there came the chant of voices. Sweet and true the melody filtered down to us through the trees—"Adeste Fidelis," the hymn of hymns for Christmas! We looked up, baring our heads mechanically. I don't think we would have been surprised after the first strain to see a troop of angels among the branches. I know I was quite convinced that some supernatural manifestation had been vouchsafed to us. We could see nothing, but the voices rose and fell. I scarcely dared to move, but Steve, who was more practical, let out a whoop and dashed on up the hill. We followed him to the top and in a little open space we found our angels.

There were four of them, young men from Boston. It appeared that they had belonged to a church choir and had traveled to California together. They were in the hills prospecting and were making the most of their Christmas. They were well supplied with provisions, flour and sugar and bacon, and they welcomed us joyfully. You may be sure we were grateful.

They stayed our hunger, but announced that the big celebration would be in the evening. We were content, and during the afternoon all seven of us sat around and swapped yarns. In the evening we built a gorgeous fire, and one of the singers, who had a knack, cooked marvelous flapjacks in bacon grease. Then we had bootleg coffee, so called from its color, and the chef finally achieved his greatest triumph and our undying admiration by producing a rough sort of johnny cake, baked on a shovel.

It was a rare feast, unimpeded by dishes in the absence of any, and digested by the aid of talk and laughter. We had enough to tell each other. Every man had some tale of Christmas to add, and we exchanged all the stuff we could remember or had read that would contribute to the occasion. Toward the end some one produced a modest flask and we had a drink around to do fitting honor to our happy gathering. Perhaps a newcomer blundering into our camp might have thought us a rather questionable crowd, with our torn and stained garments, our heavy boots and our general unshorn and unkempt appearance. But if we lacked the polish, out there in the new uncharted country, we had the will and the sentiment.

There never was a more successful Christmas dinner when we sat back replenished, warm, filled with the glow of good and kindly company, we three strangers had thankful hearts for the cheer and shelter to which we had been led on this day of days. Grouped about the fire, we all sang the old Christmas songs again and again, the

eyes of each man seeking and finding in the flames familiar scenes of home far back in the east. Then when the blaze had fallen to embers and the shadows began to steal in upon us from the forest we shook hands all around, with the clasp of friends, wished each other once more a 'Merry Christmas' and so to our blankets.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE from David McKinney



We have been working on a revised membership pamphlet, "Who Are WE?" and it reminded me that some members who do not get to our quarterly meetings may not be aware of the scope of the Pioneers. We do more than meet quarterly. We also have *The Trail Blazer*, *The Pioneer Papers*,

(which will go to the printer soon), the Annual Essay contest, The Austin Warburton Pioneer Award, the Jackson Ranch, The Hacienda Cemetery, and Touring With the Californians. To Commemorate our 125th year, we plan to have new Anniversary Pins available for the first meeting in 2000 in March.

As we look to our third century of existence this next year, or more accurately, the year after, (we do begin counting with one not zero!) we hope to improve upon each of these projects and take on some new ones. Look for reports on all of the projects, old and new, in future Trailblazers.

Authors-Remember to bring your books to sell at the December meeting. Meanwhile, Happy Holidays. Plan to join us on December 4. Eureka! David

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR THE YEAR 2000 ARE DUE IN DECEMBER, 1999 It is that time again for members to remit payment for dues. We have a total membership of 697 of which 216 are LIFE members. If you are not a life member, your Dues of \$10.00 are now due and payable.

Check your mailing label to see when your membership expires. Most of you will have a 99 next to your name. If you would like to become a Life member, please send \$100 or \$175 for a couple. You may pay at the next meeting in December or by mail to Melita Kelly, 460 North 15th Street, San Jose, CA 95112, Membership Chairman. If you mail, please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope so your new membership card can be sent back to you.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Lorayne Borba
Joanne Dinges
Julia K. Kane
William D. Prolo
Marguerite Sheehan
Alma Gene Taylor
R. Watson & Norma Taylor
Warren B. & Jeneil Wieman

Bee Craig
Ann Durkan
Jack J. Labourdette
Bruce Ravenal
Esma Sprague
Lee (Lydia) Tibbs
Terry Worden

GONE TO THE GOLDEN HILLS

Mildred McCrea..... June 5, 1999
Helen C. Richmond..... June 9, 1999
Marian Stewart..... June 18, 1999
Ronald Gordon..... July 21, 1999
Eleanora D. Joseph..... August 4, 1999
Ann Puglizevich..... September 9, 1999
Patricia Oltman..... September 10, 1999
Erma Frost..... October 4, 1999



RON GORDON, MEMBER OF PIONEER FAMILY died at the age of 87 on July 21. His father, John C. Gordon was San Jose's first commercial photographer. Ron donated a large photographic collection of his photos to San Jose State University Library recently.

Ron was a pioneer in radio, becoming interested in radio at age 9, received his radio operator's license at age 15, after building his own receiver and transmitter. Some

parts were bought from Dr. Charles Herold, who had the world's first commercial radio station. He met Bill Eitel at the Santa Clara Radio Assn. who hired him as a glass blower for Heinz & Kaufmann, making radio tubes for the Dollar Steamship Lines. As employee #4 at Eitel-McCullough, he made power tubes for ham radio operators. After retiring from Varian Associates, he reactivated his ham radio license and activities. He was interested in the Perham Foundation Museum of radio and electronic history. He is survived by a sister Doris Herschbach, brother Wilbur, 2 daughters, Ronda and Sallie, a son, Barry and 3 grandchildren.

SARAH PARDEE WINCHESTER...continued from June, 1999

She rode in regal splendor in conveyances fitting the era. At first it was a Victoria with a liveried coachman. Later, she had a French Renault, a Buick "Town Car" and finally, two Pierce-Arrows, one done in stunning lavender and gold. The Renault gave continual trouble until she called in a San Francisco mechanic, Fred Larsen to diagnose the problems. He did so quickly and efficiently, that she asked him to stay on. He refused. She persisted until finally asking him to name his own salary. He cited a fabulous figure. She accepted immediately and Fred stayed with her to the end.

She seldom traveled extensively, but did have relatives in the Bay Area whom she visited. She also had another estate on the upper peninsula where her niece, Frances Merriman lived, her favorite companion and principal heiress. She did spend one vacation at the original Del Monte Hotel.

Mrs. Winchester did all her shopping from her various conveyances, never alighting. In those days, First Street was our elite and only shopping center. Merchants were glad to bring their wares to the curb for her inspection. She always paid in gold coin and nothing was ever returned.

She contributed to charities of all faiths. Daily, her carriage would take soup and hot food to newly arrived settlers on Stevens Creek Road, a man dying from tuberculosis, and others. When the old Cupertino Church Ladies Aid Society collected used clothing for the local poor children, she would drive up in her polished Victoria and her liveried coachman would alight and stagger up the church steps with a huge hamper of newly purchased garments.

It is true that she was a very private person, but in her early years, she was neither cold nor distant. She was very sensitive and the cruel rumors and gossip hurt her, so she withdrew into her shell. When the San Jose Chamber of Commerce asked permission to show President Teddy Roosevelt her house on his way to planting a tree in Campbell, she refused them. The story of her planned but unattended reception is absolutely not true. It did not happen.

A hedge of cypress was planted in 1888 which enclosed the estate, protecting it from prying eyes. The entrance was not barred, but people were reluctant to trespass. Adults craned their necks as they passed by and small boys peeked through the cypress hedge.

At first, she did entertain children and young people. They were invited to parties in her incomparable gardens with acres of blooming flower beds bordered with rare dwarf boxwood and shaded by imported ornamental trees and shrubs. Maids served "French ice cream made from real cream" on "Strawberry Hill." She was particularly fond of little girls and they were allowed to romp through her gardens or thump her rosewood grand piano in the great ball room while their audience of one sat and beamed.

Throughout her 38 years of residence, her employees remained fiercely and faithfully loyal, defending every eccentricity. They said she was strong minded and firm, but always fair and kind. Those who

were lazy, stole, gossiped or revealed confidences were immediately dismissed. They were well paid and often given additional gifts, even homes or real estate and lifetime pensions. She was concerned with their families and showed it.

Mrs. Winchester had a favorite French maid, who on her nights off, attended current performances. She delighted in regaling her mistress about the evening's highlights. If they appealed to her, Mrs. Winchester would ask the players to stage excerpts or skits, often after midnight in her spacious ball room. Knowing of her generosity, the cast was always happy to comply.

Often, when she couldn't sleep, she would play one of the mansions' organs. She was an accomplished musician and it also exercised her arthritic fingers. Her "sacred" blue room that some say was her seance room and was locked to all but herself was at various times used as a bedroom by her foreman, the chauffeur and the head Japanese gardener and his wife...

Some whispered about a \$30,000 solid gold dinner service...that never was. When the safe was opened after her death, it contained precious clippings from newspapers, fishlines, socks, woolen underwear which had belonged to her husband plus a tiny purple velvet box with a lock of baby hair and a faded clipping from a New Haven Newspaper Death column which read, "Winchester, in this city, July 24, 1866, Annie Pardee, infant daughter of William Wirt and Sarah L. Winchester."- only golden memories.

Those who knew her found her interesting. They said she was a sweet person and not at all crazy. Her mind was perfectly clear to the end. It was utterly false that she was eccentric or mentally unbalanced. She was preyed upon by people. At the age of 85, she finally joined her husband and child on September 5, 1922.

To get the whole story, read Ralph Rambo, *Lady of Mystery*, Sarah Winchester, or Lyon, *Some More Women*



Touring With The Californians

Touring with the Californians

Rose Crimi Muench - Tour Director

Nancy Hill - Phone Reservations: 258-3449 Mon-Fri am

Pauline Hawkins - Treasurer 390 No. Winchester Blvd.

Santa Clara, CA 95050 (Please note change of address.)

REGISTRATION FOR WINTER TRIPS begins at the December 4th luncheon. Checks are preferred over cash. Non-members and guests may sign up, starting December 13th. If you do not get a trip flyer at the luncheon meeting, please send a stamped, self-addressed letter-sized envelope to Pauline's address above. (Please note change of address.) Pick-up point (unless otherwise indicated) is at Valley Village, 390 N. Winchester Blvd., Santa Clara, at Dolores St. side.

DECEMBER 22, WEDNESDAY SNOOPY'S CHRISTMAS ICE SHOW. (Registration is in progress.) This is a holiday treat to share with your children — or grandchildren! We travel to Santa Rosa and enjoy an included pre-show lunch at Michele's Restaurant. Then we'll have a little time to stop at the Charles Schultz Memorabilia Shop before seeing the spectacular Christmas ice skating show, filled with colorful costumes, music and fantastic performers on ice.

Leave: 11:00 A.M. Return: 7:00 P.M. Price: \$ 56

**NEW YEAR'S at VICTORIA'S EMPRESS HOTEL,
DECEMBER 29, 1999 - JANUARY 2, 2000.**

Registration is now on a SPACE AVAILABLE basis. Call Rose Crimi Muench, 1-(408) 293-0896.

GOING OUT in STYLE TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2000

Where can you find a park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted with grassy rolling hills, shade trees, sculptures and monuments designed by prestigious architects? The surprising answer is Mountain View Cemetery in the Piedmont hills of Oakland. Founded in 1865, the cemetery covers 226 acres. A hundred years ago, it was a popular destination for recreation and spectacle for Victorian Oaklanders. We will have a docent-led tour where we will view the final resting places of such noted persons as architect Julia Morgan, Yosemite landscape painter Thomas Hill, and muck-raker novelist Frank Norris, as well as noteworthy statuary and monuments. We will also have a tour of the Chapel of the Chimes, designed by Julia Morgan of Hearst Castle fame. It is in gothic style with garden courtyards, and decorated with murals. We will have an early lunch at Fenton's Creamery, a long-time old-fashioned ice cream parlor on Piedmont Ave. , and enjoy one of their ice cream specialties for dessert.

Leave: 9:30 A.M. Return: 4:00 P.M. Price: \$ 28

**GEORGIA O'KEEFE EXHIBIT and the 16th ANNUAL
"BOUQUETS to ART" THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2000**

We travel to the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco to see an exhibit of 53 works by Georgia O'Keefe from 1908 to 1963. The exhibit displays paintings of "things" — flowers, leaves, bones, shells, and fruit — with vibrant colors veering toward the abstract. Optional audio narrative is available for \$4.00. We will also have the opportunity to see the 16th annual "Bouquets To Art" for which floral designers fill the museum with spectacular floral tributes inspired by the Legion's works of art. As an added bonus, we will stop at the Windmill in Golden Gate Park to see the Queen Wilhelmina Tulip Garden. We will have a late lunch at the Beach Chalet on Great Highway overlooking the ocean, with the opportunity to

admire the restored 1920's murals of San Francisco life.

Leave: 9:00 A.M. Return: 4:00 P.M. Price: \$ 37

OBERAMMERGAU, ITALY, and SWITZERLAND

MAY 21 - JUNE 3, 2000 The world-renowned Passion Play is produced every ten years in this picturesque Bavarian village. The cost is \$3790, including nonstop air from San Francisco to Rome; sight-seeing in Rome, Assisi, Florence, Bologna, Padua, Venice, Verona, Brenner Pass, Ludwig's Castles, and Lucerne; hotels, and 21 meals. The return flight is from Zurich. Please note that the registration form and \$500.00 deposit must be received by December 13th. Call Rose Crimi Muench, 1-(408) 293-0896.

SANTA FÉ OPERA in AUGUST 2000?

If you are an opera buff, experiencing opera under the stars in Santa Fé will be a treat. Productions include: "Rigoletto," "Ermione," "Marriage of Figaro," "Electra," and "Venus and Adonis." The cost is approximately \$1300, including airfare, six days' accommodation, three or four theatre tickets, two meals per day, and local tours. Last chance to express your interest is at the December 4th luncheon, or call Rose Crimi Muench, 1-(408) 293-0896.

RIVER BARGE EXCURSION in NOVEMBER 2000

We go into the Cajun country on the Intracoastal Waterway between New Orleans and Galveston. The cost is approximately \$2200, including airfare, port taxes, all outside cabins, all meals, shore excursions, and tips. Brochures will be available at the March luncheon.

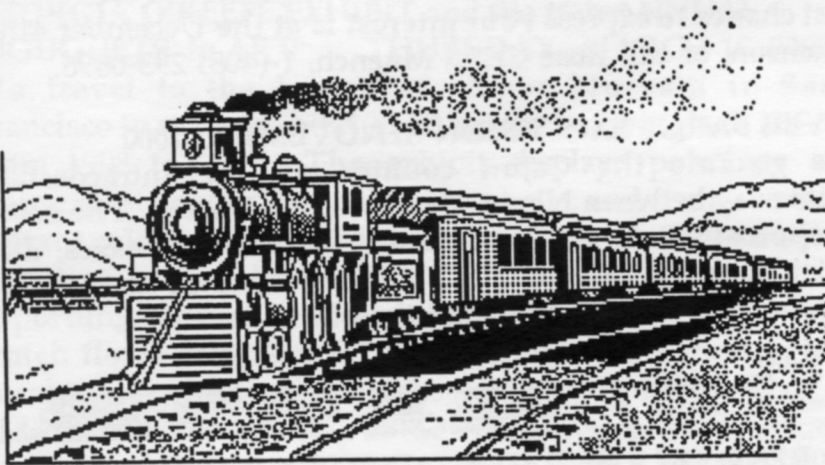


**TO RENO ON THE RAILROAD THROUGH THE SNOW
LADEN SNOWSHEDS & A TRIP TO VIRGINIA CITY,
NEVADA, HOME OF THE COMSTOCK LODE-for
MARCH 10-11-12-13 in conjunction with Mary Lou Lyon's**

California History Classes which will be studying the 1860's California which includes the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, The Comstock Lode & The Civil War in California at TWO times.

A NEW DAYTIME CLASS will begin on January 25 -Tuesdays, from 1-3 because several of you have asked me to teach a class in the daytime, too. I hope to see YOU there. Both will be held at The Willows Senior Center (but you do not need to be a Senior to enroll) The Night-time class is continuing on Wednesdays, 7 to 9, beginning January 26, 2000. The price is right. This is my 14th year, since Clyde Arbuckle gave up his night-time class and endorsed me to follow him, teaching our first love, California History.

If you are interested in this proposed joint excursion which has not jelled yet, please sign up at the luncheon so we can let you know the particulars when we get them together. It is my fault, not Rose's...Mary Lou
P.S. You will be allowed to bring along a bag of nickles...



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Mary Lou Lyon- Editor

DEADLINE- for March Trailblazer-- JANUARY 28

P.O. BOX 8208 SAN JOSE CA 95155

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

PIONEER LUNCHEON

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1999

AT NOON LOU'S VILLAGE



CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY THE

Main Street Singers~

LOS ALTOS HIGH SCHOOL

Cross Rib of Beef au jus

*Mashed Potatoes
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*seasonal Vegetables
Holiday Cake & Coffee*

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by Wed. Dec. 1

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