



Karen Stepper, Our November Speaker Steve Larmore, and Jerry Warren.

**A Great Opportunity
Tour The Caldecott Tunnel!**

Would you like to do the 1.5 hour tour of the 4th Bore of the Caldecott Tunnel now--a year before it opens? The tour requires climbing some ladder steps, walking uphill, and wearing safety equipment. The tour guide is Ivan Ramirez, the man who engineered the tunnel digging as well as the subsequent electrical and aeration requirements--quite an engineer!

The tour is limited to 6 to 8 attendees. Please email back if you would like to be included. The date will be set based upon the time available to you and to the engineer.

Karen Stepper
coachstepper@yahoo.com
Or call Bill Lloyd (925) 837-9382

**Need A Ride To The Society Meeting On January 17th?
Contact Bill Lloyd: 837-9382.**

Over 42 Years Looking Back!



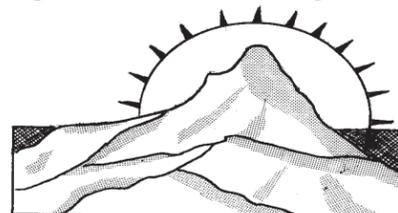
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SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 521 • DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94526

**NEXT MEETING
THURSDAY,
JANUARY 17TH
"Danville's Lost Park, Pearl
Harbor Beacon, Johnson's
Cutoff Emigrant Trail"**

SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



January 2013

ALAMO · BLACKHAWK · DANVILLE · DIABLO · SAN RAMON

San Ramon Valley Pioneers' Various Treks To Our State Presented By Dr. Steve Larmore In November

At our Thursday, November 15th meeting Dr. Steve Larmore shared stories about the California Trail. Many San Ramon Valley pioneers trekked across America to California in the mid 1800's. Steve is active in the Oregon California Trail Association that researches and marks the various routes 49'ers and others took to cross the continent from the Eastern states. From 1846 to 1860 these trails were forged by mule teams and wagon trains carrying all the worldly possessions early Californians brought with them. Some of the markers the Oregon-California Trail Association places along the trails have diary quotations recorded by emigrants during their arduous journey. Steve became fascinated with the California Trail after reading James Holliday's gold rush book *Before The World Rushed In*. Steve's presentation dovetailed well with the recent Gold Rush Exhibit at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley and focused on the Johnson Cutoff around Lake Tahoe.

There were two main trails into California between 1841 and 1860. The California Trail cut off from the Oregon Trail along the Snake River near Idaho Falls in southeastern Idaho. The trail followed the Raft River through an interesting rock formation area called the City of Rocks, which is now a national historic site. Emigrants comment on this site in their diaries. Some of the rocks have emigrant signatures written with axle grease. Signatures are still visible in protected areas.

The trail then went through Pinnacle Pass, which was just wide enough for a wagon, dropped down into north eastern Nevada, followed Hughes Creek, and came to an area now known as Wells, Nevada. The Humboldt River originates here. The trail followed the Humboldt River through Nevada for about 300 miles. Today Highway 80 follows this route. The organization Emigrant Trails West has placed many markers for this trail.

The wagon route continued to about 100 miles east of Reno to the Humboldt Basin area where the Humboldt River disappears into the desert in the Humboldt Sink. At this point, the trail splits.

Some emigrants picked the Truckee River route and headed west through 40 miles of desert, a rigorous and difficult journey. They met the Truckee River about where Wadsworth, Nevada is today. The route was difficult, as the river was crossed about 30 times before they got to Truckee Meadows, near today's Reno. They continued following the Truckee River to the Donner Lake area.

(Continued on Page 2)

January 17th Dinner Meeting: Danville's Lost Park, Pearl Harbor Beacon, Johnson's Cutoff Emigrant Trail

At our January 17th dinner meeting, there will be three events.

Ross Smith will share the story of Danville's Lost Park which is of keen interest to him. Ross is a long time Danville resident and a member of the historical society.

Burt Bogardus will update us on the status of the Pearl Harbor Beacon on Mt. Diablo. Burt is a retired park ranger who worked at Mt. Diablo State Park for many years and avidly champions the restoration of the beacon.

We will view "and hear" the "Johnson's Cutoff Emigrant Trail" DVD (discussion of approximately 15 minutes) beginning at 6:40 pm and ending by 7:00 pm.

The meeting will be held at the San Ramon Golf Club, 9430 Fircrest Lane, San Ramon. We will gather at 6:30 pm, eat at 7:00 pm, and enjoy our speakershhhhhhhh. We hope to see you there.

SRV Pioneers' Various Treks To Our State (Continued)

From here, at least two different routes were available. They could go due west around Lake Tahoe, or they could go up Cold Stream Canyon and over Rohnert Pass.

The emigrants said the Truckee River route was more difficult going down than it was going up because of all the rocks. They preferred the south fork of the Yuba River and crossed over to Bear Valley. From here some branches went to Nevada City and Grass Valley. Some branches went to Johnston's Ranch, where some of the Donner party rescue efforts were coordinated. Today there is very little left of this ranch, which is on private property. The wagon road then went to Sutter's Fort.

The other route was the Carson Route that began at the Humboldt Sink. They too crossed the 40 mile desert. Some crossed at night to avoid the scorching sun. Belongings and wagons were often left along the way. Items were sometimes burned so others could not use them.

They met the Carson River where Fallon is today and followed the river west south west up the Carson River canyon near today's Highway 88. The travelers continued west up the Hope Valley and camped in the Cables Lake area, which was two lakes. They entered the mountains near the Kirkwood ski area. The trail then went southward and made a big loop that paralleled the Placerville Soda Springs area. The trail ended at Placerville.

There were many cutoffs. One was named for Peter Lassen, an operator. Peter wanted people to come to his ranch which was near Milton, CA. In 1849 he went from his ranch to the Oregon Trail, Highway 80, near Oleum and the Humboldt. He told emigrants that if they took his route, they would be 300 miles closer to the gold fields. But, he was wrong, and he knew it. This was a terrible route. It went through the Black Rock Desert by Black Rock Springs, through High Rock Canyon, and near Cedarville. This route continued down near Alturas, through the Lake Almanor area, and today's Ishi Wilderness Area, and ended at Lassen's Ranch. Today the Burning Man Festival is held in the Black Rock area.

There was a trail out of the Wasatch that the entire Mormon migration began using in 1847. The Pony Express and the trans-continental telegraph also used this route.

After arriving at Fort Bridger in 1846, the Donner party were snookered into taking the Hastings Cutoff. This is one reason they ran into trouble. The Hastings route delayed them about 28 days. They were also slow and behind schedule.

The Donner party went through the Salt Lake City area and around the south side of the Great Salt Lake. As they got further west, they eventually picked up the south fork of the Humboldt River. They followed it north to the main branch of the Humboldt River west of Elko, Nevada.

The Anslow Cutoff went northwest from the Salt Lake City trail and met the main California trail near the City of Rocks.

Steve mentioned the Johnson Cutoff, which was developed to reduce mileage off the Carson Trail. The Johnson Cutoff went south of Lake Tahoe, dipped far south of the Carson route and was an improvement from the standpoint of the mileage. In most areas, Highway 2 follows the Johnson Cutoff.

There are two organizations with which Steve is involved. The Oregon California Trails Association (OCTA) was formed 40 years ago as a national organization. Its main focus is to identify and preserve trails from Missouri to Oregon and California. Its headquarters and library are in Independence Missouri. The library houses a collection of diaries and maps. The organization works with the US Congress to protect the trails and works with the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private land owners to preserve trails. The OCTA gives a Rancher of the Year award at its annual banquet. The award is presented to a rancher who best protects the portion of the trail that is on the property.

The OCTA has an annual meeting somewhere along the trail or one of its branches. Scholarly lectures on trail history are presented and tours are offered.

The other organization with which Steve is involved is Trails West. This organization is mainly concerned with trails in Nevada and California.

Both organizations rely on information in diaries to identify trail locations.

The Trails West organization installs markers at identified trail locations. The T shaped markers are made of 90 lb. railroad rail steel. The bottom of the marker is cemented in the ground. Information is written on an aluminum plaque that is riveted to the cross bar of the marker. If the information was taken from a diary, the name of the diarist and the date the diarist was in the area are included.

(Continued on Page 3)

The Sales Table — Nancy Ramsey

(Nancy Ramsey)

The Alamo Grammar School 1876 notes and envelopes are available. There are Mount Diablo, Front Street, Southern Pacific Depot, Tassajara School, the "Grand Dames" series of three San Ramon older homes, and miscellaneous packages with eight historical scenes for sale. Our price to members is \$3.50 per package. Lots of postcards with historic scenes are available for \$0.20 each. Postcards of the one room school at Tassajara are out of print.

Do stop by the Sales Table.

Need a Ride
To The Society Meeting
On January 17th?
Contact Bill Lloyd: 837-9382.

R E C O R D

Published by
San Ramon Valley Historical Society
Founded 1970
P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

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Make check to: San Ramon Valley Historical Society Memorial Fund.

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This contribution to the Society REMEMBERS (), HONORS (), EXPRESSES APPRECIATION (), OTHER (). Please check one.

This Donation for:
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Dinner Reservations

**Thursday,
January 17, 7 p.m.**

\$20.00 per person

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO S.R.V.H.S. (Deadline January 15, 2013)
Mail to: S.R.V.H.S., P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

San Ramon Royal Vista Golf Clubhouse
9430 Fircrest Lane
(North of Alcosta Blvd., San Ramon)

NAMES: _____

President's Corner (Karen Stepper)

This fall, you have helped us express so many ways our Society treasures its history. We hope you will use our "short list" to encourage your friends to visit our meetings. Then make them a new member! We:

- Contracted with the Town of Danville to restore an aging wagon at Magee Ranch Park. Thank you Don Wood for housing the restoration and to Joe Hardin for using his crafts to restore it. (If you want to help, call me!)
- Installed a detailed historical plaque on the Prospect side of the new Veterans Memorial Building. Thank you, Lee Halverson, for designing and ordering the plaque!
- Donated to the Veterans Building renovation—qualifying the Society to be listed on the Donor Wall.
- Displayed some construction photography of the new Caldecott Tunnel 4th Bore. Thank you, Jerry Warren, for partnering with the Museum and personally hanging the exhibit with Museum volunteers. The display drew attendees from November 13 through January 6.
- Continued the picnic focus on stories by ancestors of our original Valley settlers.
- Expanded meeting attendance through Jerry's outreach to the Museum Members and to the public.
- Presented \$500 to the Museum at its Christmas Memories Exhibit to support the Tassajara School program for 3rd graders.

Please consider joining our Board as Corresponding Secretary or WebMaster (which we still have to create!)

Merry Christmas and Happy Chanukah

History can come alive for all of us when we get good storytellers who talk about themselves and their ancestors. It is a unique outreach that can never be recreated with such vibrancy after the story teller has passed on. Remember to record or write down the tales that you hear over special holidays and gatherings with your family on these cold, indoor, winter nights!

Karen Stepper, President, on behalf of your Board.



In Memoriam

Kirk William Otto

May 13, 1920 - November 28, 2012 Former Danville, CA Resident.

Kirk William Otto, 92, formerly of Danville, CA died Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2012 at Presbyterian Homes in North Oaks, MN. He was born May 13, 1920, was hired by Pan American World Airways in March, 1942 and married Mildred Bergstedt in October, 1942. He retired in May, 1980, traveled with his adored Milly, studied theology and moved to Minnesota in 2007. Kirk was preceded in death by his parents, his brother Bruce and his wife Milly. He is survived by daughter Rebecca, son Kirk Jr. (Carol), six grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. He is deeply missed. Services are being held in Cloquet, Minnesota. Arrangements entrusted to Atkins Northland Funeral Home, Cloquet, MN (218) 879-7184.

Published in *Contra Costa Times* on December 5, 2012

At the May 18, 2000, SRVHS dinner meeting, attendees were asked to describe a remembrance or event special to them on the back for a blue card that was distributed. Kirk and Millie each filled out a card.

Kirk said he had been in the valley for 45 years, and that he followed his job here as an airline pilot until retirement.

Millie said that she came here with her husband and was a housewife.

SRV Pioneers' Various Treks To Our State (Continued)

There are now some 600 markers in Nevada and California and all the way down the Humboldt River. These markers are often near a highway but off the beaten path.

Trails West publishes guides with easy to follow driving instructions for locating its steel markers. The larger Trail Guides provide complete history, photos, directions, GPS coordinates, and maps. The smaller Driving Guides have less historical information but also provide driving directions and GPS coordinates to the markers from southern Idaho to northern California and southern Oregon. Initially, the markers were painted yellow. The Forest Service and BLM made Trails West paint them brown.

Kit Carson was a guide for Fremont. He came west in the middle of the winter of 1845. Kit Carson explored in the Red Lake and Devils Staircase areas. He was the first white man to see Lake Tahoe.

The emigrants never saw Lake Tahoe. They did not know, when they went through the Truckee area, that the Truckee River flowed from Lake Tahoe west for a distance and then turned east, eventually

ending in Pyramid Lake. They kept going west and encountered Donner Creek that flows between Donner Lake and the Truckee River. The emigrants assumed that the source of the Truckee River was Donner Lake.

Steve read from a diary of a Delano ancestor of Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was an August 17, 1849 entry. Delano was in the desert on the Applegate-Lassen Trail near Black Rock Canyon. As he slowly walked, he encountered animals perishing for lack of food and water. The animals showed intense agony and could not stand or walk. Instead of avoiding a 45 mile trip across the desert as Delano thought they would when they left the Humboldt, they had actually crossed the desert where it was 100 miles wide. In comparison Delano should have looked at all the other routes taken by the trains that had preceded him. Delano cursed the Lassen Cutoff.

One of the best emigrant diarists was a fellow named James Goldbrough. Not only did he write well, but he drew pictures. From an entry dated September 21, 1849 (about a month after Delano), "there was a very beautiful mirage of light blue water at the base of a mountain, with tall trees and had a small island. Oxen had stampeded hoping to quench their thirst. Carcasses were strewn over the plain as far as the eye could discern. Immediately in front were 103 dead oxen, 3 dead horses, and 1 mule. Also 3 more abandoned oxen were lying on the road anxious to get going again, but were suffering a slow death. One of the oxen was shot. The wolves would finish the others that night."

It is amazing that these emigrants got to California and accomplished all that they did.

For the 1993 Trails West convention, a couple of men started out from Missouri to walk to Sacramento. It was August. The two men quit somewhere in Wyoming. These men were equipped with high tech boots - high tech everything! It was still too arduous.

Steve mentioned an interesting lecture at a recent Trails West meeting. The speaker was interested in Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), who had connections to the Reno area. Mark Twain got involved in some logging. There was a large flat rock where Mark Twain and a friend met for a picnic. Steve located the rock and showed a photograph of it.

On another occasion, Clemens and a friend were on the eastern shore of Lake Tahoe. Their camp fire started a forest fire. They got in their boat to get water, but the forest fire became huge. Mark Twain thought it was a fantastic sight.

Within the Oregon-California Trails Association, is a Consensus of Emigrant Diaries (COED) program. Volunteers survey diaries of the period and extract the desired information. Some 4,000 diaries have now been surveyed. The information is transcribed to electric format which is searchable.

Steve noted that the Oregon Trail was in use up to 1900. Many people did not have enough money to ride the train. People often started with their wagons and then put them on a train in Wyoming.

Steve mentioned that Conestoga wagons were not used on the western trails. Farm wagons were better suited. The Conestoga's were too large and heavy, and were used to transport goods in the east.



A California Trails Map taken from Webster's Guide to American History, G. & C Merriam Company, Springfield, MA., 1971, pg. 669.

Members' Corner

The Museum of the San Ramon Valley is planning for the January exhibit which will feature several SRV families. First flyer is attached for this exhibit "What's In A Name, Tracing Our Valley's Early Families".

Do any members have original diaries, autograph books, flyers or other items from their families they could loan for this display? We will lock up any paper archives, for sure. And we already have some very interesting things, the entire George McCamley diaries for example.

Two SRVHS members (Winkie Camacho and Betty Dunlop) expressed concern about information on the Root houses in the November, 2012 SRVHS newsletter. Joan Witte Mahoe, a SRVHS member living in Hawaii, was contacted. Her response is presented below.

I hope this information helps you. I based it on my own recollections and Guide of Historic Points of Interest of SRV.

JAMES ROOT HOUSE, 90 Railroad Ave.

Built late 1800's by Joel Boone. It is a Queen Anne cottage style house with high pitched front gable, fish scale shingles, decorative trim and cutaway bay window. (I visited in Oct. 2012 and was dismayed to see the modern windows that have recently been added). The house was surrounded by a pear orchard which was cleared in the 1950s when the PX Market was built on the property (now Trader Joe's). This house was originally on the NW corner of Hartz Ave and Linda Mesa (kitty corner to the original St. Isadore's Church).

June James Root and his wife Ina (daughter of Joel Boone and Sophie Love Boone) moved into the house in 1910 and raised their children (James Pearlie Root, Austin Root-my grandfather, Cora Root Daley, and Harold Root) in this house. In 1950 this house was moved to Railroad Avenue and Austin's daughter Eileen Root McCauley lived there. The house was moved because the original location became a Shell gas station.

Several years ago the owner of the house searched the attic and found long lost items from the Boone family, which he donated to the Museum of SRV. One of the items was a love letter from Joel Boone to his future wife Sophie Love. Joel Boone was a direct descendant of Daniel Boone.

AUSTIN ROOT HOUSE, 120 W. Linda Mesa.

Austin Root built this Craftsman style house in 1919, next to his parents home on Hartz Ave near the NW corner of Linda Mesa. Austin and Elizabeth's 3 children (Eileen Root McCauley, Jean Root Witte-my mother, and E.A. Bud Root) were born in this home. My family, Ken and Jean Witte and children Joan (myself), Nancy, and Jim lived in this house from approximately 1952 until 1960.

Austin and Elizabeth moved to another home Austin built on Diablo Road in 1952. The Danville oak tree was in their front yard. When the Diablo Road house was built, they had to stop construction because the site was found to be an Indian burial ground. Archaeologists from the University of California spent several weeks removing artifacts before construction could be completed. This house was torn down in the 1970s when Diablo Road was widened. The new road was built around their oak tree.

Austin Root and his father James owned the Mt Diablo Dairy from 1941 until 1945. When the two homes were moved in 1950, they converted the dairy house into a residence for Austin's mother Ina. It was located next to the 120 W Linda Mesa house and my great-grandmother Ina "Goggy" lived next door to us in this cottage until she was 94.

In the 50's, Dr Cuenin's dentist office was right next door to the Boone house and then Railroad Ave came to a dead end. It was a great place to gather for neighborhood street baseball games. The usual ones that attended were Joan, Nancy, and Jim Witte, Chuck Ferreira (he lived down Hartz Ave above his Mother's hair salon, now a restaurant), Dave and Danny Basso (he still hosts Monthly old timers class reunions for San Ramon HS at the Brass Door) lived a block or so away on Verona, and Marv Root (my cousin) lived on Entrada Mesa.

The Shell station was built on Hartz Ave and there were other buildings just past it that were built at the same time. Next to the Shell station, a new building with several businesses was erected.

As I remember it, that building contained Geldermann Real Estate, Kay and Paul Haar's Donut Shop, Daniels Drug Store and a radio /TV repair store (they used to have a TV on in the window and we would gather outside to watch TV before we got our own). Past that building was Harold and Pearl Root's house (daughters Marilyn, Phyllis and Janice) which was also moved to make way for progress. It was replaced by Ferreira Chevron Station and the Danville Variety Store (5 and 10 cent store). Next to the variety store was a kid's clothing store (the family that owned it had a pet monkey that wore diapers) and it was a real treat to go there. Loard's Ice Cream was in that location later, a very popular place when I went to San Ramon High School. The San Ramon HS Annex was the next building, then Love Lane, then the High School.

If my recollections are incorrect, maybe my brother, sister or cousin(Jan Root Martin) will send corrections.

My mother Jean Root Witte graduated from San Ramon in 1939 with a class of 35. I graduated in 1965 with a class of 440 students from Alamo, Danville and San Ramon. (Monte Vista opened a few years later).

Joan contacted Janice Root Martin living in Washington State. Her response is below:

These are fun recollections and certainly bring back a lot of memories for me. Yes, I am a few years older than you so some of the things you did I remember but didn't participate in them. I remember that we had one of the first TV's in the area, so I stayed home and watched TV. The family that owned the children's clothing store was the Houghs. Gail Hough graduated with me in 1960. She had an older sister and brother who graduated with my sisters in earlier years at SR. My parents sold our home on Hartz Avenue in 1954 or 55 and we then built a home on Laurel Drive. Your Aunt Eileen managed the apartments right next door. I remember in earlier years our home having pear orchards all the way back to the railroad tracks. That was before the new PX was built. Before the Danville Variety Store was in the strip mall, it was the original PX.

We used to have great pear fights in those orchards when the pears were ripe. My sisters, Marilyn, Phyllis and myself were joined by the Markee brothers, Tom and Leo, for many fun times. There may have been others that lived in town, but I don't remember their names. We also used to play kick the can on main street many nights, as there were very few cars that were on the road after dinner during those years. Another way we entertained ourselves was sneaking up on the "bums" that used to sleep in the orchards after hopping off the trains.

Many summers were spent at the summer program held at the high school. They had classes, crafts, and just a lot of fun things to keep the valley kids entertained. It was held in the old building that later was torn down to make a new music building for SR in the late 1950's. I remember the old building was condemned and remember bats flying around the inside of the old building.

It was a great childhood.

The Donut shop that you mentioned was later purchased by Mel Whalen who opened the first funeral home in Danville, next to the Village Theatre. In high school, I worked a short time for Mel Whalen doing his accounting for both the funeral home and the donut shop. Also in the strip mall was an office for Maury Marrott, who was involved with many real estate projects in the valley and with real estate with my Dad. I think Dad and Maury owned the buildings in that strip mall, at least for awhile.

On the other end of town near Elliott's bar was a small telephone operators office, where our Aunt Viola Root, Jim Root's wife, was the telephone operator. She had a cord board and sat by the window answering telephone calls for the valley. I remember walking by her office and seeing her at work. I remember we had a party line and each had our own ring so we knew when to pick up the phone. We were told not to listen in on others conversations. I always worried if I was telling a friend something that I shouldn't be saying if someone was listening. The phone was also not to be used extensively, but for important or emergency situations.

I am still in contact with Gail Hough and Phil Fay, whose families were part owners in the PX market, and if you still need more information I can certainly contact them and get their recollections.

The plaque for the new Veterans Hall at 400 Hartz Avenue shows that the first hall was inspected by E. A. Root in 1925.