

SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 167TH YEAR

PIONEER NEWSLETTER

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the President

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Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter



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Cover image: A “four-pounder” iron ship’s gun, once owned by John A. Sutter and probably given to the Pioneers by a Captain John Nye in 1878, flanks the front door of Pioneer Hall at 1011 Seventh Street. In contrast, colorful artwork appears on the plywood that boards up a broken window in the Hall’s front door. May 30 protests in the streets of Sacramento provided cover for looters who shattered the glass and ransacked the business that occupied the Hall’s ground floor.

The artwork appears to depict a young African-American man, whose face is responsibly covered by a Covid-19-style mask, with one fist raised, while pink and turquoise flowers bloom all around him.

The artist scrawled the message “WE WILL GROW” next to the work. A signature in the lower left corner seems to spell “I SARBLUD;” perhaps a phonetic compression of the phrase *It’s our blood*.

Sacramento Pioneer Association Pioneer Newsletter TM

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President's Message

Events –

Our planned visit with the Society of California Pioneers at the San Francisco Presidio was cancelled because of the pandemic and will be rescheduled when conditions permit. Other regular events such as our Annual Picnic and Holiday Party are also on hold pending an improvement in conditions and will likely not be possible this year. We will hope for the best but be conservative in planning social events until our members can feel comfortable gathering together again to enjoy each other's company.

Board Meeting –

The SPA held its June board meeting via Zoom on the 15th. Future meetings will likely be conducted in the same way pending the end of the current health crisis.

After a thorough review, Vice President Bill Gould requested, and the board approved, a long-considered amendment to the bylaws that would reduce the number of directors, including officers, from eighteen to thirteen.

Pioneer Hall –

As many of you know, Pioneer Hall on 7th Street in Sacramento is our Association's most important monetary asset. On the night of May 30th the building sustained some minor damage during an episode of looting. Our principle tenant's space was, however, badly damaged and they lost almost all their inventory.

The tenant, KICX, has decided to go out of business as a result of these losses and accordingly we have negotiated and signed a Lease Termination Agreement with them. Many thanks to Steve Huffman and his Pioneer Hall Committee for all the work involved in reaching this agreement. The agreement limits our monetary losses and has allowed the Committee to begin marketing the available space at the earliest possible date.

Future –

Thank you for your continuing support of the Association. We look forward very much to resuming our traditional social activities once health conditions permit us to do so safely.

Bill Schaw,
President

September 9th,
Happy Admission Day!!!



1850-2020
170 Years of Statehood

John A. Sutter's Statue

On the evening of June 8, 2020, someone splashed red paint upon the 8-foot-tall statue of John A. Sutter, which has stood on private hospital grounds in front of Sutter General Hospital, near the corner of 28th and L Streets, across from Sutter's Fort, for thirty-three years.

The United Swiss Lodge created the statue in 1987 to commemorate Sutter's Swiss heritage. Sutter General Hospital accepted the monument dedicated to its namesake - an apt name considering Sacramento's first hospital operated at Sutter's Fort in 1850 under the charge of Dr. William Grove Deal, a constitutional member of the Sacramento Pioneer Association.

During the week that followed the vandalization, Sutter Health made a decision to remove the statue from its premises, according to a spokesperson, "out of respect for some community members' viewpoints, and in the interest of public safety for patients and staff." Sutter Health plans to return the statue to the United Swiss Lodge.



Columbus - A Nineteenth Century Pioneer Perspective

By Michael Shepard

Visitors to the State Capitol in Sacramento on Monday, December 17, 1883, obtained a preliminary viewing of D. O. Mills' valuable statuary gift to the statehouse and to the people of California. The crated object aroused the curiosity of the public ever since its arrival in the building's rotunda from the Sacramento railroad freight office four months earlier on August 21. Spectators crowded around the workers as they removed the nine-foot-tall, five-ton sculpture in Carrara marble from its wooden case according to a *Sacramento Daily Union* article dated December 18, 1883. The article descriptively informs that the sculpture:

...represents, in spotless white marble, Isabella, of Spain, crowned and robed in royalty, seated upon her throne, holding a large necklace of pearls in her right hand - the jewels which the noble woman pledged for ships to carry the Genoese sailor westward. On the right of the Queen crouches a richly dressed page, whose attention is directed to the ornament which his royal mistress holds. At the left of the two the sculptor has chiseled the great Master Navigator appealing to his patroness for means to discover the new world. Columbus kneels before the throne, holding a small globe in his hand, with which he is illustrating his theory that the earth is round. The attitudes of the figures are natural and the features of each faithfully portray the characteristics with which history accredits them.

American master sculptor Larkin Goldsmith Mead created the massive work of art, titled *Columbus' Last Appeal to Isabella*, from 1868 to 1874 while he resided in Florence, Italy. New York financier and Treasurer of the New York Stock Exchange Legrande Lockwood commissioned the sculpture for his mansion in Norwalk, Connecticut, but died before its completion. Mrs. Lockwood received the sculpture and then shortly after sold it to D. O. Mills in 1882 for the sum of \$30,000 in gold.

Darius Ogden Mills amassed exceptional wealth throughout his lifetime while maintaining charitable

public spirit. An Argonaut by way of the Isthmus of Panama, pioneer banker of Sacramento, constitutional member of the Sacramento Pioneer Association and association treasurer from 1855 to 1856, regent of the University of California and director of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. Mills exemplified nineteenth century prosperity and philanthropy, evidenced by his actions and achievements.

On the highly anticipated day of the official unveiling of the Columbus statue, December 22, 1883, patron D. O. Mills unfortunately could not attend as business matters required his attention in New York. In his stead, brother Edgar Mills (also a Sacramento Pioneer and long-serving treasurer of this organization) presided over the ceremonious presentation. A *Sacramento Daily Union* reporter estimated about one hundred people observed the event in the rotunda of the State Capitol including "nearly all of the State officers and their deputies, and a large number of interested citizens." Edgar proceeded to read a letter from D. O. Mills addressed to California's governor:



To his Excellency George Stoneman, Governor of the State of California -

Sir: Allow me to present to the State, to be placed in the Capitol, the marble group by Larkin Mead, representing Columbus before Queen Isabella, explaining his proposed voyage of discovery and receiving her assurance that he should have the necessary aid, even if she had to pledge her jewels to secure it.

Trusting that you will agree with me in the belief that the rotunda of our State Capitol is an appropriate place for a work of art commemorating an event that has had so great an influence on the destinies of this western world, I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant, D. O. Mills.

Edgar Mills then described in his own words the significance and symbolism of Columbus and the Golden State in a short speech to Governor Stoneman and the attending public, "California, more than any other State in the American Union, fulfills his visions of marvelous lands beyond the setting sun. And exceedingly fitting that here the group should be placed for the pleasure and

instruction of all, to be for all time a graceful and enduring memorial of the great event which led to the discovery of America."

The sentiments regarding Columbus expressed by both D. O. and Edgar Mills prevailed in nineteenth century America. Members of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, sympathetic to this perspective, likened their own adventurous journeys to California to the expedition of the Atlantic navigator. What is more, the general thinking of the day perceived that the very existence of the United States directly correlated with Columbus' expedition of discovery. Had the first not occurred, then nor would the latter. Americans of the time acknowledged Columbus as a matter a patriotic pride and the natural precursor to the westward expansion of "civilization."

On more than a few occasions, members of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, many of whom sailed westward into the unknown in the spirit of bold adventure in search of unfathomable treasure, spoke of their affinity with Columbus. During a September 1855 lecture to commemorate the anniversary of California statehood, Joseph W. Winans, the association's first president, offered a comparison of the great explorer to Winan's fellow Argonauts: "Like Columbus, they were the pioneers of a new discovery, a moral continent, to which the beneficence of God and the enlightenment of man had not yet penetrated; and they went proudly on their way, the messengers of spiritual and intellectual redemption to millions of benighted men, sunk in the deep gloom of unproductive ages." The Native Americans, Spaniards and *mestizos* of Alta California did not appear to fit the pioneer's concept of "civilization."

During the January 8, 1863, groundbreaking ceremony of the transcontinental railroad at the foot of K Street in Sacramento, Newton Booth (Senator from Sacramento, future Governor of and U.S. Senator from California, and member of the Sacramento Pioneer Association) delivered a speech in which he alluded to a notion that the transcontinental railroad would fulfill Columbus' vision to discover a route to the Orient by sailing west: "Through this bond that is to be made shall not Europe and Asia shake hands across this continent? Why, you remember that the theory of Columbus was when he set sail, that he was in search of a pathway to India. That pathway is found. Here it will lie."

Six years later on January 4, 1869, the transcontinental railroad just a few months from completion, the Sacramento Pioneer Association gathered its members to dedicate its new hall on 7th Street, between J and K Streets. Dr. Gregory J. Phelan, president of the Pioneer Hall Association, delivered an address - a portion of which compliments Newton Booth's sentiment regarding Columbus and his westward route to the Far East:

Columbus and the mariner's compass, less than four hundred years ago, opened the Atlantic for the use of man, and that ocean served the purposes of a wider and higher civilization... As the civilization and multiplication of man transferred the scepter of trade from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, so that same cause is again transferring it, and this time from the Atlantic to the Pacific, across which, as one of our reverend gentlemen has well said, the oldest and the youngest of civilized nations gaze upon each other!

Nearly 528 years have passed since Columbus' fateful encounter with the Arawak people of the Bahamas on October 12, 1492, which opened the western hemisphere to further exploration and subsequent colonization by Europeans. Now, the public in general has begun to rethink the navigator's heroic legacy. Within the world's longest standing democracy, where descendants of conquerors and subjugated now comingle in a diverse society, the prevailing attitude turns away from glorifying the conquerors and instead expresses recognition and validation of the subjugated. Such is the progress of civilization.

On Tuesday, June 16, 2020, the California State Legislature voted to remove the statuary group of Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella from the State Capitol rotunda after nearly 137 years. According to a *Sacramento Bee* article printed on that same day, lawmakers released the following joint statement: "Christopher Columbus is a deeply polarizing historical figure given the deadly impact his arrival in this hemisphere had on indigenous populations. The continued presence of this statue in California's Capitol, where it has been since 1883, is completely out of place today,"

A flatbed truck delivered the statuary group to the California Statewide Museum Collections Center at McClellan Business Park, formerly Air Force Base, on July 7, 2020, where the work of art will safely remain, perhaps indefinitely.



The Looting of Pioneer Hall

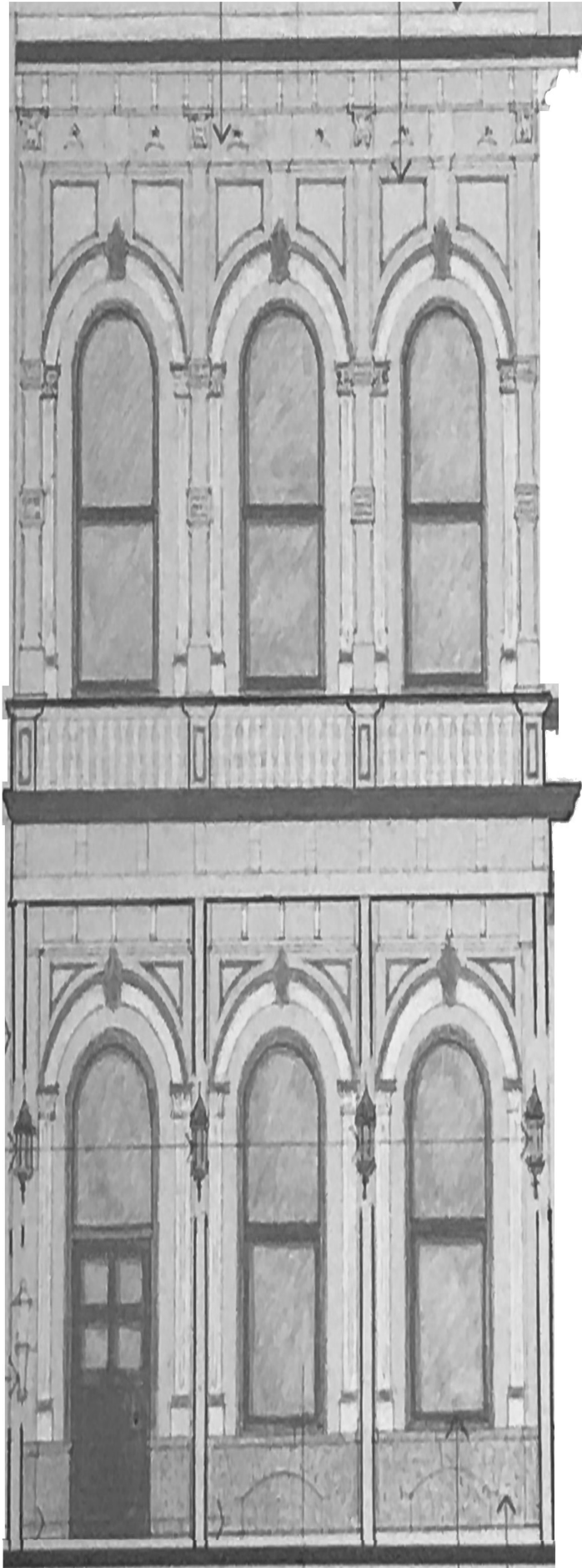
By Michael Shepard

In reaction to the death of George Floyd while in the custody of Minneapolis police officers on Monday, May 25, 2020, marchers took to the streets in cities around the country, including Sacramento, to support social reform. By the following weekend, criminal opportunists marred Sacramento's mostly peaceful demonstrations. Looters downtown took advantage of an attenuated police presence as officers remained preoccupied with lawful protest. A group targeted the retail and consignment shoe store, Kicx Unlimited, which occupied the ground floor of Pioneer Hall. When the storefront windows shattered, broken security film triggered an alarm. Police responded causing the gathered crowd to scatter, but the police could not remain to guard one building amid all the activity throughout the downtown area. Looters returned and ransacked Kicx Unlimited over the next few hours.

The proprietors of Kicx had secured most of their inventory in the basement of Pioneer Hall behind a locked metal door after the governor ordered all non-essential businesses to close due to the coronavirus pandemic. Looters, however, broke a hole through the drywall to bypass the sturdy basement door, crawled through the narrow gap between two wooded wall studs and opened the door from the other side.

The owners of Kicx, in a letter to the Pioneer Hall Committee, explained that, "Once the basement was breached, there was no stopping the looters. The looting didn't stop until almost everything was stolen or destroyed. Our cameras were able to capture footage of the events. We are working with the authorities and have been providing them with our footage and any other information they need for their investigation."

Fortunately for Pioneer Hall, the looters caused minimal, mostly superficial damage to the building. Glass windows and drywall can easily be replaced. The Hall's upstairs tenant, Position Interactive, suffered no damage. Unfortunately for Kicx, the business will close its doors for good. After Covid-19 and the looting, 2020 has been a tough year for the three entrepreneurs.



Another Chapter in the Storied History of Pioneer Hall



Pioneer Hall with ground floor windows boarded up.



Kicx company artwork above the main door at the 7th Street storefront



The narrow hole rendered through drywall between two studs gave looters access to Kicx's valuable merchandise locked in the basement of Pioneer Hall



Debris left by looters in Pioneer Hall's basement.



An idealistic message stenciled over a plywood-covered window stands in stark contrast with the aftermath of looters.



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Sacramento Union
January 28, 1906

The Guns of Pioneer Hall

On either pillar of the portal to Pioneer Hall, on Seventh street, is strapped securely to the masonry a four-pounder iron ship's gun. These guns constituted a part of the battery of General Sutter with which he frightened the Indians and kept turbulent spirits in hand.

One of these guns bears the inscription in gold letters above a field on which an American Eagle spreads his wings - "This gun was brought from South America for General John A. Sutter, who mounted it on his fort in 1841. Presented to the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers, March 25, 1878, by Captain John Nye."

The other gun, twin of the Nye piece, was presented to the Pioneers by Knickerbocker

Engine Company No. 5 of the old Volunteer Fire Department. It also bears an inscription in gold above a view of Sutter's Fort on a blue field. That inscription is more than half obliterated by the erosion of rain and wind, and perhaps by the leaning of brawny backs against its front. No date appears upon it. The Knickerbocker boys received the gun direct from General Sutter, who told them it was the first gun ever fired from his fort, and that fact is emblazoned upon it.

Now, only one cannon remains mounted to the masonry of Pioneer Hall. Could it be the Captain John Nye gun, or the Knickerbocker gun? A mystery to be solved.

M. S.