



# Saratoga Historical Foundation

PO Box 172, Saratoga CA 95071

November 2018

## Celebrate the Holidays with the Museum!

Come to the annual free reception held on November 23 at the Saratoga History Museum celebrating the holidays. A special exhibit, Christmas Cheer, featuring vintage toys, can be viewed; the Marshall Lane Choir will sing at 5:45; Lovin' Ukes will play music from 4-6 PM; and the Skillet Lickers from 6-7:30 PM.



Cookbook Author Lisa Newman will be available to sell and autograph her new cookbook, "For the

Love of Apricots," from 6-8. Munchies will be provided by Newman and others. Children's activities include making a candy cane reindeer and snow flakes. Take a minute and peruse the Museum gift shop for local

history books, beautiful scenes of Saratoga, and consider giving a gift of membership to your friends.

The Saratoga History Museum is located at 20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road in Saratoga. The museum is open from 1-4 on Friday and Sunday and from 10-4 on Saturday. Admission is free. Call 408-867-4311 for more information or go to [www.saratogahistory.com](http://www.saratogahistory.com).



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### Checking Your List Twice

Make shopping easy-- include one of our many local history books--- the latest book is "Historic Bay Area Visionaries" by Robin Chapman and Lisa Newman's Cookbook, "For the Love of Apricots." We also have nicely matted scenes of Saratoga created by local Artist Kay Duffy as well as charming notecards. And, of course, the gift that lasts year round—the gift of membership. Membership includes discounts on most books but it also includes an 8-page newsletter that includes information about local history. Best of all he or she will receive a newsletter in the mailbox six times a year.



### The Elves Have Been Working

This year the museum, McWilliams house and one-



room schoolhouse looks especially festive—all thanks to a group of highly creative people. Shown here Alex Nugent, Ginny Sampson, Ryan and Valerie Richardson and Nancy Kirk.



Also shown Ginny Sampson, Katie Alexander, Joan Bose and—Linda and Dick Benenati, Tom Soukup and Annette Stransky not shown.

July-September 2018

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## Save These Dates in 2019

The potluck/membership lectures held three times a year will be on a new schedule in 2019. These meetings are held at the Saratoga Foothill Club. Please note the following dates: January 22, March 26, and May 28. We have two pending programs and will let you know as soon as possible.

### Walking Tour



When Paul Boehm asked the Saratoga History Museum to give his Santa Clara Valley History class a walking tour of Saratoga he was not prepared for who would show up. The 22 member class was treated to a collection of costumed Saratoga figures including Miss Wooster (Carolyn Armstrong), Sarah Brown (Pat Martell),

Martin McCarty (Jack Dunstan), Paul Masson (Paul Hernandez), Sunshine Williams (Jack Mallory) and toothbrush packing Painless Parker (Bill Ford)



Linda Hagelin and Ray Cosyn led the tours with Annette Stransky coordinating the historical characters.

The class said it was the best walking tour they had taken in four years!



### Saratoga Historical Foundation

*The mission of the Saratoga Historical Foundation is to preserve the unique history of Saratoga for the education and enjoyment of the community.*

The Saratoga Historical Park is open from 1-4 PM on Fridays and Sundays and from 10-4 PM on Saturdays. For more information, i.e. group tours, you can call 408-867-4311 or e-mail [info@saratogahistory.com](mailto:info@saratogahistory.com) or check the website at [www.saratogahistory.com](http://www.saratogahistory.com). Newsletter suggestions can be sent to the editor at: [annette@saratogahistory.com](mailto:annette@saratogahistory.com).

## Memorial Arch Gets a Touchup

The Memorial Arch located in Blaney Plaza recently got a touch up by Public Works Director John Cherbone.

After receiving a request to paint in the names of the World War I veterans on the arch he responded quickly.

The arch is a great salute to all veterans on Veteran's Day and every day. The Memorial Arch, incidently, was the first memorial to honor World War I veterans in Santa Clara County.



## UPCOMING Events

**November 23** 4-8 PM reception for the holidays!

**November 23-Jan. 8**  
Holiday Cheer exhibit

**January 22** History lecture 7:30  
potluck, 6:30 PM

## Notable Saratogans Exhibit Enjoyed!

Dr. Audry Lynch sent a letter to the museum about the Notable Saratogans exhibit, and writes “Thanks for including me in the exhibit. I found it was very well done and I found the people you included were a fascinating and varied group of people. No wonder it’s such an exciting experience to live in a town like Saratoga.”

The Notable Saratogans exhibit covered over 50 people – mostly contemporary in all walks of life. We may show this exhibit again.

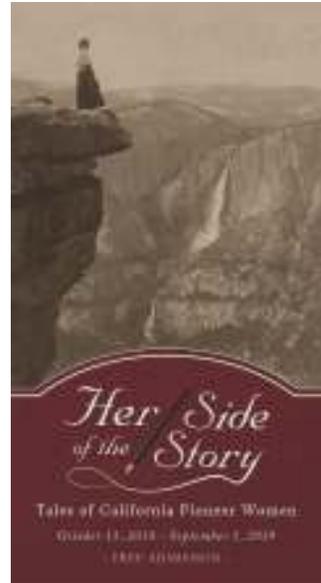
## Is Your Great Grandmother in This California Pioneer Women Exhibit?



If you are interested in seeing if your great grandmother or someone in your family has written a journal or article about coming to California—this is the exhibit for you.

The Society of California Pioneers has a new exhibit, “Her Side of the Story—the Story of California Pioneer Women.” Among the treasures in The Society of California Pioneers archives are rare, first-person narratives by pioneer women. After uniting to ensure

that future generations could recognize, and would acknowledge, the role women played in the formation of the state, The Association of Pioneer Women of California collected and preserved the experiences of its members. Bound in an unpublished, handwritten book, their remarkable stories are the foundation of this museum exhibition and online resource for teachers.



As preparations began for the commemoration of California’s Golden

Jubilee on September 9, 1900, a small group of women called for greater recognition of the important role female pioneers played in the founding of California. Many women responded and stepped forward to tell their side of the story. In turn, the Association of Pioneer Women of California was formed seven years after California’s first, but failed, vote for women’s suffrage.

The Association invited women to write their stories in a cloth-bound book. Donated by the estate of the organization’s last president and digitally published here for the first time, it includes over *eight hundred* entries that provide new perspectives on historic events. The exhibition features excerpts from thirty of the first-person accounts found in this unique book, as well as original quilts, artifacts, photographs, and letter sheets illustrating the life of the pioneer woman in the 1850s.

The book is not for sale. About one-third of the book has been transcribed and can be found on-line: <http://pioneerwomen.californiapioneers.org/transcriptions/>. More transcriptions will be added online in the spring. The exhibit will run from now until September of 2019. The Society of California Pioneers Museum and Library is located at 101 Montgomery Street, Suite 150 in the Presidio of San Francisco, 94129.

## Camp Swig Remembered

Camp Swig was once the site of the happy sounds of



campers as they made s'mores (gelatin substituted for marshmallows) and participated in other traditional

camping activities while learning about the Jewish faith. Camp Swig was located outside of Saratoga on Big Basin Way and was on land formerly called Estancia and owned by Author Kathleen Norris who summered there.

It was organized by the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis and opened in 1947 under the name Camp Saratoga. It was re-named Camp Swig in 1965 following a donation by Philanthropist Benjamin H. Swig.

Early campers came for two to three week sessions to learn more about Jewish history and culture. They also learned about nature and other typical camping experiences. Later programs included learning the Hebrew language.

The camp was located on 200 acres of pristine forested land. It was one of 12 camps operated by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and served 12,000 Jewish youth every summer. The camp offered programs for kindergarten students through twelfth grade.

It was also one of the oldest Reform Jewish camps in the United States and was part of the Camp Institutes for Living Judaism that brought spiritual and cultural programming to Jewish Youth.

The camp ran until 2003 when it was faced with many costly renovations and the news that it lay directly on the San Andreas Fault. Swig's attendance had been slumping with camp attendance dropping from 500 campers to 150 per year over the years. Campers were re-directed to Camp Newman near Santa Rosa which served 1400 children each summer.



The site was on the market for four years until it was purchased by the Valley Institute Academy.

One of the highlights of Camp Swig was the Jo Naymark Holocaust Memorial nestled in a Redwood grove. Shami Noily, a talented San Francisco architect created a building that echoed the wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe, most of which were destroyed during World War II. The building was then adorned with metal sculpture by Helen Burke and by the hands of a thousand Swig campers. The art, housed in a tall, wood-beamed roof resembling a Nordic ship's bow with light filtering through high windows created a serene and ethereal effect. The synagogue pays homage to the Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust.

Artist Helen Burke (1916-1997) came to Camp Swig as part of a resident artist program intending to stay for two weeks for a festival and ended up staying for 20 years.



For over 15 years, some 1500 campers contributed to the Holocaust memorial project working either in mosaic or welded metal. Children learned the art of welding by designing small ritual objects they could

take home.

They welded reliefs that were attached to the memorial's centerpiece, art attached included artistic representations of Jewish holidays, images of California flora and fauna. Article continued on page 5.



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The campers also built two portable Torah arks. The first metal ark and adorned with symbols of Jewish holidays, was built to house a Torah rescued from the Holocaust. The second ark contained the traditional associations with the Torah.

In addition to her work at Swig, Burke designed Jewish ceremonial art for synagogues throughout the United States, Canada and Israel. She constructed the “Tree of Life” room at San Francisco’s Congregation Sherith Israel and the Aron Hakodesh at Congregation Koi Emeth in Palo Alto.



After the sale of the Swig Camp Institute property, the Magnes Collection in Berkeley acquired the entrance



mosaic to the Holocaust Memorial as well as six of the original lamps sculpted by Helen and her students.

## The Vitaphone and Elmer Gantry

The Vitaphone theater was a cherished landmark of Saratoga from the 1970’s until 1985. Located on Third Street and Big Basin Way in a WWII Quonset hut, the theater featured cinematic nostalgia.



Many Saratogans visiting the museum have fond memories and frequently share those memories.

Pat and Vi (Violena) Moore (1926-1989) ran the theater and said audiences wanted 1940-1950 romantic films. The Moores turned the Vitaphone into a private club after encountering seat-slashers, washbowl bashers and other vandalism. For an annual \$10 membership fee, theatergoers could see what they wanted for \$3. The membership was over 100,000 members among them John Wayne, Charlton Heston, and Olivia deHavilland—all of whom had visited the theater.

According to Saratogans Lee and Bonnie Stone, one of the most sensational films shown at the Vitaphone was Elmer Gantry by Nobel Prize for Literature winner Sinclair Lewis.

In 1927, American novelist Sinclair Lewis published Elmer Gantry. This tale of a hypocritical preacher who prefers money, booze and women over saving souls is today considered a classic. But at the time, some folks didn’t agree.

Lewis was at the height of his creative powers when he wrote Elmer Gantry, and many critics consider it his finest work. But some Americans were furious that a writer would dare to satirize a member of the clergy and sought to suppress the novel.



The book was banned across the US and many libraries would not stock it.

When the film came out in the 1960s starring Burt Lancaster, the subject matter remained controversial with many newspapers condemning its production. Over seventy-five years after it first appeared,

Elmer Gantry still has power to shock as well as amuse. With time passing Gantry is portrayed in film (and opera) as more of a “rascal” than the character in the original book.

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## In Memory

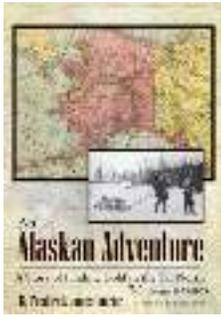
Betty Landin

Mayor Francis Stutzman (1990-91)

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## History Is All Around Us!

Although Linda Hagelin's daughter lives in Fairbanks, Alaska when she stepped into a bookstore in Anchorage, Alaska she didn't expect to see Kirke Currier, Amy June Jorgensen's son, who was promoting a book about his grandfather.



Amy June Jorgensen is the daughter of Fredrick Currier, and she had edited her father's journal of his days finding gold in the far north.

"An Alaskan Adventure: A Story of Finding Gold in the Far North From 1893 to 1903" by Frederick James Currier is a 176 page

spellbinding story of a 30-year old fellow who prospected for gold in the Fairbanks area.

When Randy Zarnke was first handed an unpublished memoir about a little-known Yukon and Chena River gold miner named Frederick James Currier, the book stood out to Zarnke, both because of the types of adventures and the way the stories about them were told. He's the president of the Alaska Trappers Association and has interviewed nearly 200 Alaska outdoorsmen for his previous book "Alaska Tracks: Life Stories from Hunters, Fisherman and Trappers of Alaska."



According to Zarnke:" Currier's adventures in Alaska included floating and crashing a raft on the Yukon River; seeing a tribal election among the Birch Creek Indians; figuring out to how improvise ways to mine for gold; and seeing a man condemned to freeze to death after a barroom trial.

Currier keeps a steady optimistic tone in his writing even as he describes hardships that are hard to imagine for a contemporary reader.

Zarnke said the narrative impressed him for the toughness and inventiveness Currier displays and the detail he goes into in describing his adventure.

"They just kind of went, 'Well, better get to work,'" Zarnke said, describing the scene where Currier and his companions narrowly averted drowning and hypothermia when their raft crashed in the Yukon River upstream of Whitehorse. They lost some of their flour and all of their sugar and salt to the water. They proceeded to build a fire to dry out their clothes and their bacon, one of their few remaining food sources.

Currier's memoirs are about the early days of gold mining in Alaska. In 1894, Currier climbed over Chilkoot Trail as part of the Fortymile River gold rush, ahead of the larger and more famous Klondike Gold Rush of 1896.

After returning to Wisconsin for a year, Currier came to Alaska again, preceding another gold stampede. Currier had the steamship Potlatch built, and he led it up the Yukon and Tanana rivers to the upper Chena River. Currier's prospecting preceded the founding of Fairbanks in 1902, after Felix Pedro discovered gold in this area. Currier stayed in Alaska until 1903, also chasing gold in Nome and in the Klondike during his time in the north. After leaving Alaska, he went on to start a prune orchard in Saratoga, California."

### The Biography of Frederick James Currier

Frederick J. Currier was born on February 3, 1860 in River Falls, Wisconsin to James Kimball Currier and Florilla Locke Currier. He had two younger sisters, Mary Louise and Lillian and a brother, Harry.

Frederick was always a young man looking for adventure. He loved the outdoors, camping, fishing, and hiking. He was a graduate of River Falls Normal School, majoring in natural sciences. He married Abbie M. Parke of river Falls on June 24, 1885 when he was 25 and she was 22. They had five children: Gladys, Ruth, Donald, Maxwell and Geneva. The two older children were born in River Falls and the others were born in Turton, South Dakota, where the family moved to a wheat and stock farm in 1888. In 1893 the family returned to River Falls, leaving the farm in South Dakota, so the older children could be entered into the primary schools and have better educational advantages than were offered in Dakota territory.

In March of 1894 Fred J. Currier went by way of the Canadian Pacific Railroad to Vancouver, BC intending to go down into Oregon to purchase an apple orchard and then move his family out there. Instead he met two miners in a hotel in Victoria who were about to depart on a trip into the interior of Alaska to seek gold. Story continues on page 7.

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Fred accepted, forgetting the apple orchard idea. His “memories” cover the next decade of his adventures as he sought “his fortune” on the gold fields.

In 1904 he moved his family to the Santa Clara valley



settling in Saratoga where he purchased a prune orchard. The children completed their education in local schools, with Donald and Ruth later attending Stanford University in Palo Alto, Max going to a mechanical engineering school in San Francisco, and Gladys and Geneva attending San Jose State Normal School.

Fred’s first wife, Abbe, died in 1908 and is interred in Madronia Cemetery. Fred’s oldest daughter Gladys, kept house and looked after the family for the next ten years. In 1913, Ruth married Paul W. Merrill who later became an eminent astronomer at the Mt. Wilson Observatory in Pasadena, California. A crater in the moon is named after him. Max married Emily Van Hovenberg in 1914; Geneva married Leland Huntington in 1917; and Gladys married James Law in 1918. Donald served in World War I and married Louise Hallmeyer in 1929. All these children are deceased.

Just before Gladys married, Frederick James Currier married Jennie (Jean B. Smith of Saratoga on April 10, 1918. They honeymooned in various California beauty spots for six months. Fred then accepted a position as manager of the California Prune and Apricot Growers packing house in Red Bluff, California (He had sold his prune orchard in the Santa Clara Valley before his second marriage.) A daughter, Amy June was born to Jean and Fred on June 11, 1920. (photo of Amy June in 2014 being honored by the Saratoga Historical Foundation.)

In 1929 the Currier family returned to Saratoga and built a beautiful home on a five acre wooded estate which they called “Brookbanks” as the Saratoga Creek ran through the property. They also purchased a prune orchard



adjoining the property and Fred went back to ranching for the next six years until his death on November 25, 1935. His death was the result of a blood clot in the pulmonary artery of the heart after abdominal surgery. He was 75 years old when he died. He is interred in Madronia Cemetery. His second wife, Jean, died in 1971 at the age of 90, and is interred in Madronia Cemetery, also.

There are six grandchildren: Emily Currier Hall, Gordon Leland Huntington, Donald Huntington Merrill, Kirke Currier Jorgensen, Locke Currier Jorgensen, and Rilla Jorgensen Betz. All of whom live in the state of California. The three latter being the children of Amy June Currier and her husband Colonel John G. Jorgensen, whom she married on May 22, 1943.

At present there are nine great-grandchildren of Frederick James Currier and several great-great grandchildren.



Biography written by Amy June Jorgensen.

Editor’s Note: Today Amy June lives in her grandparent’s home on Saratoga built in 1915—one of the last of the pioneering families in Saratoga.

## Looking Back



Saratogan Marshall Seymour remembers “when Judy Hartman and I used to take her brother's quarter horses out and ride them in the

orchards between Douglass Lane and Fruitvale. We pretended we were cutting cattle, as we whipped around the trees, slalom-like. We also rode those horses up the dry creek beds to the area above Saratoga where Gary pastured his cattle.”



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Happy holidays and may 2019 be a good year for each and everyone.

### Membership Renewal— It's That Time Again



Renewal notices are going out in December. Please renew your membership. And, if you choose, consider renewing at a higher level this year.

Out thanks for being a member of the Saratoga Historical Foundation and helping us in our mission of preserving Saratoga's history.