

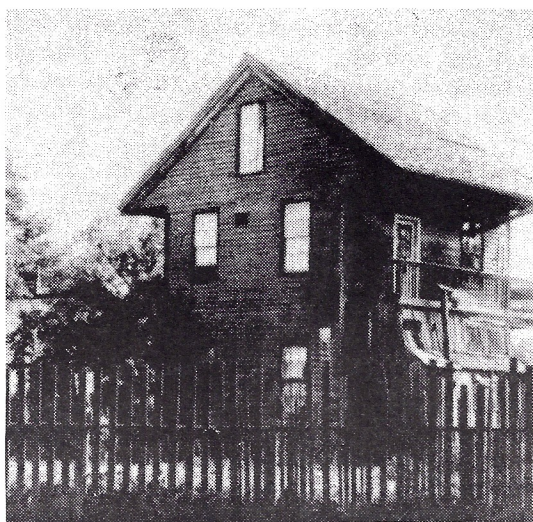
Volume 27

May, 1986

No.2

PELLIER NURSERY HOUSE -

OUR FRENCH PRUNES BEGINNINGS



This 1904 photo was taken by Alice Hare, a highly noted photo-journalist from Santa Clara. Mrs. Hare made note how this structure, long since replaced, was used for years as a residence for the Louis Pellier family and later as a nursery house. It was here where the first French prune in America was cultured. From this humble start had grown our once great prune industry. Mrs. Hare declared it was one of the first frame houses in the valley brought around the Horn from the East, it being pre-fitted.

The old home place located at the junction of Julian and W. St. James was dedicated as California Registered Landmark No. 434 on November 29, 1977 as the "Site of City Gardens - Nursery of Louis Pellier," popularly known now as Pellier Park. The Bi-centennial memorial trees planted in 1978, ranging from prune to pear, now continue to blossom and foliate at Pellier's old "back yard" in memory of our valley's fruitful past.

WHALE BLAZERS

In the early days of the College of Pacific in San Jose, young men students held the responsible job of ringing the college bell to summon students to class. On occasions, such as April Fool's Day, mischievous students removed the clapper from the bell and students failed to appear in class. After such an incident or two the school president had several extra clappers made by an obliging blacksmith. These were kept by the sexton. The very next time the mischief makers removed the clapper, they were amazed to hear the college bell sound off as usual. They knew positively they had hidden the clapper in the dormitory! There is no record of disciplinary action.

JUNE 1886: Six hundred dollars seems to be a large price for one cherry tree but that was the sum paid for one in this county. It was required to be removed to make way for the New Almaden Railroad with the owner demanding \$900 for it. Experts were appointed and it was proved that the tree for years had yielded the owner crops which sold for sums equivalent to the interest on the amount claimed. By a compromise \$600 was accepted for the tree. This was reported as giving our "back east" friends some idea of the value of fruit trees and the profit derived from them in the Santa Clara Valley.

JUNE 27, 1894: To raise funds for the construction of the University of Pacific Conservatory of Music when it was located in San Jose, the ladies of the Methodist Church scheduled an excursion to the Mid-Winter Fair in San Francisco. Of the \$50.50 which was raised four dollars were used to pay for the transportation of a model of the conservatory done in seeds. This model was made of California seeds which had been kindly donated by C.C. Morse and lumber given by R.L. Higgins, both of Santa Clara.

MAY 1904: Five-Hole tin mouse traps were going on sale in San Jose with a limit of just one to a customer at a cost of just one cent each, usually a ten cent value proclaimed the Home Union.

JUNE 1913: In San Jose Judge J.E. Richards sentenced a chicken thief to a year in the state prison at Folsom for stealing chickens. The henhouse culprit was caught after some long annoyed neighbors subdued him with a volley of buckshot.

EXPLORING A BOARDWALK

by Laura Calloway



The spectacular sight and sound of a merry-go-round or carousel bring to mind a childhood pleasure which can still be enjoyed.

The term carousel is derived from the Italian and Spanish words meaning "little war." Indeed a very early form was simply horsemen riding in circles attempting to spear a target and sometimes each other.

The merry-go-round bounced forth in America when the wood carvers and the machinist joined forces. The animals are carved from hard woods. A single horse may consist of up to seventy laminated pieces joined with rabbit-hide glue. The more ornately carved horses or animals are to be found to the outside and are often the standers - meaning they do not move. the highest jumpers are to the center.

By looking at the parts of a carousel you can usually identify the carver. The Santa Cruz Boardwalk merry-go-round is a 1911 Loeff transported from Riverside, Rhode Island.

Charles Loeff was a Danish wood carver who worked in a furniture factory in Brooklyn during the day and carved his carousel figures at home in his spare time. Although he opened his first shop in Brooklyn, he moved in 1905 to Riverside, Rhode Island. Finally the business was brought to Ocean Park, California.

Loeff's horses are distinctive in as they appear to be gentle creatures, jolly, with bulging nostrils to show heavy breathing and many teeth exposed in a smile. He used a rosette on the breast of his animals and the saddle pads were decorated with tassels and glass ornaments. Most often the horses had real horsehair tails. Loeff also carved lions, tigers, panthers, ostrich, deer and other animals.

The Santa Cruz carousel has seventy hand-carved horses of Japanese white pine prancing to the music of the original 342-pipe Ruth Band Organ which was built in 1894 in Germany.

These antique animals are priceless and need to be maintained. It is reported that each is sent to Walnut Creek for a chemical stripping and for at least fifty hours of work to rebuild the fine finish that can also withstand the sandy bathing suits.

In the beginning the horsemen tried to spear a target; now, it is "to catch the brass ring" which gives interest to the ride. If you are fortunate to catch

the ring, you then throw it into the clown's mouth at which time his nose and eyes light up.

The first roller coaster on the Santa Cruz beach in 1884 went to the daring height of twenty-four feet on its five hundred foot circumference ride. It was replaced in 1908 by the Thompson Scenic Railway which was then the longest in the United States - some 1,500 feet. It was considered to be a rather boring ride in which you went up gentle slopes and down gentle dales. If you looked to one side, you saw the mountains and to the other side you could observe the water - a scenic railway. With the arrival of the Roaring Twenties, it was just too tame!

In 1924 Arthur Loeff, son of Charles Loeff of merry-go-round fame, leased land from the Seaside Company and proceeded to erect the \$50,000 Giant Dipper of today. In exactly forty-seven days the first paying customer paid 15 cents for the half mile ride lasting two minutes. This vestige of wooden monsters on the West Coast designed specifically to scare people rises to a height of seventy feet and travels at a speed of 55 miles per hour. Loeff operated his one and only roller coaster for eleven years before selling to the Seaside Company and rejoining his father in the merry-go-round business.

A roller coaster enthusiast wrote in a fan magazine, "A good roller has to have nonstop action from beginning to end. Dimensions have nothing to do with it. In fact, the Santa Cruz Giant Dipper is one of the smallest roller coasters, but it is a good combination of drops and turns, one after the other. The ride is unpredictable and does not get old."

Being within fifty yards of the water there is constant battle with salt air and rust. Approximately one fourth of the structure is replaced each year. By the end of four or five years you have substantially a new structure. Before the ride opens each day, a technician walks over the train's route looking for problems.

Maintenance and basic design are credited with the fact the Giant Dipper is still around where similar rides have been shut down.

Remember - the fever and excitement still prevails at the Boardwalk. You just pay more for your screams.

EXHIBIT OPENS AT THE CALIFORNIA HISTORY CENTER, DE ANZA COLLEGE

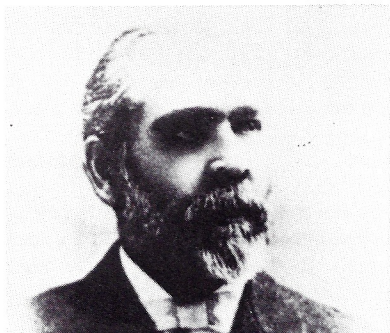
Through June 13 reflecting a fascinating look at California's past. Colorful displays of trademarks at the turn of the century represent everything from spirits, canned goods, household items, cigars, tonics, powders, pills and more. Open 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Free admission. Phone (408) 996-4712

FREE "OVERLAND JOURNAL"

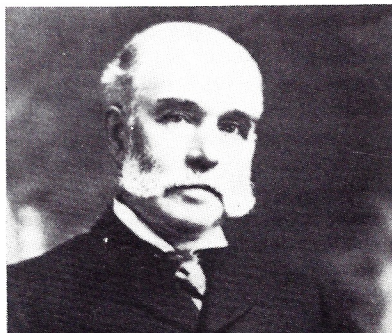
"Overland Journal", the quarterly publication of the Oregon California Trails Association (OCTA) will inform you on preservation projects, provide fascinating reading with articles about emigration and the trails the pioneers left behind, plus book reviews, contemporary and historical maps and photos. For more information and a complimentary copy contact Pioneer member Bill Chivers 378- 0325.

FERRY-MORSE SEED CO.

by Bill Chivers



CHARLES C. MORSE
Founder of the C.C. Morse & Co.



DEXTER M. FERRY
Founder of the D.M. Ferry & Co.

The fame of Santa Clara County having been a major fruit growing center is widely known, but the few people realize that at one time this county was also one of the largest vegetable and flower seed growing areas in the world. Many of the seed farms were in and around Santa Clara .

Seeds were first grown in California for trade in 1873 by R.W. Wilson, a seedman from Rochester, New York, who came to California for his health, and planted three acres of prize head lettuce on his farm near Santa Clara for the D.M. Ferry Seed Co. of Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Wilson never lived to share the wealth he had uncovered. In 1877, his failing health forced him to sell to two local seedmen partners, C.C. Morse and A.L. Kellogg.

Charles Copeland Morse came to California from Maine in 1862 after three years before the mast of a sailing vessel. He tried his luck in the gold camps around Virginia City, Nevada but preferred the climate and opportunities afforded by the Santa Clara Valley. Morse's partner, A.L. Kellogg, was a Methodist minister from New York State, whose first interest was in education. In 1884, he retired from the firm leaving Morse to carry on alone as C.C. Morse and Company. The company incorporated in 1896 under the laws of California and quickly became the leading flower and vegetable seed producers on the Pacific Coast.

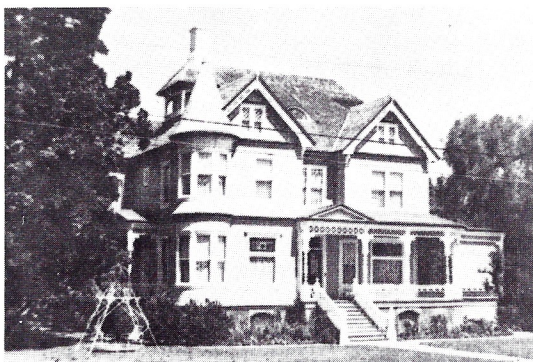
Meanwhile in 1887, the firm of Dexter Mason Ferry, better known as D.M. Ferry and Co. was expanding in Detroit, Michigan. They had seed gardens around Detroit and later moved the stock seed growing to Pontiac, and later larger acreage near Rochester, Michigan was aquired.

C.C. Morse and Co. was also rapidly expanding. In 1898, Mr. Morse's health having failed, his son Lester L. Morse, took over active management of the business. C.C. Morse died May 5, 1900.

There were some other major seed companies in the county at this time – J.A. Kimberlin Seed Co. Kimberlin was founder of the University of the Pacific. There were J.B. and H.C. Agnew Seed Farms at Agnews, the Gallimore Seed Co. of Mountain View, Charles Parker Seed Co. on what is now Scott Boulevard, the Chin Ah Coon Seed Co. of Sunnyvale, and the W.J. Fosgate Co., who had 500 acres where the San Jose Airport is today.

In 1905, C.C. Morse and Co., having meanwhile absorbed several pioneer West Coast seed firms, moved its headquarters from Santa Clara to San Francisco. On April 18, 1906, the great earthquake and fire which destroyed a major portion of San Francisco's downtown business district, wiped out the company's warehouse, but it resumed operations immediately in temporary quarters. As the seed-growing operations of C.C. Morse and Co. expanded, additional acreage became necessary. In 1910, the 900 acre Flint Ranch at San Juan Bautista was acquired as production headquarters. A few years later the Sacramento Ranch was added, and the company's plant breeding activities were centered at Salinas.

Business relations between D.M. Ferry and C.C. Morse and Co. remained cordial throughout this period, and for 52 years C.C. Morse and Co. continued to supply the Detroit firm with much of its California seed. All types of seeds were grown here - onion, lettuce, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery and many more. Flower seeds were the pansy, dahlia, nasturtium, hollyhock, larkspur, forget-me-not, petunia, poppy and more. It was a matter of natural



evolution and economic logic that these two concerns, whose activities dovetailed so perfectly should combine forces. The merger of these two seed giants took place in 1930.

Having survived wars, panics and depression, Ferry-Morse Seed Co. was prepared to serve our nation in an emergency when World War II exploded. After Europe's seed producing areas were cut off by invasion, American seedmen did an outstanding job in filling the gap. To meet the urgent needs of our overseas allies, vegetable seed production in the United States was more than trebled between 1939 and 1944. Not only was the company called on to help meet America's own increased requirements, but also to supply much of the seed required by all of the allied nations, and to help replant the fields of liberated lands.

In 1951, the company's Western headquarters were removed from San Francisco to a modern streamlined plant at Ferry-Morse Way in Mountain View, not far from the original site of C.C. Morse and Co. This plant, in addition to offices, warehouse facilities, testing laboratory and stock seed vault, contains the world's largest battery of modern automatic equipment for cleaning and milling garden seeds, much of it designed and built to the company's own specifications. No longer are seeds dried in the sun and washed by hand.

We can be proud of this pioneer seed company knowing that it has had an important part in making our County the great County that it is today. The C.C. Morse house is California Historical Landmark No. 904 and can be seen at 981 Fremont Street, Santa Clara. Go take a look at it.

SAN JOSE'S REMARKABLE OSTRICH FARM

by Henry Calloway



Tantalizing our valley's population after March 2, 1904 was the stirring San Jose Ostrich Farm at King Road and Alum Rock Avenue as trolley cars and buggy whips all assisted in keeping our feather farm's turnstile creaking at a profitable pace.

The promoter of this feat was headed by Colwell P. Leitch who had ostrich interests in Arizona and San Diego. It was said he had been lured here due to the "generous" encouragement received from the San Jose and Santa Clara County railroads.

By February 22, 1904 a carload of twenty-four of the finest ostriches to be found were on the way to San Jose. The promotion was reported to have been capitalized at \$25,000 divided into 250 shares of \$100 each. Directors of the company were Colwell P. Leitch, A.J. Leitch, H.H. Mears, Hugh Porter and V.A. Scheller of San Jose.

The Farm was captivating scores at a time when ostrich plumes were a high fashion item. "Our product," said A.J. Leitch, "are from the finest strains of South African ostrich. They are reared principally for the beautiful feathers they yield. Our plumes here are plucked every eight months and sent direct to New York where experts treat them by a special process.

"The hens lay only twice a year, and each time they provide nine to ten eggs. The eggs weigh about four to four and a half pounds each while the shell has the substance of thin crockery. The male bird prepares the nest and unlike many of the feathered tribe sits more than half the time on the nest and helps the mate in hatching. This can be witnessed here on the premises at the proper time. When the chick ostrich makes its initial peek into the world, it is quite a lusty fellow and is about the size of a small turkey. Inside of a week he is almost a foot high and before he is six months old he reaches a height of six feet. At the age of four years hens begin to lay and help to increase the stock. At maturity birds can be plucked but the first and second pluckings are of poor quality. It takes another year or so before the feathers are of the quality we seek. Plumes come

off the wings and tail," Leitch informed, "and measuring as much as 20 to 25 inches in length. The feathers as they come off the ostrich are very beautiful and have a natural curl and gloss, but this is soon lost if not prepared and treated by experts. It is only after this treating are plumes ready for market. To make a plume for milady's Easter hat takes from two to three of our feathers to arrive at one that is showy and stylish," said Leitch.

Attendance always increased when ostrich plucking time came around. On hand, also, was Mr. John Mears, another Farm official, who contributed much to reveal the habits of the big birds. "Ostriches cannot be depended upon," he said. "They would just as soon turn on their master as upon a stranger and are very powerful with most weighing up to 300 pounds. Their kick would put a Missouri mule's effort to shame. Many attempts have been made to train them but in very few instances have proved successful. Ostriches are noted to be fleet of foot and have been trained as trotters. They can outrun any horse."

The ostrich eats the same food as a horse, visitors were told, hay, grain, corn and grass, although the hay has to be chopped fine for the birds to eat it.

The ostrich plume firm always had a captive audience of all ages. Mr. Leitch or Mr. Mears would be on hand with their many ostrich stories. The circus-like fanfare coming on like, "Welcome to our ostrich world. Did you know an ostrich must chew in its stomach? Since most birds do not have teeth, such as our ostriches, they often swallow small pebbles and gravel. These grits become so overly agitated in the bird's stomach and thus serves to grind food as it passes their digestive system. Please remember, also, ostrich eggs are good to eat, usually in the form of an omelet, each egg being equivalent to about two dozen chicken eggs."

The common belief, according to Mears, was that the ostrich hides his head in the sand when confronted by danger. "Not so!" declared Mears. "It

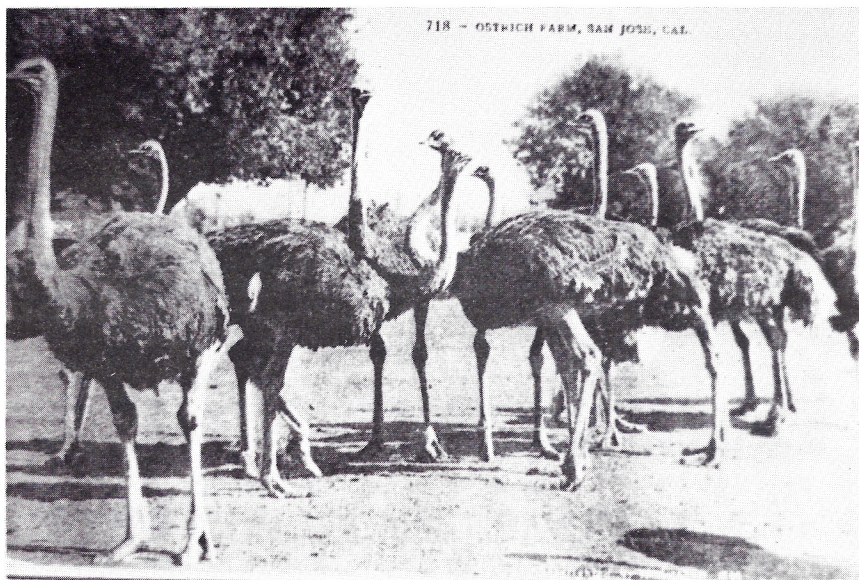


Ostrich Chicks

runs away in haste but if cornered or hurt fights viciously with its big legs. Its sharp toes can decapitate a man. Even horses are no match for a cornered ostrich."

Mr. J.T. Brooks, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, heralded the Farm for its contribution to the world of high fashion as well as its contribution to the community's pride and growth.

By May 1907 the Farm had opened a branch office and salesroom in the lobby of the fashionable St. James Hotel. "Mr. Leitch and his associates spare neither time or expense to make the location in keeping with their reputable ostrich undertaking," said local papers. The office-sales room was



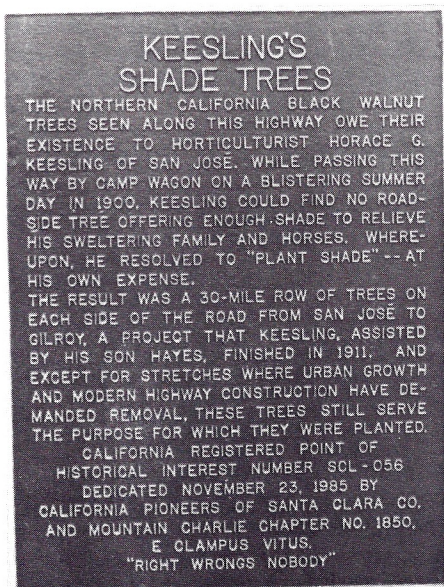
San Jose Ostrich Farm

described as a multi-color of costly feathers. Even ostrich egg shells were artistically suspended from electric light and gas fixtures. According to the San Jose Herald, "If anyone desired to purchase a real ostrich plume, not the doctored or manufactured kind, he would find the genuine article on the premises. Here shown to the utmost was the results of local production and rich quality of the local plumes. Retail prices ranged from \$6 to \$8 with a color range of black, white, and cream with ostrich tips in bunches of three selling from 55 cents to \$2.60 in the same hues." It was noted that all sales were done under the name of the San Jose Ostrich Company.

Surprisingly with the arrival of May 1909 after six interesting years an abrupt about-face was made. San Jose was to lose her endeared ostrich farm. Sacramento had stepped in with a handsome \$7,000 offer enticing the local ostrich owners to move to the capitol city. By May 24, 1909 the plume farm had arranged for the transportation of some thirty-four birds and a large number of eggs.

San Jose's civic leaders whole heartedly believed the ostrich movement had been an asset to the city and county and understood fully why the owners were desirous to capture a new market and audience.

This once fascinating industry, however, was soon to decline to a point of no return since the changing tastes in fashions no longer found a need for the wants of ostrich plumes or sizable omelets.



KEESLING SHADE TREES PLAQUE

This is the bronze plaque placed on the Monterey Road by the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County and Mountain Charlie Chapter 1850 E. Clampus Vitus as related in the February 1986 Trailblazer.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Dali Ahm
Sigfred Ahm
Joseph C Amaral
Marie Amaral
Juanita Garrett
Mary S. Gomez

Mildred V. Hoffman
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Shirley Jorgensen
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Marjorie Morgan
Frances Pino
Florence R. Smith
Gayleen Thomas
Mary Watson
Josephine W. Wiley

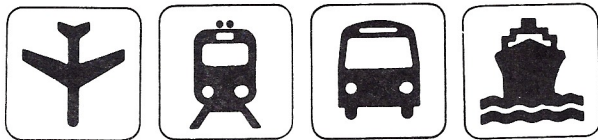


Beyond the sunset

Carol Bartholomew
Inez G. Getchell
Edna Harrison

Ethel F. Johnson
Jack I. Rawlings
Alvina D. Rohlfes

THE TRAILBLAZER would appreciate hearing from our membership who can offer short articles or provide us with information which may lead to a story of general interest. Phone 294-1786



Touring With The Californians

RESERVATIONS by phone begin on Monday, June 9th, for MEMBERS ONLY. Call Ruth Gross at 294-9830 ONLY BETWEEN 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon Monday through Friday. After Ruth confirms your reservation, make check payable to the Californians, and send to P.O. Box 32121, San Jose, CA 95152. After the quarterly meeting, a Trip Brochure and Flyers can be obtained by mailing a stamped, self-addressed legal size envelope to the above address.

WE'RE GOING PLACES! At press time space is still available for the following three trips. CALL Ruth NOW!

June 17, Tuesday-MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM – Repeat vistors will discover there is much to see as new exhibits have been added while first time visitors will be amazed at the largest aquarium in the nation. A leisurely lunch at "The Tinnery". CALL NOW!

July 17-24 – MT. RUSHMORE – Highlights: flight to Denver; Scottsbluff National Memorial revealing the epic of the California-Oregon Trail; Rushmore National Monument; The Badlands of South Dakota; Custer State Park; Estes Park. CALL NOW!

A Grand Breakaway to EASTERN CANADA, September 26-October 7. The Statue of Liberty is the surprise opener for this whooping venture! This jaunt then takes us to the modern cities of old world charm in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec including Niagara Falls. CALL NOW!

At the June 7th luncheon reservations begin for more 'Funtastics'. NEW YEAR'S AT LAWRENCE WELK'S RESORT IN ESCONDODO plus several remarkable one dayers including a Mystery Outing and Railroad Trip.

WAWONA AT YOSEMITE, August 30-September 1, Labor Day Weekend. Two nights with lots to see and marvel in this area of silent wonders.

ANTARCTICA! If you think you might be interested in setting foot on this spectacular continent in January 1987, send your name and address to The Californians at the above address.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP PROVIDES INSTANT RELIEF

Do you get a little weary reading about the need to pay dues and possibly receiving a reminder letting you know your payments are over-due? A good way to avoid all this is to join the 122 members who are already LIFE MEMBERS. The cost (tax deductible) is \$60 for a single member or \$100 for a married couple. Send your checks made out to California Pioneers, P.O. Box 8208, San Jose, CA 95155. Your white and gold card(s) will come back to you by mail. Any questions? Please call Financial Secretary, Mary Wahlberg at 246-5503.

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Staff Artist - Ralph Rambo

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