

THE TRAILBLAZER

Quarterly Bulletin of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County
Incorporated 1875

Volume 5

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Number 4

PROGRAMME

Theatre José

Week beginning March 28, 1910

The Ed. Redmond Stock Co. Presents
The Lion and the Mouse

NOTICE TO PATRONS

The California Society of Pioneers has purchased outright the José Theatre for the two performances on Wednesday April 6, and will have absolute control of the house for that day. No standing orders will be held unless other special arrangements are made. The entire proceeds for the two performances go to the Pioneers and they have raised the prices for that day only. At every other performance the usual José prices will prevail, and standing orders will be held.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Leo Sullivan

(Advertisements from the same program)

Next door

68 South Second St.

José Confectionery

5¢-ICE CREAM SODA - CRUSHED FRUIT-5¢

THIRSTY? A mug of Hire's Root Beer, ICE COLD, or an ICE CREAM SODA will hit the spot. Run in during intermission

JUST NEXT DOOR

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R. F. Benson

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FLANDERS 20, \$750

F.O.B. Detroit

F.O.B. Detroit

The best for the money

Actual freight only

SAN JOSE IMPLEMENT COMPANY

83-91 South Market Street.

(Above program sent in by Mr. Laurence E. Bulmore)

IN PLACE OF A SKYSCRAPER
Lovesta Dorwin Davis

Remember the Knox Block? The two-story yellowish-brown brick structure, with its many tall windows, was once called "the most elegant building in San José." That was in its younger days. Senator Knox's L-shaped store-and-office building stood for eighty years on the northwest corner of First and Santa Clara Streets. Condemned at last, it was demolished in December 1945, to make way for the present J. C. Penney building.

But what was there before the Knox Block? Thereby hangs a tale--one having the flavor of most bits of local history, tinged as it always is by emotional reactions to personalities.

When the Lady Adams sailed into San Francisco Bay on January 7, 1848 James Lick was aboard. He stepped ashore for the first time in California just seventeen days before the discovery of gold. Almost at once, even before the rumor of gold became an established fact several weeks later, Mr. Lick began to invest some of his Spanish doubloons in real estate. Within a short while he had visited Santa Clara Valley a number of times, and bought several pieces of land. Among them was the 50-vara lot at the corner of First and Santa Clara. Small ramshackle buildings faced both streets. They had seen their best days during the Mexican period, so recently ended. El Pueblo de San José had been an American town only since 1846.

The new Owner - not a builder -- but a persistent investor in real estate--was not disturbed by the dilapidated appearance of his corner. But his fellow townsmen complained that the spot was a disgrace to the city. They were said to have urged the Owner to improve it. Reputedly averse to listening to suggestions, Mr. Lick replied that he didn't care to invest any more money. In the early 1860's a fire destroyed the rundown buildings, leaving the lot covered with blackened rubble. There was also an angry man who suspected the volunteer fire department hadn't tried hard enough to save his property.

The unsightly debris remained untouched for nearly a year. Then (according to the story) Mr. Lick let it be known he would clean it up and build the first skyscraper on the Pacific Coast--five stories high. The would-be builder, individualist that he was, hired a laborer to stack the bricks on one end of the lot. But that wasn't where he wanted them after all. He ordered the bricks

piled up elsewhere.

Across the street critical bystanders were amused at the seemingly erratic behavior of their fellow citizen. Touchy Mr. Lick saw and heard--so the story goes. He paid his workman and dismissed him. He also discharged the excavators with their teams and metal scoops, and went back to San Francisco. The skyscraper "died a-bornin'."

Not long thereafter Mr. Lick sold the lot to Senator Knox for \$21,000, reaping a neat profit. By the following year the Knox Block was under construction. It cost the Senator \$51,000 and was built of the best of materials. Except for the floors, all the lumber throughout was of #1 redwood. The partitions between the twelve stores on the lower floor were of solid brick, as were the exterior walls. There were cast-iron girders, and "tons of lead pipe." Wide entrances, one from each street, opened upon broad stairways that led to spacious halls on the second floor. Heavy dark polished doors opened from each side of the hallways into high ceilinged rooms that were business and professional offices.

The exterior of the building presented its most distinguishing features. The upper story walls, along both streets, were cut by narrow windows, arranged in groups of three, eighteen or twenty to a side. Each group was adorned with different headings, some rounded with scrollwork, others ridged like tiny roofs, then repeated--all very decorative, all characteristic of the gingerbread-trim of the times.

The "elegant building" was still in its prime when Mr. Lick died in San Francisco in 1876. Ten years later the tall windows stared down unfeelingly upon a small cortege. Mr. Lick's remains, removed from their temporary interment in San Francisco, were being brought through the center of town on the way to their final resting place beneath the Observatory atop Mount Hamilton.

As the years slipped by the Knox Block continued to be one of the busiest corners in town. Its tenants' names were those of individuals and firms familiar to many today. The building was forty-one years old when it withstood the 1906 earthquake. Then it survived for nearly another forty years, while today's Old-Timers helped to make history, and stacked up memories for themselves. Finally the citizens of San Jose began to call the "ancient and dingy building" an eyesore--"the biggest disgrace in the City of San José."

The stairs were worn by the tread of many feet; floors were sagging, plaster was falling off, clouded windows were becoming opaque, and the tall paneled doors seemed shockingly big and heavy. City Councilmen and the City Building Inspector agreed that the building "could be legally ordered demolished, or repaired."

The Knox heirs sold the decrepit building in 1940 for \$127,000, having previously (1929) refused an offer for \$500,000. In September 1941 the Knox Block was pronounced unsafe, and the twenty remaining tenants were notified to vacate. The last two to leave some time later were a blueprint company and an attorney.

For awhile the new Owners did nothing--except to look for tenants for whom they could "build to suit." Eventually the J. C. Penney Company qualified, and a wrecking crew from San Francisco began work in December 1945.

Demolition was accomplished in twenty days. The head of the wrecking company remarked, "--one of the best buildings I've wrecked in all my forty years." Again bricks were piled up on that corner lot; re-usable lumber and other materials disposed of. Townspeople came with their little open-bed trucks and carted away the splintered debris for fuel for their fireplaces.

Nearly twenty years ago (as of today) one Old-Timer, knowing the story of the skyscraper that never was, sat beside his crackling fire, pondering what might have been--instead of the old Knox Block. From time to time he tossed on another bit of the 80-year-old gingerbread trim from over the blank, staring windows. He recalled what he knew and had heard of those bygone days--from the year of Lincoln's assassination to the end of World War Two. During those years "the most elegant building in San José" had served a healthy growing community, becoming at last "the biggest disgrace in the City of San José." Remember?

* * *

THE QUAKERS OF SAN JOSE Herbert C. Jones

Before the Revolutionary War, particularly from 1725 to 1750, because of the severity of the winters, there was an extensive migration of Quakers from New England down into North Carolina. Here they established numerous Quaker Meetings and the New Garden Boarding School which became the present Guilford College.

However, because of their abhorrence of the institution of slavery in the decades before the Civil War, in the 1830's, '40s and '50s there was in turn an extensive migration of North Carolina Quakers to Ohio, Indiana and Iowa, with some coming through to California.

Among those who came to California are Jesse and David Hobson.

As early as 1861 the little group of Quakers met in member homes. In 1866 they acquired property at the corner of 9th and St. John streets and built a Meeting House. However, in 1883, the property was sold to the Free Methodist Church who built the present church on the property.

In 1883 two Quakers from Iowa, Joel Bean and his brother James Bean, together with their families, moved to San José. They attended the Meeting at 9th and St. John streets for a few months.

After selling their property at 9th and St. John the Quakers divided into two groups. One group erected a Meeting House on Stockton Avenue and continued to use it as a Friends Meeting House until 1924 when, because of the smallness of the membership this Stockton Avenue Meeting was dissolved.

The Stockton Avenue group was known as a Pastoral Meeting, as they had a minister or pastor.

The other group, led by Joel Bean and James Bean, which believed in the silent worship, met for about a year in Rutherford Hall, at the corner of Second and San Antonio streets, using the second floor, which was the lodge room for the Masonic Lodge, as the place for carrying on worship on Sundays. The lower floor was a saloon. This prompted James Bean to burst into verse:

"There are spirits above and spirits below,
There are spirits of love and spirits of woe,
The spirits above are the spirits of love,
And the spirits below are the spirits of woe."

This latter group, known as the College Park Meeting, had deeded to them by James Bean a lot on Morse Street just north of Davis. Here in 1885 they erected a Meeting House, the work on which according to the diary of Joel Bean was started on March 19, 1885 and completed April 25, 1885 and the first religious worship on the following day, April 26, 1885.

Here Herbert Hoover, while attending Stanford University and convalescing from an illness in the home of Joel Bean, when he recovered, attended meetings.

Here also, occurred a number of Quaker weddings.

In 1958, to make room for the Freeway known as Route 17, the Meeting House was moved across the street to its present location at 1041 Morse Street.

It has been said that the history of an institution is frequently the elongated shadow of a man. The College Park Meeting is truly the elongated shadows of Joel Bean and his wife Hannah. Through the years the little Meeting has radiated their buoyant, kindly personalities.

Though the Meeting is small in numbers, it has exerted an influence far beyond its size.

* * *

The SAN JOSE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION has recommended to the City Council, that they approve a \$100,000 expenditure to pay for the first phase of development for a historic museum complex at Kelley Park to provide immediate storage space for the Lew Bohnett collection, recently purchased by the city. This would include two metal warehouse buildings, paving, fencing, utilities, workshop, access roads and other preliminary necessities.

The SAN JOSE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION recommended to the City Council that they purchase the Luis Peralta adobe at 184 W. St. John St. and preserve it as a civic shrine. The city council has now instructed the administration to negotiate for its purchase. Built in 1804, it is the oldest adobe in San José.

SCOOP--The new freeway across Lincoln Avenue in the 700 block would have caused the demolition of the Roberto Adobe, (the original unit was built in 1839) if the San José Historic Landmarks Commission had not recommended to the Division of Highways that they try to save this historic structure. The Division of Highways has agreed to a slight realignment and construction of a retaining wall that will save this old landmark for posterity. We appreciate this kind of cooperation, deeply.

* * *

THE ROBERTO ADOBE

Arthur M. Fisk

The Roberto Adobe (now known as Laura Ville) one of San José's two remaining adobe houses still stands today at 770 Lincoln Avenue, and is in exceptionally fine condition. At present it is a two-story colonial type

home, but originally it was a one room adobe, which is still an integral part of the present structure as additions were made by the different owners. The entire lower floor is made of adobe. The walls are over two feet thick and the heavy ceiling beams are made from local redwood. The upper floor is built entirely of wooden framework.

Shading the house are two large fig trees over 100 years of age planted by Roberto. The larger of the two trees stands at the southeast corner of the house and the trunk of this tree is nearly three feet in diameter.

Roberto was a Christianized Indian and built the first unit of his adobe home in 1839 on the original Rancho de los Coches, this was a Mexican land grant made to Roberto by Micheltoñena, governor of California on March 12, 1844 and consisted of about 2219 acres.

In January 1847 Roberto sold all of his property to Antonio Sunol. Eventually Sunol divided his Rancho into three parts keeping the home for himself. He gave one third to his son-in-law Pierre Sainsevain and sold one third to General Henry Naglee. Naglee's property extended from Stevens Creek Road to the present Naglee Avenue.

In 1853 Sunol sold his home and 55 acres to Captain Splivalo a seafaring man. Splivalo built the second floor which was constructed from wooden timbers and siding. While on the east coast he purchased wooden shutters for the windows and the front door with its beautiful frosted glass panels, which were brought "around the Horn" on his ship.

The interior of the home displays the splendor of yesteryear with its polished mahogany bannisters and staircases and the original marble fireplace. The present owner Miss Elayne Basuini takes great pride in this historical landmark, which is still a private home and in excellent condition.

100 YEARS AGO

The earth trembled and quicksilver production fell.

The following quotation is from the 1865 annual report of the Quicksilver Mining Company (New Almaden), and was contributed by Laurence E. Bulmore.

"The earthquake of October 8th reduced the production of quicksilver for that month about twenty-five per cent; and caused damage to the mines and reduction works to the extent of about \$25,000."

19th CENTURY BUSINESS FIRMS

During the 19th century many long established businesses started in San José. The following names and dates were taken from Hall's History of San José. "At Market and Santa Clara streets Leopold Hart & Son opened their store in 1853. Gus Wendt, butcher 1860. Rhoades & Lewis, drugs (later Morehead-Fleming) 1863. T. W. Spring, dry goods 1865. Conrad Renzel, bakery and grocery 1865. Kocher & Blauer, jewelers (later J. R. Kocher Sons) 1868. George B. McKee, paints 1868. Herold's, shoes 1869. James A. Clayton, real estate 1869, this was our first abstract and title firm. E. J. Wilcox, shoes 1871. City Market on Market Street 1873. Farmers National Gold Bank of San Jose (later First National Bank of San Jose) chartered July 11, 1874. California Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County incorporated June 22, 1875. The Farmers' Union, May 1876. Central Market on First Street 1874. H. H. Anderson, groceries 1875. George W. Ryder, jewelry 1875. O. A. Hale, mercantile store on So. First Street May 1874. Lazard Lion & Sons, furniture 1876. George Hobson, clothing 1876. T. K. Black's, groceries 1876. Charles Bernhardt, groceries 1878." Hotel Vendome built in 1888, with grand opening February 7, 1889. The San Jose Abstract & Title Co. 1890. Hubbard & Carmichael Bros., lumber mill 1890. Leaman's Red Star Laundry 1890. Home Union 1891. Brennan & Tucker's Pacific Carriage Factory 1891. Observatory Parlor, Native Sons, organized 1891. A. S. Bacon & Son, shoes, 1892. Santa Clara County Fruit Exchange 1892. San Jose Woman's Club founded December 3, 1894.

* * *

REUNION

In 1846 the Harlan-Young party wrote an important page of history, when they crossed the great plains and conquered the Sierra Nevada. During last August, Theron Fox and Harlan Gelderman met to discuss early history and plans of the project's developers for preserving the natural beauty of the "Greater San José" area, and by chance Fox discovered that Gelderman was the great-great-grandson of George Harlan and Gelderman was surprised to learn that Fox was the great-great-grandson of Samuel Young. After nearly 119 years this historically famous party came together again, in the form of its present survivors.

* * *

By-Lines from the President
Minnie L. Clark

It is with a great sense of responsibility and mixed emotions of pride and humility that I accept the manifold duties as President of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County. The honor you have conferred and the confidence you have reposed in me will be a constant reminder of the obligations I have assumed as President of a society dedicated to the preservation of items of historical interest.

Much progress has been made toward the establishment of a San José Historical Museum Complex and City Plaza of early San José at Kelley Park, where sixteen acres has been set aside for this development by the San José City Council.

The entire Bohnett collection of antique items has been obtained, which is a big start toward the goal we so desire.

It is very important for San José to have this development, for here was the first Capitol of the State of California and the replica of the Capitol is at the County Fair Grounds, where historical documents and other items of great value are stored.

Visitors travel across the United States to visit Greenwich Village at Fort Dearborn, Michigan and also the restoration at Williamsburg.

Here in California we have a Museum and Pioneer Town at Bakersfield; the Village of Wawona in Yosemite Park, with its covered bridge and early day buildings.

Columbia, too, is now set aside by the State of California as a State Park and all the buildings are being restored for future generations.

There is not sufficient space to enumerate all the valuable historical places that should be protected before they are all demolished to make way for the rapid growth of the City of San José.

Our next quarterly meeting will be Saturday, December 4th, when we will make merry with our Christmas program. At this meeting we will also honor our members who are 85 YEARS or OLDER. We all look forward with a great deal of anticipation for this event. The officers plan to make it a very pleasant and enjoyable occasion. MERRY CHRISTMAS to all.

LOOK FOR IT HERE

1966 DUES may be paid now by mailing your \$2 to Mrs. Jessie E. Black, 82 So. 9th St., San Jose, Calif. 95112.

The Post Office Department wants us to use the zip code on our mail. Those who wish to receive the Trailblazer and quarterly notices, should send in their correct address, zip code number included.

We like to get material for the TRAILBLAZER. Send us your news items and articles. Because of space limitations we cannot use everything we receive, and reserve the right to condense material submitted. Send your items to 1335 Singletary Ave., San Jose, Calif. 95126.

The Society of California Pioneers was organized in San Francisco, August 31, 1850. Their first officers were: W. D. Howard, Samuel Brannon, Jacob R. Snyder, George Lemon, J. L. Folsom, J. C. Wadsworth and Edwin Bryant.

On August 30, 1850 the following notice appeared in the San Francisco newspapers: "The early pioneers of California are requested to call at the office of the iron warehouse of Howard & Mellus on Montgomery Street on Saturday evening, 31st of August, at 7 o'clock. It is expected all old pioneers and residents of three years and upwards will attend. The object of the meeting will be announced. Anglo Californians."

The Machado School along the banks of Llagas Creek west of Morgan Hill was built in 1895 of redwood timbers and siding. On June 6th they celebrated their 70th anniversary, fearful that it might be their last, because of unification. There are only two two-teacher schools left in Santa Clara County, Airport and Machado. The school was named for Bernard Machado who donated two acres of land for school use, back in 1895. Machado School's first teacher was Miss Annie Britton, who later became Mrs. Andrew Sterrett.

San José was founded by José Joaquin Moraga, November 29, 1777, under instruction of Governor Felipe de Neve, who named it Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe for Saint Joseph and for the river on which the town was situated. It was the first Spanish pueblo in what is now the State of California.

Santa Clara County took its name from the Mission of Santa Clara which was founded in 1777. Six days after the mission's founding, the first settlement in the county was started on the present site of Santa Clara.

WELCOME

Congratulations to our new members: Helen E. Arbuckle, Mila Hills Borden, Leland M. Boruck, Mildred E. Boruck, Beth Brown, Hilma J. Delfs, Golden L. Edgar, Paul W. Edgar, Howard P. Foley, Wanda Derr Foley, Alice Williams Kelley, George H. Kelley, Laura B. Morgan, Jessie T. Morton, Robert Morton, Beulah E. Nedom, Ann E. Norgrave, Ellen O'Neill, Julia Picchetti, Lois M. Ralston, Katherine S. Richardson, Walter E. Richardson, John L. Tate, Reine M. Tate, Margaret Trevey, Edna S. Wilson.

* * *

UNDER THE WEATHER

Mrs. Faye Rhoads and Mrs. Mabel Ogier have been reported ill. Our very best wishes and hope for a rapid recovery are sincerely extended.

Kindly keep your officers informed as to the condition of any ill member, and report any sickness or deaths to the chairman of our Sunshine Committee, Mrs. Ruth M. Heath. Phone 292-2609.

* * *

BEYOND THE SUNSET

Martha A. More

May 21, 1878 - June 18, 1965

Ada M. Potts

July 8, 1884 - July 7, 1965

Earl A. Potter

January 26, 1898 - July 25, 1965

Lillian Fox Currlin

March 27, 1885 - August 7, 1965

Gaston Plat

January 19, 1885 - August 10, 1965

In behalf of the officers and members of the California Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County, the TRAIL-BLAZER extends their sincere sympathy to the relatives and friends of our departed members.

THE TRAILBLAZER

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* * *

THE SOCIAL CLUB of our society meets on the 1st and
 3rd Monday afternoon of each month. Card playing and
 various activities highlight each meeting. For further
 information call Mrs. Kate L. Owen, 295-1153.

BUS TOUR information for members of the Pioneer
 Society may be obtained from Miss Gertrude A. Bernhardt,
 phone 293-3087.

Any items for the Pioneer scrap book may be sent to
 Mrs. Elsa Jensen, 520 Bradley Ave., San Jose, Cal. 95128.

If undelivered return to:
 82 So. 9th Street
 San Jose, Calif. 95112

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