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Henry Skinner's Apples—Born in San Jose

By Russ Robinson

An agreement has been made between the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County and the E Clampus Vitus Organizations Chapter, Mt. Charlie 1850 (The Clampers). This agreement provides that the Pioneers will assist the Clampers in the preparation and installation of plaques that identify historic locations. The Pioneers' name will be included on all plaques with which we assist. One of these is the Skinner's Seedling Plaque which has been created and installed in recognition of the first Henry Skinner's Seedling apple tree.

Who Was Henry Skinner?

Henry Chapman Skinner was born in Milwaukee, WI. His father operated a large machine shop, so Henry was apprenticed as a tool and die maker, becoming very accomplished at that trade. However, he decided that he wanted more education and attended college, studying to be a druggist/doctor. Though he became very successful, his health required that he live in a better climate. So, in 1849 and at 45 years old, he prepared to go to California, commissioning three large covered wagons for the trip. They were made of the lightest and strongest materials available. Each wagon had a sleeping area, a cooking area, and with one of which stored pharmacy/medical books. The other two wagons stored tools to help set up residence in California. He sold all his horses and bought oxen as they could best make the trip. He also brought along Newtown Pippin apples. These apples led later to the development of a new variety, named Skinner's Seedling apple.

Skinner and family (wife Susanna Dyer Moody



Skinner's Seedling Apple plaque installed at its San Jose's birth place by Coyote Creek (Photo: Frank Deats)

and four of their children; the fifth born in San Jose) joined a wagon train heading west that started later than the optimal time of year. When they got to Salt Lake City, it was decided that they were too late to cross the Sierras due to the expected heavy snow. After about six weeks, Skinner joined another wagon train (Jefferson Hunt party) that was planning to travel along the Old Spanish Trail to California, crossing by a southerly route rather than across the Sierras.

A while after starting out, some of the pioneers became dissatisfied with their progress and broke away to take a new cut off, supposedly a shorter way to California. If you recall from a past Pioneers luncheon, Marv Jensen and his daughter Jan told us of the extreme hardships

(Continued pg. 2)

No Pioneers Quarterly Luncheon

The normally scheduled Pioneers quarterly luncheon will not be held in December due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County hope you and your family are doing well during our county's slow return to opening up our cities again. Staying connected is especially important now and without our quarterly luncheons or events, we miss seeing and talking to you. Keep in touch with our Facebook page and other social media.

We will be back together again soon, hopefully by mid-1921 at the latest.

Apples (Continued)

for those who broke away, encountering threats to life and possessions in the area that is now known as Death Valley. In fact, this group gave it that name, barely making it across alive. Among those in this break-away group were the Wade family who settled in Alviso, CA. (The H. G. Wade brick warehouse, built circa 1860, is still there, but in neglected condition).

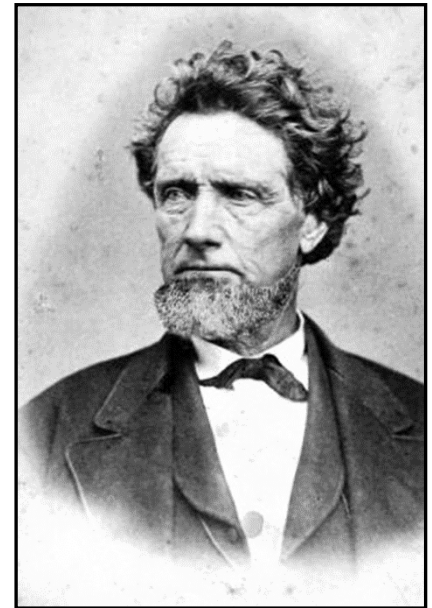
Henry Skinner and the rest of the wagon train continued along the Old Spanish Trail across El Cajon Pass into what is known as the San Bernardino area. From there he proceeded up the Kings Highway to San Jose. He settled on a property near what is now Roosevelt Park, near Coyote Creek. Here he established a drug store, and eventually became a municipal judge.

About the Apple

Most of the apples that Skinner brought across all those miles had rotted and were unusable. However, two had survived

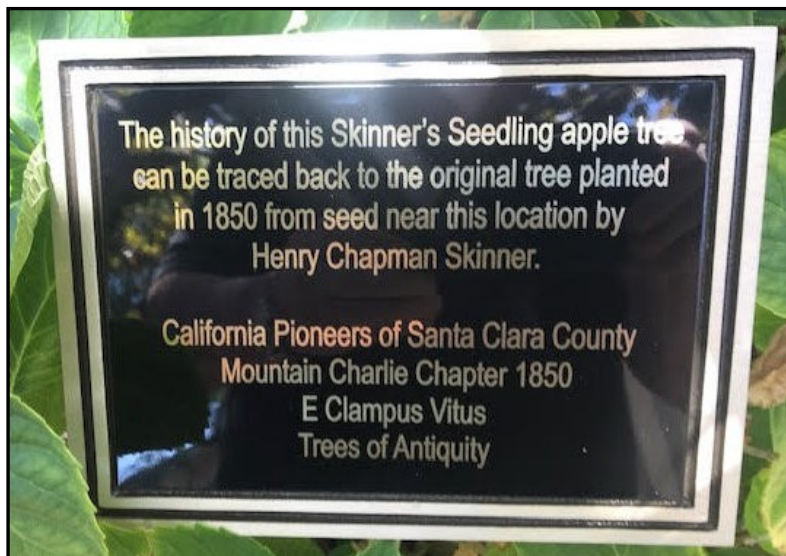
with viable seeds which he planted. One produced a sour apple tree, and the other provided a delicious apple that he named the Skinner's Seedling. An article about Henry Chapman Skinner and his apple tree was printed in a San Jose Mercury newspaper in 1910. A copy of this newspaper was found in the wall of an old house being renovated in the Coyote Creek area. This house was determined to have belonged to the Skinner family but has been greatly altered over the years.

Protected within the wall, the newspaper was very readable. The article told of Skinner's journey, how the Skinner Apple tree was developed, how popular the apple was, and that many local pioneers had grown the tree (including the Cottles). The article ended saying that the tree was known to be growing well and producing apples near Coyote Creek until at least 1878. (It was found later that it had been neglected and died.) *(Continued page 3)*



Henry Chapman Skinner
(1805-1877)

(Photo: History San Jose)



A smaller plaque will be installed on the Skinner Seedling Apple tree, donated to the site by Trees of Antiquity.

(Photo: Russ Robinson)

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Gayle Frank, Editor

Contact us at
SCCPioneers@gmail.com
or
P.O. Box 8208
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Apples (Continued)

The owner of the former Skinner house, which is now under renovation, thought that this article had historic interest and deserved a plaque. So, she contacted the Mt. Charlie 1850 ECV (Clampers) to see if they could erect a monument and plaque on her property.

When the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County became involved, the wording for the plaque ended with the story of the tree but the Pioneers felt it did not tell the whole story. In talks with the Clampers' Humbug (the leader), Frank Deats, he suggested that we do

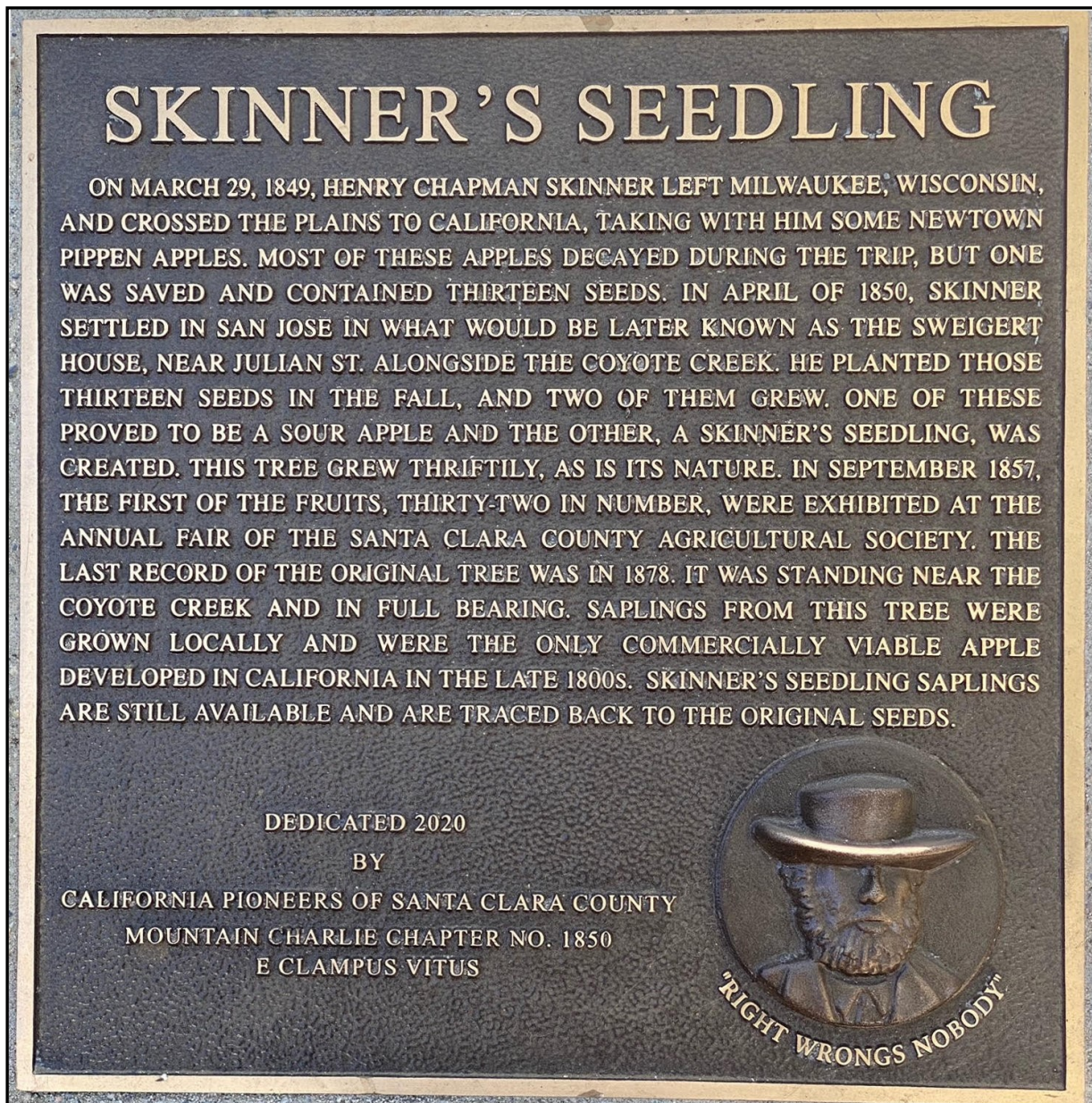
more research on the apple tree. Since the plaque was in the development stage and the plaque foundry was shut down due to the pandemic, there was time for research.

Researching the Apple

More interesting information was found in old historical documents. We found that the Skinner's Seedling apple tree became very popular and was grown by many of the local pioneers as well as others along the Pacific Coast. Commercially growing the Skinner's Seedling

apple became profitable. One of the producing orchards was owned by Royal Cottle on Willow Street in Willow Glen, CA.

Later, the Skinner's Seedling was grown near San Diego, CA where Henry Chapman Skinner moved in 1868 and eventually died in 1877. He was buried there, but his body was later moved to the family plot in Oak Hill Cemetery, San Jose, CA. ❖



This bronze plaque was installed in September, 2020 on a concrete base at the former Skinner house on Roosevelt Street.

The plaque was produced and installed by the Clampers and the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County.

(Photo: Frank Deats)

“When San Jose Was Young: The Suñols’ Adobe Ruin”

This is a reprint of a 1916 series about local history written for San Jose’s *Evening News* and attributed to Cora Older.

“A few mornings ago, some workmen were tearing down the walls of an old adobe in the rear of “Decker’s Shoeing Shop” on Market Street¹ near the station of the Peninsular road. Few persons noticed it, but it belonged to one of the most famous residences of the old Pueblo days. It was formerly the residence of Don Antonio Suñol (1796-1895).

The main portion of the residence stood almost intact until six or seven years ago, when it was bought by the O.K. Garage and for the most part razed to make room for the new building. At that time there was considerable excitement because it was known that Don Antonio had been a rich man. He owned the great Rancho del Valle in Alameda County, as well as the Rancho los Cocheros² in the Willows.

In Don Antonio’s time there was no bank, and so, wealthy people buried their gold in strong boxes.³ There were rumors that he had hidden treasure in the thick adobe walls. A crowd gathered expecting to find Spanish doubloons, but they were disappointed.

Don Antonio was born in Barcelona, Spain. He came to San Jose in 1818. He spent several years in the Spanish wars and had served under Jerome Bonaparte. He was a man of education, experience and shrewdness. He married Miss Bernal,⁴ one of the heiresses of the



Don Antonio Maria Suñol



Sunol’s Adobe on Market Street, San Jose. (Photo: History San Jose)

vast Santa Teresa ranch. He kept a large merchandise store, and like many of the old Spaniards he manufactured soap and candles.⁵ The old Dons were never too proud to manufacture soap. Even the Ortegas of Gilroy who had thirty-three miles square, incidentally had a soap factory on what is now called the Rancho del Rey at Monterey. The Hotel Del Monte owns the Rancho Del Rey.

Don Antonio Suñol was the first man to work the Almaden mines discovered by his brother-in-law, Berryessa.⁶ Sunol’s luck went awry in the connection with Almaden. He spent \$400 on it, became discouraged and abandoned it.

In trading he was sharp and keen as a Yankee. He sold a great many supplies to Sutter of Sutter’s Fort. Among the most interesting early California letters are those that passed between Sutter and Suñol. Don Antonio threatened to seize Sutter’s cattle by force if he did not pay his bills. The Gringos never got the better of Don Antonio. He died a rich man.

While Don Antonio was a very able businessman, he was always interested in public affairs. He was San Jose’s first postmaster, and in

1846 he was one of the twelve men appointed by Alcalde Burton to govern San Jose.

Don Antonio was one of the most generous men. His wine cellar was famous. His servants were perfect.⁷ In 1835 he gave the site of St. Joseph’s church to the parish.

His wife is one of the two persons buried under the altar of the old church. Later when the secularization of the Missions came, he, with Mariano Pico, bought the Mission of San Rafael for \$8000. When Archbishop Allemany came to this country from Spain he was first a guest of Don Antonio who had known him in Barcelona.

Now that the old house is gone not many mementoes of Don Antonio Suñol exist in San Jose. One of the most interesting belongs to his granddaughter, Miss Margarita. It is the engraving of a little Saint Anthony. For years it was worn in the case of his watch.

On the back of the engraving there is written in Don Antonio’s handwriting that this saint had traveled with him through the war of 1808 and to the Bay of Bristol.

(Continued pg. 5)

Extended Submittal Date!

2020/2021 History Essay Contest

Prizes Awarded for Best Essay

Essay Subject: Any person, place or event concerning Santa Clara County from its beginning to the recent past.

For Details and Rules go to: www.CaliforniaPioneers.com

New Submittal Deadline: May 31, 2021

For more information contact CaliforniaPioneers@gmail.com

SJ Young—”Suñols’ Adobe Ruin” (Continued)

The Spanish words [on the engraving] are: ‘Este santo me a acompañado en la Guerra del anno, 1808, l en la navagasion esta la baia de Bristol.’”

—Evening News, Oct. 16, 1916

¹ This adobe was on the west side of Market looking toward the Plaza de la Cesar Chavez.

² The CA Pioneers of Santa Clara owns the Roberto Adobe & Suñol House at 770 Lincoln Ave (formerly part of Rancho de los Coches) and have transformed it into a museum. The original adobe (c. 1836 built by Native American Roberto Balermino) was purchased by Suñol in 1847 and he subsequently built his 3-room field-fired brick house adjacent to the adobe. Suñol sold Rancho de los Coches (2,219 acres) in 1853.

³ Suñol had the first known strong box in San Jose where he kept money for and gave loans to others, and thereby was said to have operated the first bank in San Jose Pueblo.

⁴ Maria Francisco Dolores Bernal married Suñol in 1823 at the age of 17. The Suñols had four children.

⁵ Suñol was also well-known for his home distilled liquor which he sold in his store on Market Street (reported to be the first store in San Jose). Sources say he was the first layman in San Jose to manufacture alcohol for sale. By 1823, Governor Arguello complained that Suñol was selling “rum and honey... concocting therefrom a drink that was causing much harm.” He then called for an investigation but nothing came of it. (Source: “Witness to Empire, the life of Antonio Maria Sunol” by James P. Delgado.)

⁶ According to Jim Zetterquist’s “California Connections,” a book soon to be released by the Pioneers, Antonio Suñol was the first person José Antonio Robles consulted in 1824 after his 13-year-old son, Secundino, stumbled across the ancient Ohlone cinnabar mine, the red rock deposits 3 miles south of San Jose. Don Antonio invested the \$400 to set up a mine operation along the Alamos Creek to mine silver, but with no luck he gave up after a year, not aware of the value of the quicksilver.

⁷ Suñol was known for hosting large parties that included lots of liquor, good food, game playing and gambling.



Celebrating 100 years of Women's Suffrage

After a very long battle for the women's right to vote, the U.S. Congress finally approved the 19th Amendment in June of 1919. Three-fourths of the then-48 states ratified the Constitutional Amendment by August, 1920. To celebrate the 100th Anniversary, the Trailblazer will print a brief summary of one of our Santa Clara County suffragists in each issue through 2020.

Sara Bard Field

Sara Bard Field (1882-1974) was an American poet, a Christian socialist, and a skilled orator. Born in Ohio, she grew up in Detroit, Michigan, married a Baptist minister twice her age, Albert Ehr-gott, in 1900, and delivered a son a year later. After traveling through India and Burma on missionary work, where Sara learned of the deep inequalities existing in the world, they returned to Connecticut in 1902 and then moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1903. There Sara started a kindergarten and a soup kitchen.

After a daughter was born in 1906, the family moved to Oregon in 1910 where Sara met Charles Erskine Scott (C.E.S.) Wood through Clarence Darrow. They became friends and she was hired as Wood's assistant. Eventually a long-time love affair ensued.



Photo: Oregon Historical Society Collections

Sara Bard Field c. 1915

Around this time, Sara joined the Oregon College Equal Suffrage League and campaigned throughout the state as her marriage began to crumble. Her work was rewarded with Oregon passing a women's suffrage law in 1912. During the next two years, Sara campaigned in Nevada for enfranchising women and at the same time, she was granted a divorce from her husband, although he was awarded custody of the children.

Moving to San Francisco, California, Sara

became involved in the national movement for women suffrage, becoming a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association's Congressional Union and later the National Woman's Party.

One of Sara's biggest accomplishments toward women suffrage was agreeing to travel in an automobile cross-country from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. leaving on September 16, 1915. She was selected for the job as the messenger/orator by Suffragist leader Alice Paul. Along the way, Sara and her companions, two Swedish women, Maria A. Kinderberg (driver) and Ingeborg Kindstedt (mechanic), held pre-arranged rallies in large cities and gathered signatures for support of the amendment giving women the right to vote. Also on the agenda was convincing lawmakers in each state as they passed through.

Along the way they encountered the "antis," women who were against giving the women the vote, and of course many of the men who considered the whole idea of women voting ridiculous. Hecklers and rudeness were all part of the gig.

(Continued pg. 7)



(Photo: Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

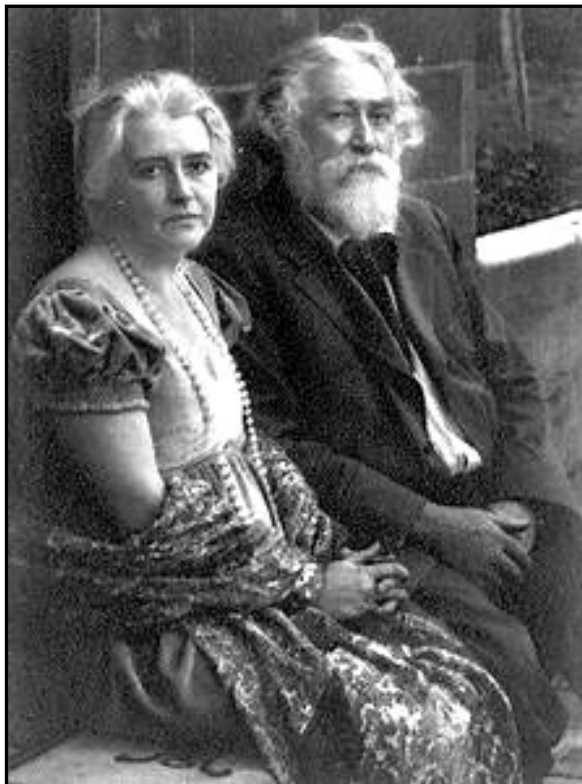
Suffragists ready for the long trip from San Francisco across country. From left, Sara Bard Field, (messenger/orator), Maria Kinderberg (driver), and Ingeborg Kindstedt (mechanic), Sept-Dec, 1915.

Women's Suffrage—Sara Bard Field (Continued)

In the open-air Oldsmobile, purchased by Kinderberg and Kindstedt expressly for their trip back home to the East Coast, the weather became harsh and colder for the travelers as winter progressed. The roads at that time were very challenging, if hardly there at all.

But in three months, Sara and friends arrived at Washington D.C. on December 6, 1915, greeted and celebrated by many supporters. The petition, with more than half a million signatures for women suffrage, was personally delivered to President Woodrow Wilson at the White House. Wilson did not back the amendment, but Sara's trip and petitions garnered full press coverage and the publicity brought the issue to the forefront.

By 1916, Sara spoke at the Chicago Convention of the National Woman's Party. A year later, her most famous suffragist slogan proclaimed, "No votes, no babies!"



Sara Bard Field and C.E.S. Wood

(Photo: Oregon Historical Society Collections)



Traveling across the U.S. with Sara Bard Field in the back seat.

(Photo: www.shallnotbedenied.org/educational-materials/
"Rhode Island's Two Unberalded Suffragists" By Russell J. DeSimone)

According to the *San Jose Mercury News* (9/11/1916), Sara spoke at the local Chamber of Commerce as a representative of the Woman's Party, which was a non-partisan group with many thousands of members. There were now twelve western states allowing women the vote, but the eastern states lacked such a law. The required number of votes to change each state constitution was not realistically feasible. That was why a federal push for a women's suffrage amendment was so vital. In the article, Sara was described as, "She is known as one of the most eloquent women in the United States."

While driving in 1918, Sara was in an automobile accident in which her son died. After this tragedy some say she never fully recovered.

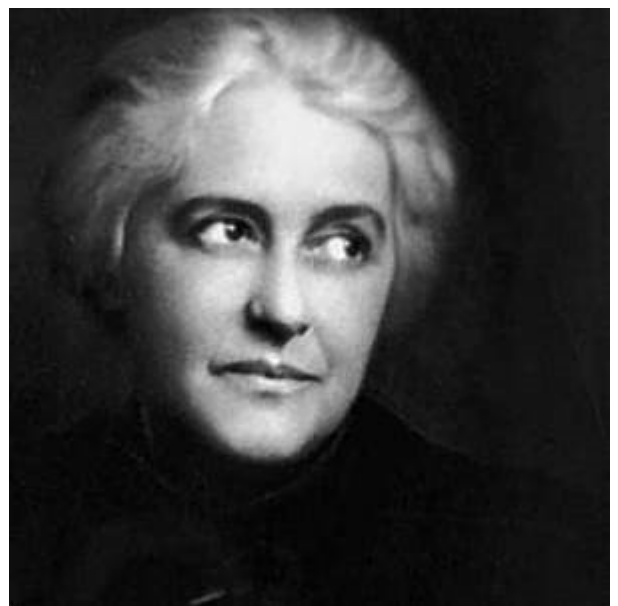
Around 1919, Sara moved in with C.E.S. Wood in San Francisco where she began to write poetry and they both supported the arts. (Because Wood's wife refused a divorce, Sara and Wood finally married in 1938 after his wife's death.)

Charles Erskine Scott Wood (1852-1944), a leading corporate and civil rights attorney in Oregon, arrived with Sara Bard Field from San Francisco to Los Gatos around 1920. (Continued pg. 8)

Right, Sara Bard Field

(Photo: lookwhatsbesaid.com/story-laurel-meade-on-the-intrepid-sara-bard-field/)

(this website also has the text of Sara's speech to Congress in 1921)



Sara Bard Field (Continued)

He is described as a poet and painter, a social critic and essayist, a collector of art and rare books, and a philosophical anarchist. The two progressives were an invigorating and popular couple. They built an amazing estate known as “The Cats” in the 1920s, which sits just off Highway 17 as you leave Los Gatos toward Santa Cruz. Two large stone cats still mark the entrance site; the gated house, mansion, poet’s cottage, and impressive grounds still remain. The views over Santa Clara Valley are said to be outstanding. A stream of notable guests visited the estate such as John Steinbeck, Charlie Chaplin, Eleanor Roosevelt, and many notable literary figures and artists.

After the U.S. women’s suffrage amendment was passed and ratified in 1920, apparently Sara went on to fight for her other causes. In a *San Jose Evening News* article (7/11/1922), Sara spoke in Palo

Alto on the “Knox-Levison Plan,” a proposal to make war illegal internationally. The article stated that, “It was reported to be a simple and intelligible proposition.”

Eleven years after Wood’s death, Sara sold “The Cats” estate in 1955 and moved to Berkeley to be near her daughter. Sara never wrote her autobiography, which Bennett Cerf urged her to do, but she did record a series of interviews about her life for the University of California, Berkeley that became an oral history. She also left thousands of romantic letters written to and from Wood. ❖

—Gayle Frank

Sources:

➤ oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/biographies/sara-bard-field-biography/#.X1auy3IKiUk



➤ www.utahwomenshistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/1915-Suffrage-Envoy-1.pdf

➤ www.storydriven.net_b_sara_and_erskine_an_american_romance_b_42437.htm



Sara Bard Field and Suffragists arrive at U.S. State Capital on Dec. 6, 1915 with over 500,000 signatures for a women’s suffrage amendment.

(Photo: www.utahwomenshistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/1915-Suffrage-Envoy-1.pdf)

1886 Rules for Teachers

Duties:

(before and after school sessions)

- 1) Wash windows and clean classroom with soap and water at least once a week.
- 2) Check outhouses daily (plenty of old catalogues are available at the school board office).

Forbidden Apparel:

(forbidden to wear in public at all times)

Women:

- 1) bathing costume
- 2) bloomers for cycling
- 3) skirts slit to expose ankles
- 4) bustle extended over ten inches

Men:

- 1) detachable collar and necktie removed from shirt
- 2) shirt sleeves unlinked and rolled
- 3) hair loosely cropped (unless bald or have disease of the scalp)

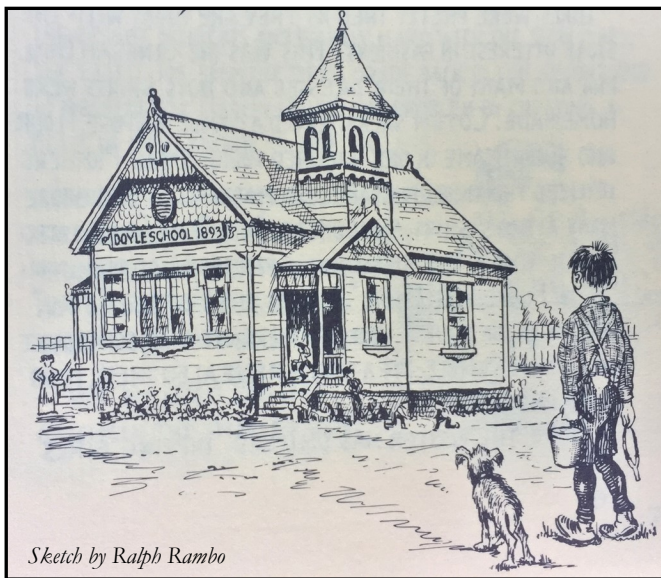
Conduct:

(cause for immediate dismissal)

- 1) Smoking of cigarettes, use of spirits, frequenting pool parlors and public dance halls.
- 2) Marriage or other unseemly behavior by women teachers
- 3) Joining of feminist movements such as the suffragettes.

By order of the Superintendent, Sept. 9, 1886

Source: *Old Sacramento Schoolhouse Museum*



Sketch by Ralph Rambo

Recent Local History Books

Here are three recent books on local history that Pioneers members might enjoy. Each author was featured on a local Zoom presentation this year. (*Book descriptions summarized from Amazon.*)

Mine: El Despojo de Maria Zacarias Bernal de Berreyesa, by Jenny Clendenen (2017)

Learn about Maria Zacarias Bernal, a local pioneer and mother of 13, who lived on a cattle ranch in the San Jose foothills (Rancho San Vicente) during the 19th century. The book describes her battles for her land and her many family losses (ten of her thirteen beloved men). The book is a blend of biography, descriptions of the natural environment of the area and the author's deeply personal thoughts. The Zoom presentation can be viewed online at <https://openspacetrust.org/event/herstory-in-almaden-valley-san-jose-the-ranchera-of-rancho-san-vicente/>

José Manuel Gonzales, by Arturo Villarreal (2018)

José Manuel Gonzales was an Apache Native American, a builder, and the second Mayor of San José, California. Through research, Arturo Villarreal, Ethnic Studies and Anthropology Instructor at Evergreen Valley College, penned an illuminated biography of an omitted historical person and elucidates the oft-forgotten social and political role of indigenous people in New Spain. Considering the fact that Gonzales was Apache Indian and given the rigid caste system during the Spanish colonial era, his political accomplishments were extraordinary. Villarreal presents a face to an obscure figure and forces history to be viewed through a different color lens.

Secret San Jose: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure, by Cassie Kifer (2020)

Here is an unconventional guidebook which will take you through bizarre and fascinating stories that define San Jose's history and shaped this one-of-a-kind city. Local travel writer Cassie Kifer will introduce you to quirky and beautiful places and share stories about the city that never get told. Part tour and part scavenger hunt, this guide will take you to some of the weirdest and most wonderful places in Northern California's biggest and most misunderstood city. ❖

2021 dues for CA Pioneers of Santa Clara County are due on January 1st, 2021

Regular membership is still only \$35 (Family \$60)

Please Mail your check to: CA Pioneers of SCC.
Membership Chair, P.O. Box 8208
San Jose, CA, 95155

or

You may now renew online at:
www.CaliforniaPioneers.com

Film Archives Report

Film Archives

Thanks to the generosity of the late Richard Johns, a longtime friend of Tim Peddy, the Pioneers were gifted eight boxes of film and still negatives from Richard John's estate. These were accessioned into the Film Archive by Rick Helin and Bill Foley in October. These films include a large amount of footage of Southern California and are believed to also include original theatrical films, newsreels, PSAs, and a large amount of home movies of California.

Museum Virtual Tour

Bill Foley is editing footage for a virtual "trailer" for the Roberto Adobe & Suñol House Museum, incorporating historic footage and modern shots. The script incorporates statements directly from the docent tour scripts. He is also working on short features that focus on elements of the building, such as the materials (adobe, brick, wood, glass) and on biographic elements for the residents of the house (Roberto Balermino, Antonio Suñol, Splivalos, Basuinis, etc.)

Vintage Florida Vacation Films

Rick Helin, film archivist/historian and part of the Pioneers' Film Archive group, examined old vacation film footage from Florida taken in 1926 and edited them down to a viewable film.

The original films were shot by Louis O. Normandin while he and his wife, Estelle, were on vacation in South Florida in 1926. Normandin was the owner and operator of what is said to be one of America's oldest known automobile dealerships in California, since 1906. Normandin's grandson, Paul Normandin, donated the moving images to Helin so they can be shared digitally.

The edited film includes Florida shots of a brand-new Biltmore Hotel (which opened that year), the Venetian Pool, Miami Beach and other parts of Miami. Also included are well-executed flips and twisting dives off tall towers along with guests paddling canoes in the Biltmore's pool. The footage is fun to watch.

Helin sent an edited film of the findings to the Miami Herald editors, who published an article about Helin and the film—printing the link to view it. (<https://www.miamiherald.com/entertainment/article244930947.html>)

Helin also found some 16mm reels at a garage sale about seven years ago that were in color and from the 1940s, showing other parts of vintage Florida. As with Normandin's moving images, he ran them through a film preservation process to turn old 8mm and 16mm films into a digital format and posted them on YouTube. One of these finds is a ride from California to Jacksonville. ❖

—Bill Foley and Rick Helin

A Gold Rush Christmas Story

"On Christmas Day, 1849, Mrs. William George Wilson delivered a healthy, 12-pound boy at Canyon Creek, near Georgetown. Soon a neighboring claim and the gold field grapevine had spread the tongue-in-cheek news that Bill Wilson had struck it rich and found a twelve-pound nugget. Most took the news literally, however. "News of the big find spread like wildfire up and down the canyon where hundreds of men were at work," wrote Bennett. At once, there was a grand rush to Bill Wilson's cabin. Miners who came from more than ten miles away to see the giant 'Christmas Nugget' were anxious to see the 12-pound lump."

The Wilsons thoroughly enjoyed the moment and lined up the men at the cabin door. A few were let in at a time to view the "nugget." Each of the miners loved being had. Bennett recalled, "As each squad came out of the cabin, the men solemnly asserted that the Wilson nugget was the finest ever seen." For three more days, the joke continued throughout the area. Bennett wrote of miners who came from more than ten miles away to see the giant 'Christmas Nugget.'"

From the "Christmas Nugget" recounted in William P. Bennett's 1893 memoir of the California Gold Rush.

Roberto Adobe & Suñol House

770 Lincoln Avenue, San Jose

**Saturday Free Tours
suspended until
further notice**

CaliforniaPioneers.com

Docent or Greeter Opportunity

(ONCE WE RE-OPEN)

Roberto Adobe & Suñol House

Contact Sylvia Hew at 408-265-5371
or hewmum@gmail.com

Paulson House at History San Jose

Contact Jonna Baker at (408) 533-3256 or
J234belle@yahoo.com

Bank of Italy/Bank of America—

A sketch by Jim Campbell

The former Bank of Italy building at 12 S. First Street in San Jose was constructed in 1925-1926 and opened Jan. 5, 1927 with a huge hoopla celebration and thousands attending. Not only was it the tallest building in the Santa Clara Valley (until 1970), it was the tallest building between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

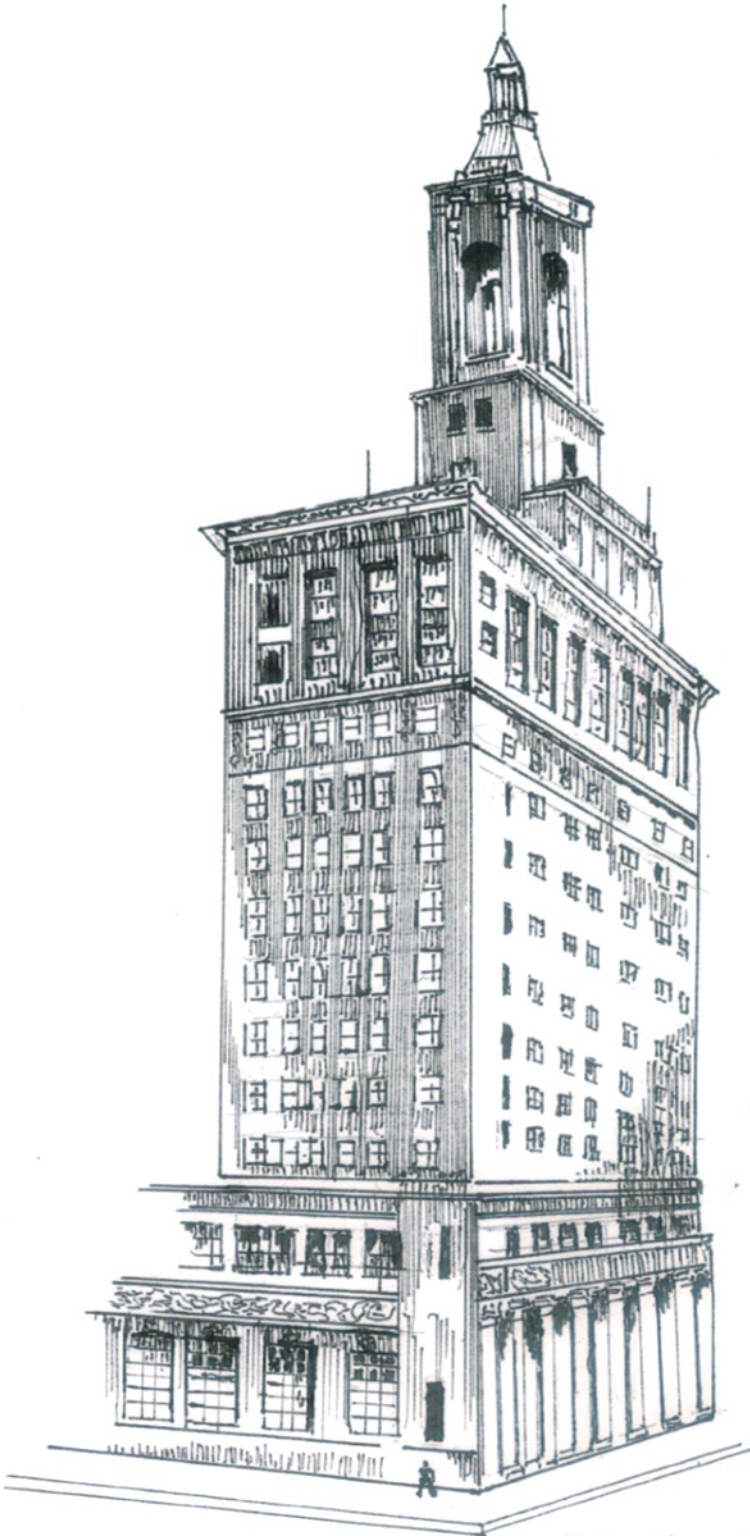
A. P. (Amadeo Pietro) Giannini (1870-1949), a San Jose native, first opened his Bank of Italy in San Francisco in 1904, wanting to serve the “little people” by offering loans to the workers, farmers, small business owners and the immigrant population. This was a unique concept then and other banks were aghast, since they only catered to the wealthy and big business.

By 1909, Giannini had purchased the San Jose Commercial & Saving Bank in San Jose and transformed it into his first out-of-town branch bank on the corner of W. Santa Clara Street and Lightson Alley. (A replica of this building sits at History Park.) Business went well and by the 1920s it was time to expand with his skyscraper on the corner of S. First Street and E. Santa Clara Street. The intersection was known as the “banking corner” since a bank resided on each corner. At this site, an 1872 ornate bank building had been built, and since c. 1885 was occupied by the San Jose Safe Deposit Bank of Savings until the 1900s. That building was razed in 1925 for the new Bank of Italy skyscraper.

This 13-story structure with a tower and beacon light was framed in steel, supported by concrete piles and sheathed in brick and terra cotta. The architectural style is described as Italian Renaissance Revival. The beacon light replaced the original spire in 1929 and shone green for fair weather and red for stormy weather. The light also served as a warning for nearby aircraft but went dark in 1980.

The building was praised for setting a high-quality standard of construction and was hailed in the Architectural & Engineering Record of California as being one of the first earthquake-proof buildings in Santa Clara County. The cost of construction and materials came to just under one million dollars. It is one of the most important contributors to the Downtown Historic District and is a San Jose City Landmark.

(Continued page 12)



Campbell

Who Was A. P. Giannini?

Amadeo Peter (Pietro) Giannini, a son of Italian immigrants, was born in San Jose in 1870, only a few blocks from his landmark Bank of America building on S. First Street.

After his father was killed in 1877, his mother later married Lorenzo Scatena, who ran a produce business, so the family moved to San Francisco. Giannini left school at 14 and worked hard for his stepfather, who was so impressed with his capabilities that he made him a partner in the business. Giannini's reputation for honesty and fairness made possible a successful career and at the age of 31 he was married, settled, and able to retire.

Only a year later, Giannini's father-in-law died and he was asked to fill his seat on the board of a small Savings and Loan company in the "Little Italy" district of North Beach in San Francisco. He soon became disillusioned after failing to convince the board members that the bank should serve the common people. So in 1904, Giannini started his own bank, and a new career, with liberal loan policies in a converted saloon right across the street. With \$150,000 he raised from his stepfather and ten others, he was able to

institute home mortgages, auto loans and installment credit. He pounded the streets trying to educate the residents on the new banking policies available to them. Successfully convincing the residents it was safer to deposit their money in his bank rather than under the mattress, his Bank of Italy thrived.

Then along came the disastrous 1906 earthquake when San Francisco fell to its knees. Giannini quickly hitched up a vegetable wagon and proceeded to the ruins of his bank, grabbed all the gold, coins, currency and bonds, and was the first bank to reopen by many days. (Giannini beat the fires; other banks had to wait for the burned buildings to cool before retrieving their assets.)

He set up his loan business on a plank and two barrels at the docks and proceeded to loan a lifeline to those who suffered losses. He said he extended credit "on a man's face and a signature."



A. P. Giannini in younger days.
(1870-1949) *(Photo: Wikipedia)*

This experience influenced Giannini's idea that branch banks could reach more people in need of loans and banking. Consequently, he brought his Bank of Italy to San Jose in 1909 (on W. Santa Clara St. and Lightson Alley; a replica sits at History San Jose) and to southern California in 1913. In less than ten years

(Continued page 13)

Bank of America—a sketch (Continued)

Architect H. A. Minton found it necessary to compromise his original design. Large fluted columns stood along the First Street façade, but before the building first opened, five of the columns on the right had to stop abruptly above the first story so that Roos Brothers Men's Store could utilize display windows. After Roos Bros. relocated years later, the columns were continued down to the cement bases on the sidewalk.

Above the capitals of these columns, the decor includes the three-mast sailing ship, Giannini's logo for his banks. Inside the building, domestic and imported marble were used on counter tops, flooring, hallways and banking screens.

The Bank of America operations remained at this site until 1969, then moving to Park Center Plaza on Market Street (which is slated for demolition soon).

In late 2017, developers and real estate investors, Gary Dillabough and Jeff Arrillago of Urban Community, purchased the former Bank of America with plans to renovate and restore the neglected building. All the unsightly window air conditioners have been removed; work on the interior has progressed for several years. We look forward to when this treasure will be brought back to life and open for business—and hope that restoration work will be sensitive and true to this historic icon. ❖

—Gayle Frank

Sources:

➤ *Historic Highlights of Santa Clara Valley,* by Jack Douglas, 2005.

➤ *History San Jose, San Jose Historic Walking Tours, 1995*

Giannini (Continued)

he operated 24 bank branches in California.

Giannini was responsible for financing the Hollywood film industry during bad times, as well as the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge when no other bank would lend the money. We have him to thank for such classics as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Fantasia, Pinocchio and many more, plus Disneyland. Giannini created a motion-picture loan division when movies were considered a big gamble.

By 1930, the new name for Bank of Italy became the Bank of America, becoming one of the largest banks in the country. At this time, Giannini retired again, leaving the business to his successors. But the Great Depression hit his management company, TransAmerica Corp., so he returned, waging a successful proxy fight to regain control of his cherished bank.

After doubling its assets in the next six years, Giannini retired from the active head in 1945. He passed away in 1949. Not only was he an innovator in banking; he has been described as humble, caring, honest, hard-working, and with remarkable integrity and extraordinary faith in human character.

A touching local story in a Trailblazer quarterly bulletin from November, 1975, reveals the humble, caring character of A.P. Giannini. Henry Calloway's article, "Greatness Was Never So Humble," describes how, in June, 1925, Amadeo requested that he present the diplomas to the graduates from the small Alviso School in Alviso.

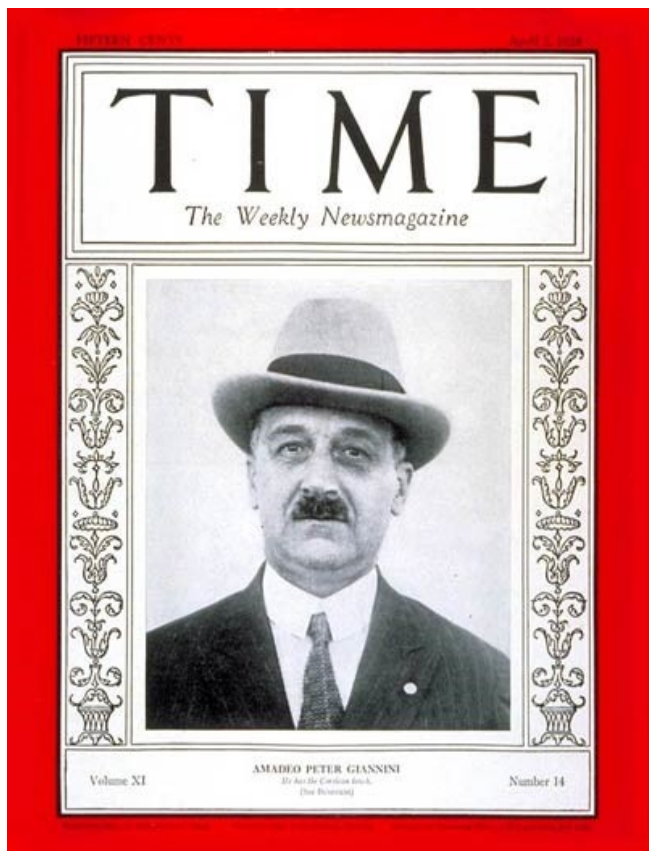
He himself had attended Alviso Grammar School as a child and this was a nostalgic moment for him. He insisted on sitting among the audience, not on the stage, until it was time for him to

present the diplomas and gifts. He was the guest of honor and almost every Alviso resident and nearby rancher were in attendance, estimated at 600. While there, he even found his original desk where he had carved his initials, "A.P.G." Calloway continues saying that Giannini labored to provide hope for "the little fellow," often saying, "We never lost a penny on these small loans." Calloway ended with, "Beyond a doubt Amadeo Peter was the foremost son that San Jose ever produced." ❖

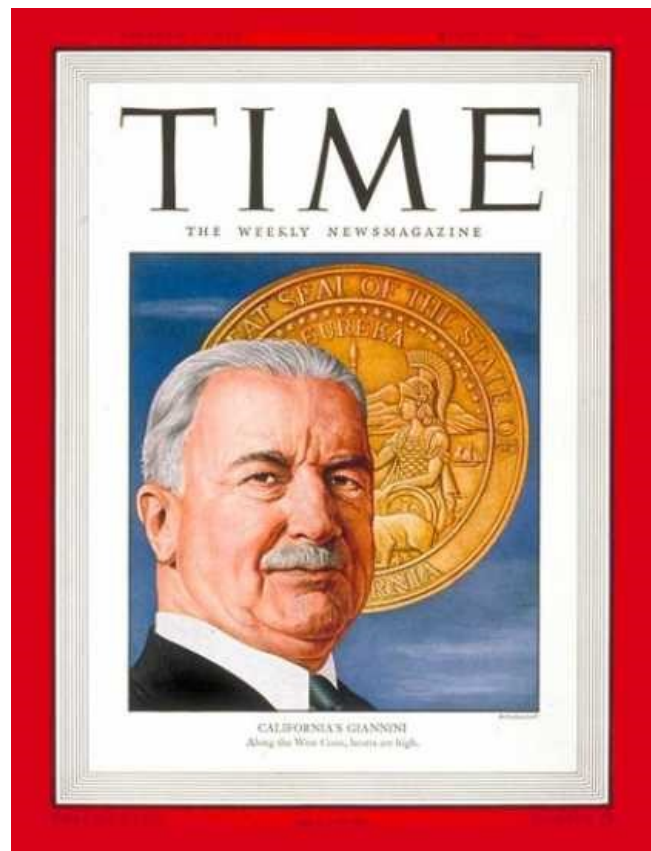
—Gayle Frank

Sources::

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A. P. Giannini in 1928



A. P. Giannini in 1946

Members 2020 Paid* Dues in July-Oct.—Thank You!

Bacich, Damian (family)

Jensen, Jan (family-2 years)

**Received between July 28, —Nov.1, 2020*

Enright, Drew (paid 2021 dues)

Lynch, Audry (paid 2021 dues)

Garcia, Duane

“Christmas in the Park” at History Park



History San Jose is excited that Christmas in the Park and History San Jose have teamed up this year to create “Christmas in the Park – A Drive Thru Holiday!” at History Park, 635 Phelan Avenue.

The event will take place from November 27 to January 3, from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Tickets are on sale now. Visit **Christmas in the Park's** website, www.christmasinthepark.com/ for more information. ❖

Holiday Boutique



Preservation Action Council of San Jose will host HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE set for Friday November 20 and Saturday November 21 at 594 South 15th Street, San Jose. Take a trip through the decorated trees to find your special ornaments, gifts, and local history mementos. Hours are Friday 9am till 4pm and Saturday 9am till noon. PAC* SJ members and Friends (Pioneers members) can attend the preview sale and reception Thursday afternoon from 4pm till 7pm.

Author Cassie Kifer will sign her new book *Secret San Jose* Thursday evening and Saturday morning.



Social protocols will be in place, so please wear a mask. Street parking is available. This event is outdoors. For more information contact Patt at donations@preservation.org or visit www.preservation.org. ❖

Membership Report

The membership dues for the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County are **due on January 1st every year**. Basic dues are still only \$35.

Please send in your membership renewal for 2021. Dues for 2021 can be mailed to CA Pioneers of SCC, Membership Chair, P.O. Box 8208, San Jose, CA, 95155.

Check your mailing label on your Trailblazer and it will indicate when your dues expire.

For example, if after your name it says, Dec-2020, your Pioneers membership is up-to-date until the end of 2020.

Additional donations or higher membership levels are always appreciated. Visit www.CaliforniaPioneers.com for more details. And please, don't forget the Pioneers in your estate planning and consider donating from your IRA's required minimum distribution to lower your taxes. ❖

**For Questions
contact
Membership Chair
Walt Gil
at
wgil@cpi-re.com
or 408-978-1090.**

Time Travel *(Past News from Newspaper Archives)*

Monterey, 1811: A verdict issued by the Commandant at Monterey in 1811 read: "The teacher has the right to correct and punish his scholars with advice, warning, and lashes in cases of necessity.

San Jose, 1863: The city boasted 3600 inhabitants, 77 merchandising establishments, 18 hotels and restaurants, a newspaper, 9 billiard tables, 3 bowling alleys, 8 livery stables and no less than 44 saloons. An object of note was the town's six churches. As one observer wrote, "It can be seen that the Lord has one church to the devil's seven and one third.

San Jose, 1867-8: The rainfall here was high enough to give thoughts of a Noah's Ark. Unofficial records indicate over 40 inches fell while several houses left for Alviso without their owners' permission.

Gilroy, 1870: Gilroy operated a brewery using local malt and hops while barreling over 1100 kegs the first thirsty year. To boot, the San Filipe Tobacco Co. was providing our country neighbors with a popular cigar. Also, two business-bent comrades went to scraping alkali off the edges of San Filipe Lake (Soap Lake) and ventured into soap production.

.San Jose, 1902: The Remillard Brick Company operations on Story Road was now the largest in the state, producing 82,000 bricks per day, or a total of 10 million bricks for an average season's run. The kiln could produce 50,000 bricks per day and sat inside a 1,000 x 90 foot building. The company employed up to 125 employees for six months each year and eventually averaged 13 million bricks per year. Fall and winter rains curtailed operations.

Sunshine Chair

If a Pioneers member is ill or needs cheering up notify,
Madeline Streight:
408-259-4422
or madeline.streight@att.net

San Jose, 1906: Plans were made to plant the Penitencia Creek at Alum Rock Park with 50,000 hatchery fish for the benefit of the excursionists according to Game Warden Koppel

San Jose, 1915: You just could not overlook the Blossom Loop Trolley Special. Interurban cars departed from the Bassett Street Depot. Here began a 65-mile moving picture whirl through the heart of the valley—all for one dollar. Ads proclaimed, "It's like going through heaven without dying."

Pioneers Gone to the Golden Hills

Phyllis C. Veloz



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California Pioneers of Santa Clara County 2020 Board of Directors

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Bill Foley, Vice President, SCCPioneers@gmail.com

Tom Kearney, Treasurer; tpkearney35@att.net

Walt Gil, Membership & Secretary; wgil@cpire.com

Ken Machado, Immediate Past President;
7m.kenmachado@gmail.com

Paul Bernal, Member-at-Large; PBernal411@gmail.com

Jonna Baker, Member-at-Large; J234belle@yahoo.com

Gayle Frank, Member-at-Large; gaylefrankCA@gmail.com

Sylvia Hew, Member-at-Large; hewmum@gmail.com

Tudy Johnson, Librarian, johnson2dee@gmail.com

Veronica Jordan, Member-at-Large; veronicaj20@gmail.com

Tim Peddy, Member-at-Large; miltpeddy@aol.com

Russ Robinson, Member-at-Large;
russ1011@ix.netcom.com

Jim Campbell, Resident Artist for CA Pioneers of
Santa Clara County

Madeline Streight; Sunshine Chair; 408-259-4422 or
madeline.streight@att.net

Our Mission is to promote, preserve, and celebrate
the history of Santa Clara County and the heritage
of its past generations. We collect, archive, educate
and encourage research and scholarship.