

QUARTERLY BULLETIN  
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OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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*Trinity Church Organ*



# IN PURSUIT OF AN 1863 CHURCH ORGAN



## ▼ ▼ ▼ **WHALE BLAZERS** ▼ ▼ ▼

**SAN JOSE, April 1870:** - The new 850 pound fire alarm bell for the new engine house arrived from San Francisco and was ready to be raised to the belfry. However, when a fire broke out at a residence, an alarm was sent to the engine house but the new bell was not yet in condition to be used to alert the volunteer fire fighters. Anyway, neighbors with bucket drenchings had squelched the fire in good time.

**SAN JOSE, May 1906:** - One hundred five men started the \$25,000 building that would soon house the merchandise palace of O. A. Hale and Co. on South First Street. With two shifts, construction was being pushed to have it completed by September 1st. Among the lavish new features would be a ladies' room with all new furnishings, a library and a lunch room for employees.

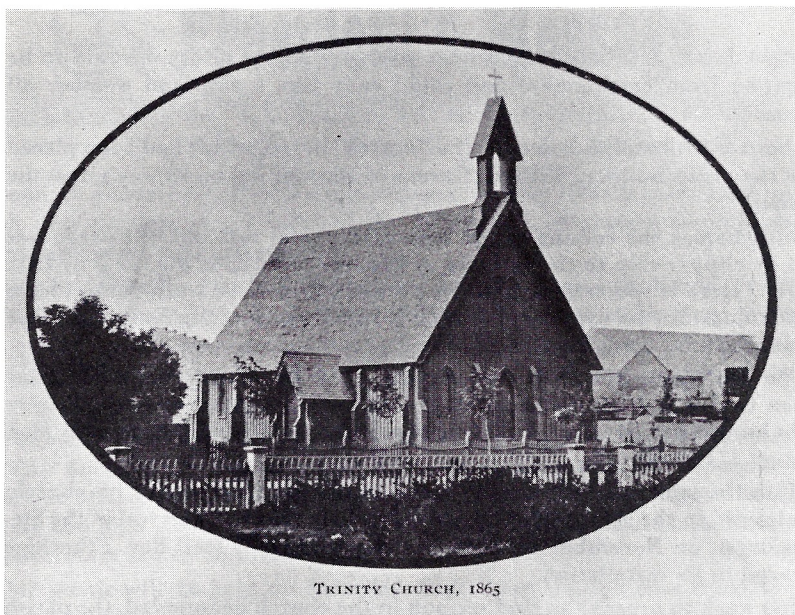
**SAN JOSE, June 1906:** - Amid the earthquake debris rose the first "post quake" brick building. It was on South Second Street and was the achievement of Mr. Lieber, a sign painter.

**SAN JOSE, April 1909:** - Three lepers made an appearance at the Vendome Hotel ballroom to illustrate a talk on leprosy. This was the thirty-ninth annual convention of the Medical Society of California.

**SAN JOSE, April 1929:** - Gas War! Price cutting flared once again as dealers appeared to be uncertain as to just how long the 20 cent a gallon cost would continue.

**SAN JOSE, May 1929:** - Mrs. Lizzie Smith, 64, of Oakland was handed a 1 to 25 year prison term for pilfering hen houses. The chicken thief was arrested in Oakland by Lloyd Skeels of Morgan Hill. She was accused of heading a gang of chicken snatchers in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties. The stolen poultry was killed and offered to Oakland and San Jose markets. Mrs. Smith's 96 year old mother collapsed when sentence was pronounced.

H. C.



TRINITY CHURCH, 1865

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## IN PURSUIT OF AN 1863 CHURCH ORGAN

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Plagued by ill health, a young pioneer clergyman's unflinching faith and courage moved him to build an imposing church while anticipating the arrival of the superb organ that would serve and grace it.

This persevering churchman, organist and choirster was the Rev. Sylvester S. Etheridge. The church was the Trinity Episcopal, built in 1863, which formed the nucleus of what is now San Jose's oldest church structure firmly entrenched at Second and St. John Streets.

By late 1860 the unrelenting Etheridge was holding services in the court room of the old city hall on North Market Street, later the site of a firehouse. Shortly the little court room overflowed with worshipers. Already an enthusiastic congregation provided their accomplished choir with a small melodeon. Success was ensured as Etheridge's fold multiplied.

On February 22, 1861 Trinity was declared a full-fledged parish. On this occasion the newly appointed vestry elected Etheridge as rector at \$700 a year.

According to Trinity Church records, it was in early 1862 when Rector Etheridge and his communicants made a close study of possible church sites. Their final choice being a lot utilized as a stock corral by the vast estate of Major Samuel J. Hensley costing \$300.

That same year the likes of a quaint Gothic-like English chapel began to rise. In charge of construction was the proficient shipfitter and parishioner,

Captain James W. Hammond, whose unique building effort was said to be "immune from earthquakes and could sway like a ship and weather all storms.

About this time, the order for the "superb" organ, which had been placed with the organ builder, William Stevens of Boston, was on its way across the Isthmus.

Built before the coming of the transcontinental railroad, the organ was sent by clipper-ship to the Isthmus of Panama (predating the canal by fifty years.) Here it was transported over a hazardous mule-train route to the Pacific Coast for its voyage to San Francisco to then be freighted to San Jose by wagon.

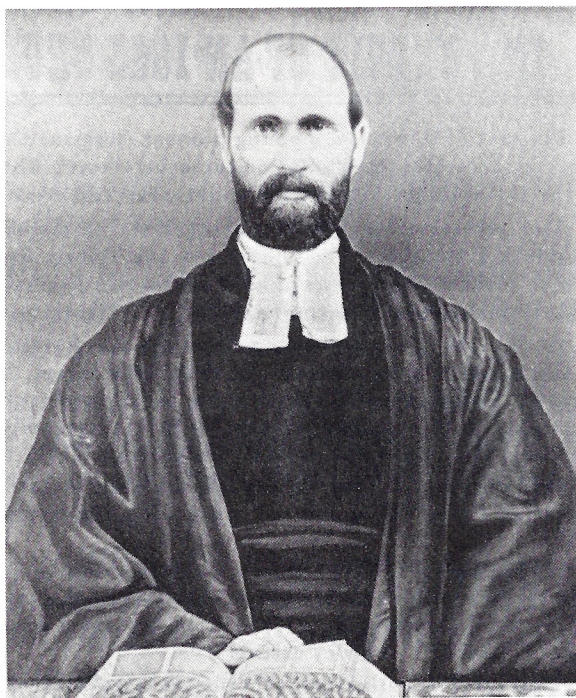
The purchase price of the two manual twenty-four stop Stevens was between twelve and fifteen hundred dollars with freight costs amounting to eight hundred dollars, the greater part of this sum being contributed by Mrs. Samuel J. Hensley.

With the same intensity the Reverend put forth in organizing his church, he also did in the selecting of the church organ. With the arrival of the Stevens organ on November 12, 1863, the now extremely frail Rev. Etheridge engaged in its installation.

Too weak to preach the first sermon in the church he founded, the parish lost its devoted founder and rector on February 18, 1864. At his request he was buried within its hallowed walls.

The Stevens organ was the pride and joy of the pioneer church as overjoyed parishioners showed off the only pipe organ in the county with its impressive rank pipes nestled in its huge wooden encasement.

Among the first church organists, names like Mrs. George Foote, Hannah Wakefield, Earl Brown, Burt Howard, Everett Pomroy, and Frank Loui King are noted. Clarence Uring expressed soul-stirring music during his



thirty-three years as console and choirmaster. It was he who introduced the vested choir in 1890.

Mrs. Leroy V. Brant informs the *Trailblazer* of her late husband, who served as organist and choirmaster from 1921 until 1945, and how he would think, as he fingered the well worn keys of the old Trinity organ, that doubtless someone played during memorial services held for Lincoln and Garfield.

Unfortunately, after sixty-one years, on a September Sunday in 1924, the untiring organ presented its farewell concert. The revered church piece was to be taken over by St. James' Episcopal Church in Paso Robles, a struggling church community at the time.

Because of the large scale increase of oratorio programs, in which Trinity Church excelled, a more diversified organ, which electric action would permit, was required.

Alerting St. James' as to the Trinity organ being available was Miss Constance Mills, a San Josean, who was teaching school in Paso Robles at the time.

Mrs. Joseph Luce Yeats who served as organist at St. James' for almost thirty years, starting in 1943, and who is presently co-historian for her church, says it has been fifty-seven years since Rev. C. L. Thackery, vicar at St. James' at the time, elatedly accepted the San Jose organ.

Thackery, who was an organist himself, and a number of music loving parishioners installed the organ themselves in St. James'.

Although a few changes were made, the 1863 Stevens organ retained its original assemblage. The first known professional maintenance extended the organ, says Mrs. Yeats, was provided by a soldier stationed at nearby Camp Roberts during World War II. He was Charles McManis, now a recognized organ builder in Kansas City, Kansas. McManis became so impressed with the Stevens organ he devoted almost his entire off-duty hours to repairing and playing on the St. James' instrument while installing electric power along the way. Mrs. Yeats relates how this benefactor's interest continued for years, often returning just to visit old friends and the organ. Until recently, she says, the San Miguel Mission had a hand-tooled McManis organ.

In 1968 this talented organ builder installed a rank of one hundred fifty-one pipes as a memorial to a parishioner. Today the organ has close to one thousand pipes and "they all speak," says Mrs. Yeats.

On November 2, 1963, the Stevens Trans-Isthmus organ celebrated its one hundredth birthday. On this special occasion, Richard Purvis, world renowned organist from Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, played a recital on this historic peice.

To date Mrs. Yeats informs, no challenges have been made to a published claim in the 1968 Diapason, a church publication, that the St. James' Stevens organ is the oldest continuously used organ in at least the three western states.

Many prominent men in San Jose served more than once behind the old Stevens organ as "pump boy." Today this esteemed tracher action organ still reveals their carved initials, committed during lulls at sermon time, in the wood casings.

Although the fruitful rectorship of an unwell Rev. Sylvester Etheridge was curtailed, his 1863 unexhausted church organ continues to serve another El Camino Real church community at a hale and hearty pace.

—Henry Calloway



*St. James' Episcopal Church, Paso Robles, California*

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## A VISIT WITH MEMBERS

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Dolores C. Hodja informs the *Trailblazer* that her mother, whose maiden name was Estelle Chaboya, was the daughter of Hildebrandt Chaboya whose family owned several thousand acres of land in what is now the Evergreen area, a segment of the once sprawling Yerba Buena Rancho.

Dolores' maternal grandmother was Dolores Cesena, daughter of Ramon Cesena. "I have been recently informed," relates Mrs. Hodja, "the Cesena Family owned land in the area of the present site of Stanford University. Dolores Cesena was related to the Zepeda and Selaya Families who were early settlers of New Almaden. I have been told that Ramon Cesena and his first wife are buried in the old cemetery at New Almaden."

Betty Fritz Pine tells of her first ancestor in California, one Manuel Boronda, who came from Mexico with Portola in 1769. Of Spanish descent, he was first a soldier in San Francisco and later a teacher at Monterey. Having died in 1826, he was buried on the grounds of Mission San Carlos.

"Jose Eusebio, the youngest son of Manuel Boronda and Gertrudis Highera was baptized at Mission Santa Clara, March 9, 1801," relates Mrs. Pine. "Between 1844 and 1848, he built an adobe which is considered an outstanding example of a Mexican era rancho adobe. Today this adobe is a California Registered Historical Landmark."

Betty goes on, "Eusebio and Josefa Buelna had fourteen children, their youngest child, a daughter, Maria Inez, was my grandmother. She married William Anderson in 1877 in Castroville. He was elected Monterey County Assessor in 1890. William and Inez were the parents of my mother, who was born in Salinas, April 8, 1901.

The "Wang Wang Blues" was a popular rug-cutting fox-trot when Clyde Arbuckle was holding forth as a banjo player in 1921. Clyde still has the original colorful sheet music of the jazz age arranged for his prized Bacon banjo.

E. Irene Bradley says her folks, Michael and Justina Heber, moving to San Jose in 1920 from Oregon, purchased the McLaughlin estate at 327 So. 24th St. around 1924 from Herman Vetterle, M.D. "My father had the foresight that people were going to tour the U.S. by automobile and would want to stay in protected camp sites," says Mrs. Bradley; "so he converted the four acre estate into the San Jose Auto Camp, the first auto camp in the county. This was the forerunner of the present day motel business."

"McLaughlin, an early day banker here, had built a fifteen room two story mansion in the center of the property surrounded by large shade trees," continues Mrs. Bradley. "Our family, which included my parents, two sisters and myself occupied the eight rooms of the lower floor of the mansions."

"After the passing of my parents the park was sold in 1944 and the subsequent owners tore down the mansion to make room for mobile homes. To this day the same four acres is known as the San Jose Tourist Park."

## *Welcome New Members*

Frances Alexander  
Frank Alexander  
Majel Anway  
Louise Bartscher  
Marian G. Bradford  
Ruth Byers  
Milton E. Calder  
Marie W. Campbell  
Thelma Cathie  
Elroy Christian  
Esther Christian  
Harold C. Emler

Lydia Emler  
Henry Gillmeister  
Eleanor Gladding  
Margaret Halla  
William R. Halla  
Jeanne Henry  
Elvera Hughes  
Joseph W. Hughes  
Joseph F. Jenkins  
Elizabeth A. Lewis  
Cecil S. Margosian

Virginia Margosian  
Alfred E. Moore  
Anita Moore  
Lucille E. Moorhead  
Mabel H. Noonan  
H. Daisy Phipers  
Laura Pierce  
William L. Pierce  
Betty Pine  
James Reed  
Lorraine V. Shertzer  
Marion R. Skare



*Beyond the sunset*

Manuel L. Bonito  
Mary G. Buchanan  
Mary Lopes

Marie Maddux  
Walter N. Petersen  
Lillian E. Schwartz

Alfred Tarot  
Bertha Taylor  
Henry Yturriaga



# President's Message

Leonard McKay

Soon a new slate of officers will be elected for our 1981-82 year. Looking back over my year as president of the Pioneers, I see certain accomplishments and some disappointments.

In the positive field we have seen a perpetual care fund established for the Almaden Hacienda Cemetery. Henry Calloway has successfully given much care, time and interest seeing that the cemetery is maintained. Both Hank and Laura continue to devote many hours to the *Trailblazer*, making it the interesting and successful publication that it is.

You will all be happy to note that there will be *NO* increase in our membership dues for the coming year. Although mailing costs have increased 50%, our officers have offset these increases by astutely investing our funds in safe and high yield returns. Al Gauger, Treasurer and John Clark, Financial Secretary are to be commended.

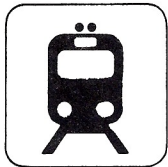
Our picnic will be held on Saturday, Sept. 19 at the San Jose Historical Museum. Victoria Malatesta has agreed to be in charge of the picnic and I'm sure she will do a good job.

The Pioneers of Santa Clara County are again a state incorporated non-profit institution. We are happy to announce that the incorporation has been renewed (it had lapsed nearly 10 years ago through a bureaucratic SNAFU) but after much work by Austen Warburton and his staff the corporate status has been reinstated.

My biggest disappointment came with the smashing of my dream for a home for the Pioneers and an audio visual center at the Museum. Perhaps it was too much of a dream but the jig saw puzzle concepts seemed to fit together. The Pioneers have had a strong interest in the museum since its founding and many of the artifacts belong to the Pioneers. We needed a home, a place to store our records, and a place to hold our Board of Directors meetings. I felt the museum needed an outstanding attraction—that could be provided by a Pioneer Theater where films and a slide show would be shown to the general public telling about San Jose's past and how they could help build the museum. The board agreed to investigate the possibility of financing this arrangement. Eight months elapsed before a proposed contract was received from the City Attorney's office. The conditions in the contract were distorted to such a point that our Board unanimously rejected the contract (and I was in complete agreement with our board) and the issue is now dead. It has become increasingly difficult if not impossible to give money to the City of San Jose.

I wish to thank all the members of our Board of Directors for an excellent year. Their wise counsel and cheerful acceptance of responsibilities made my work much easier.

Leonard McKay



## **TOURING WITH THE CALIFORNIANS**

**RESERVATIONS** for trips will begin at the Pioneer Luncheon Saturday, June 13. Beginning Monday, June 15, for reservations call Ruth Gross at 294-9830 between 9 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday. After Ruth confirms your reservation, make your check payable to "The Californians" and mail to P.O. Box 2007, Los Gatos, CA 95031.

**July 30 - ALCATRAZ** - Sentence yourself to a cops-and-robbers experience on "the rock." Poke into the cell-blocks and dungeons where the notorious and the violent were tenants. Your "warden" on this caper will be the National Park Service guides.

**CIRCUS DAY** in August - We look for the flamboyant spectacle of the greatest show on earth. Details at the June 13th Luncheon.

Keep tuned for this one! **"A DICKENS CHRISTMAS"** at Santa Barbara December 9, 10, 11, 1981.

Beautiful **TAHITI** in February 1982 - Emerald seas, tradewind breezes and lofty mountains, Tahiti, the most renowned pearl in the South Seas beckons.

Have you any suggestions, especially for one day trips? Barbara Johnsen and the Tour Committee welcome the help of any interested members. Just call Ruth Gross or write to the Californians.

**WAITING LISTS:** If you are interested in a trip that is full, we do encourage you to sign up on the "Waiting List." Many times cancellations are received in the last few days before the trip's departure. If you are on the "Waiting List" and find that you would be unable to make the trip, please call and have your name removed.

A lilt of Irish flare will be in store this June 14th as the O'Connor Hospital '89ers will be paying tribute to our Irish pioneers and their families who contributed so much to our valley's welfare. A parade, luncheon and Gaelic entertainment are scheduled.

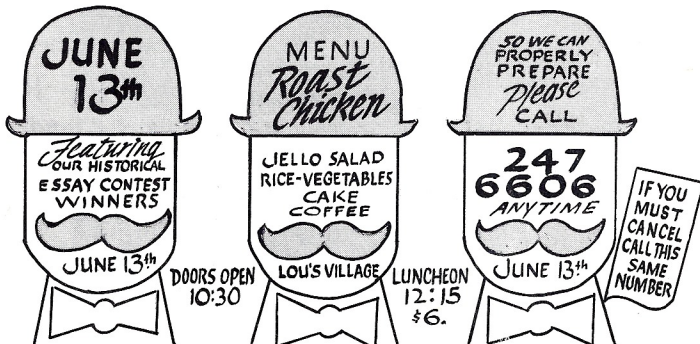
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**Financial Secretary 1900 Emory St.**  
**San José, California 95126**

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE. New members upon payment of \$1 initiation fee will have the option of paying \$4 yearly dues or purchasing a \$45 Life Membership (\$75 for husband and wife subscribing at the same time.)

The same Life Membership privileges are extended to present members.

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# Our Summer **LUNCHEON**



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## ATTENTION!

Members, please be more conscientious about sending in a change of address. We are charged for each RETURNED TRAIL-BLAZER.

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SICKNESS and DEATHS: Please notify Mary Simas at  
1722 Husted, San Jose, CA 95124  
phone 448-6102

MOVING! Let us know!