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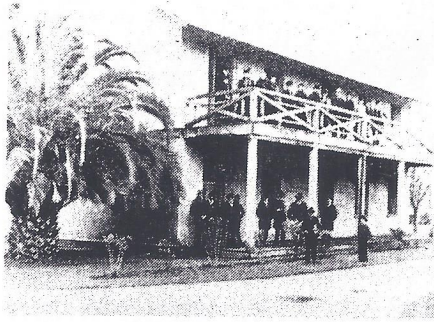
SAN JOSÉ REDWOOD SURGES FROM HISTORICAL SOILS



As a living monument honoring San José as the oldest continuously inhabited civilian community in the state, a cinnamon-crusted coastal sequoia stands high and husky near the state landmark at the north-east edge of the City Plaza. It was planted on December 30, 1899 during impressive fiftieth anniversary festivities marking the location of California's first legislature session which convened here on December 15, 1849.

For this long awaited jubilee planting, the venerable soils provided came from almost every historic battlefield and famous site in the United States: Monmouth, Bunker Hill, Brandywine, Germantown, Gettysburg and Fort McHenry battle sites; including Independence Hall, the Boston State House and Tea Wharf; gravesides of Lincoln, Paul Revere, John Hancock, Sam Adams and Grant; James Marshall's birthplace in New Jersey; Colton Hall in Monterey, the meeting place of the first Constitutional Convention in California in September 1849; Statue of Liberty, Washington Monument, Mt. Vernon, the White House and the Benito Juarez Shrine in Mexico City.

It was Mayor Charles J. Martin who first placed and mingled the hallowed soils about the redwood sapling. Mexican War veterans were invited to step up and also place a handful of soil around the tree as the Fifth Regiment Band struck up patriotic offerings. A twenty-one gun salute was fired by Battery D under the command of Major Sherman, himself, a historian, who contributed the esteemed ground for the occasion.



Replica — First State House

A replica of the first State House had been built for the event and it was from its veranda Mayor Martin paid tribute to the various people and pioneers who came together to form our great state.

A tremendous six-division parade engrossed thousands who arrived by train, boat and buggy. Col. S.W. Boring, a Mexican War veteran and a California Pioneer member, was grand marshal.

The reception committee consisted of Pioneers of Santa Clara County who tended to the reception at the Court House including the grand ball at the Hall of Records where General and Mrs. John Bidwell of Chico headed the promenade.

The San Jose Herald circulated how the Light Tower presented a magnificent sight with its arc lights releasing over 2000 candle power for the spirited event.

Despite a peaceful pace with the past and a busy present, it has been no picnic-in-the-park for our staunch rarely remembered sequoia as it faithfully continues to extend tribute. If you should be a passer-by, a firm pat and a nostalgic sigh would be kindhearted.



PACIFIC STATES FIREWORKS COMPANY

Santa Clara Valley historically has been known for its fruit products and its beautiful blossoms. For about twenty years, from 1922 until 1941, in the low hills of Daves Avenue in Los Gatos was the home of the famous Pacific States Fireworks Company, better known locally as the Hitts Fireworks Company. We can look back with nostalgia remembering their beautiful and spectacular fireworks displays at the Spartan Stadium and many other places around the state.

It all started in Seattle, Washington, with Tom Hitt who was a graduate chemist and had founded the Hitts Fireworks Company of Seattle. He had trained his brother, Fred Hitt, in the manufacture of fireworks. Fred was a natural and turned out to be a genius in designing, engineering, machining, welding, printing and was also a great salesman. Fred had designed much of the machinery for making fireworks. Also working for Tom was Fred's brother-in-law, Sam Young, who as well as Fred learned the fireworks business from Tom Hitt. Sam became the foreman of the Seattle company and was known as one of the foremost men of his time in the manufacture of fireworks.

Fred had three sons, George, William, and Don. Because of the climate in Washington, William and his Uncle Sam both had severe asthma. They had heard of the healthy climate of Los Gatos; so the Fred Hitt and Sam Young families left Seattle and bought six acres with an old redwood house on it that had once belonged to a sea captain on Daves Avenue at Los Gatos.

They started a new company that they called the Pacific States Fireworks Company. Two other manufacturing companies were also formed at the same location, one being called the Pacific Railway Signal Company. This company manufactured railway fusees and highway flares, and at one time had employed as many as thirty-five people. The other company was called the U.S. Rodent Destroyer Company. It manufactured a smoke type flare that was put down a gopher or pest hole to kill the pest.



Hitt's Preparing For Another Blast

After the businesses got established, Fred Hitt bought out Sam Young's share and Sam became foreman of the company. The Pacific States Fireworks Company imported fireworks from China and sold retail to the public, but their fame came from the fireworks they made and the theatrical pyrotechnic shows they would produce around the states of California and Nevada. Fred Hitt and his sons and Sam Young would put on their own shows. Not only would they shoot up high into the sky colorful rockets that would explode in a huge umbrella of multicolored stars with tracers popping and banging and booming all the way to the ground, but they had huge stationery displays that would depict animated action stories.

Two of the displays were related to this author by William Hitt. He tells of one that was on 5' X 10' frames with an outline of two battleships with chemicals outlining the whole picture. Each battleship was on a pole hoisted up with a rope and pulley. Each ship shot shells and rockets at the other by a line attached between the battleships. The ship getting hit had a keg of powder affixed to the rocket on the wire. When the ship to be sunk was hit, a loud explosion and bust of flames occurred. A man holding a rope on the board loosened the ropes making this ship go down by the stern, and at this time the ship's lights would go out simulating it had sunk.

Another headliner was two movable fighting bears that was a mechanical marvel, also outlined in fireworks. This unique group operated first class fireworks productions in San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose. They also put on displays for the Sacramento State Fair, the Portuguese Holy Ghost celebrations, 4th of July Santa Cruz Shows, shows in Stockton, Merced and many more cities. They put on a gigantic display for the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge at San Francisco.

They also used airplane fireworks in their shows. Brother George was a pilot and had a 1918 Lincoln-Page biplane. They rigged red and green flares to the struts, then pyrotechnic water falls and finally magnesium flares. The first time George did this stunt the 50 thousand candle power magnesium flares were so bright all he could see was the inside part of his wooden propeller. By the time the flares went out and he could again see the horizon, he was somewhere outside the Golden Gate. In those days, they did not have many instruments, and they had to fly by the seat of their pants. The San Francisco, Oakland shows were probably the most popular ones. Three biplanes were used in one show flying in formation, and when the fireballs cut in, it was really something to see as the drip from these falls dropped some 300 feet beneath the airplanes. This trick will probably never be seen again as today's safety regulations would prevent it.

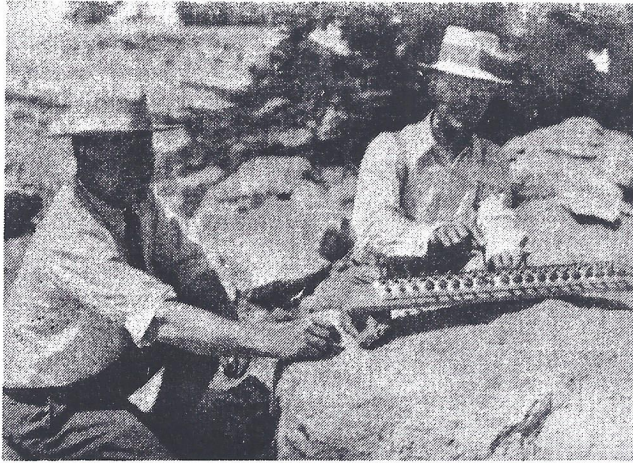
Don Hitt was the youngest of the brothers, and he tells of shows they put on at Tanforan Race Track in San Mateo. For many years, he put the shows on every night for seven nights during the Fair season. They would work all day setting up the displays, and every night just as they set off their opening flares, a dog would appear and chase all over the field after the fireworks. He would attempt to catch the stars from a tree piece consisting of 50-100 ball Roman candles. How he lived after eating all of the fire from the waterfall, Don said, he will never know. One of the dog's greatest sports was a display called "Pigeon." It started like a little wheel of fire about five feet high. He would jump and almost reach it. Then, still spinning, it cut into a powerful rocket that drove it swiftly down a wire for about three hundred feet. You could almost hear that dog's brakes squeal when that rocket reached the end of the wire and reversed itself three times. The dog got so popular with the crowds that the local newspaper ran a feature story on him. Don really wanted that dog for other shows he put on, and he tried everything he could think of to catch him, but nothing worked. He never caught the dog nor found out who owned him.

He tells of one very spectacular display that was fired over the Sacramento River. A cable was stretched across the river between towers two hundred feet high. It created a waterfall five hundred feet long, and when they lit it, you could read a newspaper by night from its brilliant glow.



Pacific States Fireworks

Everyone agrees that Fred Hitt's most ostentatious display was the artificial eruption of Lassen volcano on July 25, 1931, which celebrated the opening of a new highway to Lassen and the climax to the dedication ceremonies for Lassen National Park. Hitt's job was to make the crater come to life as it did in 1914 and 1915 when it blew its top creating the devastation still so much in evidence. All of Fred's sky rockets, kegs of black powder, heavy shell mortars, gerbes (a firework throwing a shower of sparks), smoke bombs and other equipment had to be packed up the narrow mountain trail to the crater on mules for the display. Everything that would burn or explode was used. A system of electrical wires and switches were used to remotely set them off. The simulated eruption was almost too good to believe, with acres of smoke and fire shooting many hundred feet into the air over and from out of Lassen Crater. Never before and never since has such a spectacular show of fireworks been performed.



**Fred Hitt and Park Ranger Atop Mount Lassen 1931
With Electrical Switchboard to Set Off the "Eruption"**

All of this had come from the quiet peaceful hillside company in Los Gatos, a company almost lost in the surrounding fruit orchards of this area. Fred Hitt, besides being a genius in mechanics and fireworks, was also an accomplished musician. He could play many instruments, but his first love was reed and pipe organs of which he owned about eight. He built them as a hobby and at the Santa Clara County Fair in 1941, he won first prize in his division in the section called "Hobbyists in Action." One of his organs turned out to be one of a kind. After he bought it, he discovered by opening the back panel

there was a mechanism of little fingers attached to each key, and when backed up to a piano, these little fingers could play the piano at the same time making an organ-piano duet.

Fred Hitt was a very religious man having been educated in London, England and attended "Christ College" there. At the home on Daves Avenue in Los Gatos, Fred installed a theater pipe organ in the water tower and attached barn. He built a room in his barn and would invite church groups, families and friends or Sunday School classes to come out to hear him play. He called this area Christ Chapel after his college in London.

With the coming of World War II in 1941, Mr. Hitt sold his company to the Central Railroad Fusee Company of Boston. They changed the name to Pacific Railway Signal Company. Fred and his son, Don, kept the U.S. Rodent Destroyer Company.

In September of 1953, a spectacular fire at the plant destroyed five buildings. The house and the Rodent Destroyer Company were saved. The local newspaper said the loss was \$75,000. The Olin Mathieson Chemical Company bought the company and tried to expand it, but the county regulations prevented expansion, so in October 1955 the plant moved to Morgan Hill where the restrictions were not so strict.

This outstanding gentleman, Fred Hitt, passed away in 1962. He was a pioneer in his field and is certainly another example of the interesting people that have made Santa Clara County what it is today.

BY - Bill Chivers



**Pacific States Fireworks Shops
About 1925 on Daves Avenue**

OUR SOCIETY REPRESENTED AT ANNUAL HISTORY SESSION

Mary Simas, Helen Arbuckle, and Vice-president Victoria Malatesta represented the Pioneers at the Northern California Symposium of the Conference of California Historical Societies which was held in Vallejo September 23, 24 and 25.

Hosts were the Solano County Historical Society, the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum (also the Conference headquarters), and the Benicia Historical Society. Over 250 from all parts of the state attended; the largest representation from Southern California.

An all-day tour to the California Maritime Academy, the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, a visit to the charming St. Peter's chapel with its 16 windows by Tiffany Studios, Benicia with its first state capital, camel barns, Powder Magazine, and historic churches and homes in Vallejo and Benicia had been arranged for the visitors.

No conference is complete without luncheons, happy hours, and dinners featuring regional food and entertainment. Highlights were the Friday dinner catered by the famous Nut Tree and two silent movies that featured Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton in The General accompanied by a real live old time theater organist on the Wurlitzer organ. The Saturday luncheon speaker was Mrs. Sue Lemmon whose subject was The Women in General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's Family. He had five daughters. Roy Bainer, Dean Emeritus of the University of California, Davis, spoke on The Changing Patterns of Solano's Agriculture at the Clock Tower after the Saturday evening banquet. The Conference closed with a Genealogy Breakfast Sunday morning.

Mary Lou Lyon of the Sunnyvale and Cupertino Historical Societies is President of the Conference. She is a history teacher at Homestead High School.

The 1984 annual Conference will be held in Santa Cruz.
Plan to attend.

The HISTORICAL ESSAY CONTEST has been an annual event for 24 years with the Pioneers of Santa Clara County. Students and adults should be thinking and preparing right now for next year's contest!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

J. Marius Becchetti	Blanche Geary	Vivienne M. Reed
Pearl E. Belloli	Thomas C. Geary	Barbara S. Van Mourik
Merle R. Bernardo	Ellen C. Harnach	Ruth M. Stanley
Mildred J. Coughlin	Father Alfred Naucke	Henry W. Vickerson
D. Ruth Fischer	Wanda B. Pelascini	Lucile Vickerson

BEYOND THE SUNSET

Henry E. Anet	Mary McGee Johnson	Gertrude Morgan
Elizabeth K. Boggini	Irene M. Lack	Arthur Steele
Dorothy A. Johnson		Mary M. Wilson

TRIBUTE TO JAPANESE PIONEERS

Each year the '89ers, the history segment of O'Connor Hospital, honors pioneers of our valley. This year on October 2 a parade and a well attended luncheon at the Red Lion Inn paid special tribute to our Japanese pioneers. Some beyond the age of 100 were in attendance.

This was the 10th annual festive occasion lauding our pioneers by the O'Connor '89ers. This annual event points to Myles O'Connor, lawyer, gold miner, justice of the peace, legislator and philanthropist, whose concern for the orphaned and the elderly led to the completion of his sanitarium in San Jose in 1889, hence the '89ers.

This humanitarian was born in County Leix, Ireland in 1823.

DON'T DELAY — IT'S TIME TO PAY

It is time for payment of 1984 dues. Our by-laws call for dues to be paid annually, in advance. To determine if you are paid up or not check the date on your membership card. If, after doing this you still might have questions please call the Financial Secretary, Mary Wahlberg at 408-246-5503.

In consideration of the size of our membership we are encouraging that these dues payments be made by mail if at all possible. Don't forget to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope along with your check and you will receive your new card by return mail. Make all checks payable to CALIFORNIA PIONEERS and mail to Mary Wahlberg, Financial Secretary, P.O. Box 8208, San Jose, CA 95155.

The Financial Secretary will be available both before and after the luncheon but you can avoid waiting in line if you have already taken care of this by mail. By keeping your dues current you will protect your membership and insure your receipt of the TRAILBLAZER.

'BEAR FITE' COMMEMORATION

All legitimate Brothers of E Clampus Vitus, Mt. Charlie Chapter 1850, gathered on October 15th to do honor to their top itch and rub patron and namesake, Charles Henry McKiernan, one of the first white settlers in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 1850. The doings commemorated his near fatal 'Bear Fite' near now Summit Road, an encounter that cost Charlie a chunk of his skull and an ear. A bronze marker now marks the near site of Mountain Charlie's clash.

("During the Gold Rush Days of California the organization known as E Clampus Vitus flourished throughout the diggings. It was a sort of parody of the solemn and mysterious fraternal orders then so popular in the states. Every member held an office of equal indignity. It is said the E Clampus Vitus existed for the purpose of promoting the welfare of widows and orphans, especially the widows. Early newspaper articles prove their deeds actually did aid needy families. Primarily, however, it was a fun organization and the antics and glorious spirit of early day Clampers lightened the cares of the Gold Rush days and made the old frontier ring with laughter. Reborn in 1931.")

(TOURING WITH THE CALIFORNIANS)

RESERVATIONS for trips can be made by calling Ruth Gross at 294-9830 between 9 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday. Members of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County are given preference over guests with reservations taken on first-come, first-served basis. Reservations for MEMBERS ONLY will be accepted for the first week after each quarterly luncheon meeting; thereafter, non-members will be welcome. Subject this rule, anyone may sign on a waiting list. The right is reserved to decline or accept any person as a member of any tour.

THE CALIFORNIANS, P.O. BOX 32121, SAN JOSE, CA 95152

March 29 - April 19, 1984 NEW ZEALAND "The Gift of the Sea" — wonders enough for a continent — nowhere else can you find "something of everything:" from soaring volcanoes, warm white beaches, in the haze of their mid summer — graceful mountains, carpeted forests rich in game, ice-fed streams where huge trout leap. Come to the land of Maori culture. Delve in this slice of Switzerland, of Norway, of England, of America and above all it's a big helping of Polynesia! Make RESERVATIONS NOW! Brochure available.

May 8 - 9, 1984 YOSEMITE Ideal time to view its "many mansions" during the non-overcrowded season. Reservations begin at our December luncheon.

Californians! Be on the alert for a number of remarkable one-day jaunts now being jelled.

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA-OREGON Late June of 1984. Plan now to slip away on this five day frolic.

WASHINGTON, D.C. in late October and early November 1984. The Star-spangled City acclaimed as one of the world's most beautiful cities.

* * * * *

NOTE: Did you ever have personal contact with Paul Masson? If you did, please contact Charles Sullivan at 408-356-9957. He is collecting information on Masson and is looking for people who remember him.

P. O. BOX 8208
SAN JOSE, CA 95155

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Holiday Luncheon

Please Call 247-6606

THIS IS A 24-HOUR ANSWERING SERVICE

MENU

Baked Ham
Vegetable - Jello Salad
Dessert - Beverage
LOU'S VILLAGE \$7.00
Doors open 10:30... LUNCHEON 12:00PM

BY POPULAR DEMAND
The Monte Vista High School
Christmas Carol Group
ALSO FEATURING OUR
Annual HISTORY GIFT BOOK SALE
LOCAL & AREA History Authored
BY OUR OWN PIONEER MEMBERS!

DUES: \$3 Please send a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of your membership card. Make checks payable to California Pioneers and mail to Financial Secretary, P.O. Box 8208, San Jose, CA 95155.

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CALIFORNIA PIONEERS OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY DIRECTORS 1983-1984:
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SUNSHINE Please notify of SICKNESS and DEATHS: Mary Simas, 1722 Husted, San Jose, CA 95124. Phone 408-448-6102.