

Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society
Volume XIV April, 1966 Number 3

THE CANEPAS OF VALLECITO

By MR. AND MRS. STEPHEN FARBOTNIK

Presented by Mr. Farbotnik at the February Meeting

Lucca Canepa arrived in Calaveras County from Genoa, Italy, in 1860. At first he tried mining, but this had no appeal for him and he decided to farm instead. So, with his brother-in-law, Giovanni Sanguinetti, he acquired a tract of land in Vallecito known to this day as the Canepa and Sanguinetti Ranch.

In 1865, Mr. Canepa sent for his wife, Rosida. She arrived that year with their son Frank and daughter Dorinda. Meanwhile, Canepa and Sanguinetti divided the ranch and built a house. This was a rather curious arrangement inasmuch as the house was constructed right on the property line. One half belonged to Canepa, and the other to Sanguinetti. Both families shared the house for many years.

About this time, John and Emily Sheldon arrived in Vallecito with their children from Los Angeles. Daughter Sarah, who was destined to marry Frank Canepa, was barely old enough to remember the overland trip from the East in a covered wagon.

Mr. Canepa had planted a vineyard and orchard, and while the vines and trees were young he grew vegetables for the nearby mining camps. His son Frank recalled that on several occasions there were severe outbreaks of army worms and grasshoppers that threatened the gardens. Each time disaster was averted by the timely arrival of the local Indians. They would go through the garden, picking the insects into their baskets. Then, after dipping the baskets in boiling water, they would spread the insects in the sun to dry for winter stores.

Water, then as now, was a problem. In 1867, Canepa and Sanguinetti bought a water right from Judge Hall. This water originated in Douglas Flat at the Texas and Wild Goose mines and was conveyed to Vallecito by means of tunnels and ditches. One of the tunnels was driven later by Frank Canepa and his sons. As luck would have it, they hit a 40-foot streak of hard jasper about half way through the drive. This was a formidable obstacle in those days of single-jack and hand steel. As Frank used to tell it in later years, "We were too far in to quit, so we just kept going and finally made it." Many encroachments were made on this water, but Canepa and Sanguinetti were the successful litigants in every case. The same water system serves the ranch to this day.



SARAH AND FRANK CANEPA

From a portrait made in the 1890's and loaned to the Society by the Canepa family.

In 1880, on the 9th of November, in the presence of Thomas Mitchell and Miss Matteson, Frank Canepa and Sarah Elizabeth Sheldon were married by Justice of the Peace C. Tatton. This event was on Frank's 20th birthday. Sarah was then at the tender age of fourteen, and was to bear ten children and be married to Frank for 73 years. Her life was marred by tragedy. Infant son Georgie died with whooping cough; Florence of peritonitis; Louis was killed in an auto accident; John was accidentally shot, and Frank Jr. died of a heart attack. In all, she survived five of her children. In spite of these tragedies, she lived a rich and full life.

With a growing family to support, Frank loaded a wagon each morning and left for the mining camps to sell the ranch's produce. His rounds included Angels Camp, Murphys, Sheep Ranch and Copperopolis. He also made trips as far up as Big Trees, serving the sawmills on the way. When Henry Ford's "Tin Lizzie" appeared, Frank was quick to see its possibilities and soon bought

The Canepas of Vallecito

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one. It took some time for him to master the intricacies of this machine, however. One of his early attempts at driving found man and machine tearing wildly through the family vineyard with Frank yelling, "Whoa, you _____, Whoa!" This episode ended in a cloud of dust and smoke when the machine capsized, leaving Frank bruised but not beaten. The adventure taught him that the Ford, unlike a team, would not respond to verbal commands.

Shortly after their marriage, Sarah decided to homestead. She built a cabin and proved up her claim on a tract of land that her granddaughter, Wanda James, owns today. Here, sons Frank Jr. and Will, and a daughter Justena, were born, to be followed by the children already mentioned and daughters June, Bertha, and her last child, Beatrice, who was to become my wife. It was on this homestead that Frank, with Mr. Kirkland, who was married to Sarah's sister Belle, developed a marble quarry. More remunerative was a hotel built at the fork of the Camp Nine and Parrot's Ferry roads to serve construction crews then building the Camp Nine powerhouse. Sarah and her daughters operated this venture, and then took over the hotel in Vallecito. At this time she had 45 boarders. She operated the Vallecito Hotel until retiring to the house on the hill.

As the years went by, Lucca's health began to fail and he was unable to continue managing the gardens. Frank now began buying his produce in Stockton. He recounted that he used to sell peaches from Vallecito there when most of the valley was in grain, but now found himself a buyer of valley produce.

An interesting document in the family is a bill from the Manuels' sawmill to Frank Canepa, dated 1890, for 5,000 feet of pine lumber at a price of \$90.00. Frank recalled this event because it was the year a terrific hail-storm ruined their crops. He and his father decided that it was a good time to build a home of their own. This they did on a hill overlooking the town of Vallecito. In later years this house was replaced with a more modern structure. It was here that Frank and Sarah Canepa spent their remaining years, Frank busy with a garden and a small flock of sheep, Sarah with her flowers and grandchildren. The end came in 1953 for both of them.

It is impossible to do justice to all the family in an article as brief as this. Mention, however, should be made of Frank's sister Dorinda who married John Botto. Their children were Luke, John, Rose, and Tessie. Sarah's father, a freighter, was fatally injured. Later, Mrs. Sheldon remarried. Her new husband's name was Joy. The Sheldon children were Sarah, Belle and Mary. Luke Canepa passed away in 1892, his wife in 1900. Giovanni Sanguinetti died in 1903, and his wife Rosa in 1914. Finally, it should be noted that four of the five surviving Canepa children still live on the Canepa ranch at Vallecito.

Have you invited a friend interested in Calaveras history to join the Society? — Al Gross, Membership Chairman.

COSGROVE FAMILY HISTORY

By ANNETA COSGROVE CHAPMAN

(Read by Mrs. John P. Lemue, February 24th)

Michael Cosgrove and his wife Cathrine came to San Francisco from St. Louis, Missouri, by way of Cape Horn, arriving in March, 1852. There, on June 15th, Charles James was born. When Charles was three weeks old, they moved to Angels Camp.

Mr. Cosgrove built a home on Main Street. He also built a hotel where the Bazinett Hotel now stands, a livery stable next to the hotel where today there is a market, and on Angels Creek, next to his home, a carriage house. Four generations lived in the house on Main Street.

Charles Cosgrove married Mary E. Bryan, a native of San Andreas, in 1878. They had two sons and one daughter: Burton H., Elmer L., and Annetta, now Mrs. Earl Chapman. One daughter, Jeanette, was born to the Chapmans in 1913. Jeanette married Herbert Scott in 1945, and passed away on April 9th, 1956.

Michael Cosgrove died in 1868. The old property on Main Street was a grant deed from the State, dated July 18, 1873, to Cathrine Cosgrove and signed by W. B. Norman, County Judge of Calaveras.

The first Cosgrove Hotel burned to the ground in the great fire of June 24th, 1885. This conflagration started in the upper story of the building. Flames leaped across the street to George Tryon's Angels Hotel and burned many buildings on both sides of the street. The Cosgrove Hotel was then rebuilt and sold in 1893 to Mrs. Slibbets Eddy.

In 1875, Cathrine Cosgrove purchased thirty acres of land from the Matson Estate, bounded on one side by the Gold Cliff Mine and by Hardscrabble Street on another. She built a home on this parcel and lived there for many years. Later she sold the property to the Utica Mining Company. Many new homes have been built on the tract in recent years.

At four o'clock in the morning, January 21st, 1909, a cloudburst and heavy rains sent Angels Creek over its banks. Part of Chinatown washed downstream, and struck against the old Cosgrove Carriage House. In this building were stored many old relics such as saddles, team bells, stovepipe hats, and trunks and chests which had come around Cape Horn. All went downstream, along with several other business establishments.

In 1913, the Chapmans built a garage and rented it to John Carley. This was one of the first garages in the county. In 1926, Angels Creek again rose, and this time washed the garage away.

The State Highway Department condemned the Cosgrove home in 1946 and constructed a bridge through a portion of the property. The remaining third of the Cosgrove land, owned by Annetta Cosgrove Chapman, was sold to Earl and Joseph Carley in 1957, and now is used as a parking lot.

Our Secretary, Sadie Hunt, asks that those members who are unable to attend meetings and who do not wish to be notified of these meetings to so advise her by post card, addressed to Valley Springs, Calif. As our membership grows, so does the job of sending out individual meeting notices.

STICKLES STORE

After the devastating fire of 1855 in Angels Camp, a number of new masonry buildings were constructed similar to this one built by D. Strosburgar in 1856. The rhyolite building stone was obtained from Peirano's quarry in Altaville. On the second floor may be seen the sisters Edna Bryan Buckbee (local historian) and Mabel Bryan Thomas. George Stickle Sr., and Jr., are standing in the doorway with their dog. The former was one of the early merchants in town, once owner of the mine that bore his name, and one of the incorporators of the Angels Race Track at Frogtown.



THE ROLLERI FAMILY

By MRS. OLIVIA BARDEN HARBINSON

Presented at the November Meeting By Mrs. Otta Leonard

In the late eighteen-forties Giovanni Filippo Antonini arrived in Sonora, Tuolumne County. He had left his wife and two small girls in San Antonia de Castiglione, a small village high in the hills above the Italian Riviera, until he was able to provide for their passage. His daughter, Olivia Eleria, had been born in that village on August 1st, 1844. When her father sent for the family in the mid-fifties, Olivia assured all of her playmates that she would send them necklaces of gold from California.

Olivia came with her mother and sister by boat from Genoa, around the Horn, and they were met at San Francisco and taken to Sonora. While awaiting the arrival of his wife and daughters, John Antonini had become acquainted with many of the other Italians who had gathered in the community. To one of these, John Marconi, he had promised the hand of his daughter Olivia, following a well-respected old country custom.

On their arrival, the three were introduced to the many friends who came to greet them and Olivia, now a young lady of sixteen, met John Marconi. But she also met another young Italian, Geronimo Rolleri, who was younger, more dashing, and more persuasive than John. Since she was a girl of some independence, she refused to go through with the previously arranged marriage, and on February 25th, 1861, she and Geronimo were married. It should be noted here that John Marconi later was successful in winning the hand of Olivia's younger sister, Emanuela. That couple established their home in Big Oak Flat. One of their daughters, Adeline, married Norman Smith of Angels Camp.

During the next twenty years, the Geronimo Rolleris lived in various sections of Tuolumne County, and engaged in mining, ranching and store-keeping — at times in a combination of the three. Near the end of 1879 (or early 1880) they moved to Reynold's Ferry, on the Stanislaus. There, the older boys assisted in operating the ferry. While the family did not run a regular hostelry, they could and did care for an occasional guest, Black Bart among them. It was while the Rolleris were living here, (1883) that this noted highwayman made the celebrated holdup on Funk Hill, when young James Rolleri took his famous shot.

One amusing incident happened in 1881 concerning the eldest Rolleri daughter, Mary. Arrangements had been made for her marriage to John Podesta of Yankee Hill. On the appointed day relatives and friends gathered. The ladies of the family had on their newest dresses, ravioli had been made, roasts baked, and decorations designed, finished, and hung. At the appointed time Podesta arrived, marriage license safely tucked in pocket. He crossed on the ferry and was warmly greeted by family and friends. Just as the marriage was about to begin, one of the brothers noted that the license was for Tuolumne County and was not good in Calaveras. Confusion and argument heightened, as all of the Rolleris were both voluble and vociferous. But out of all the confusion, the solution was finally found. The principals of the wedding party proceeded to the dock, boarded the ferry, and advanced to midstream (the county line) where the ceremony was performed, while guests and family looked on from the water's edge.

The family returned to Sonora in the mid-eighties and was active there in community and political life. In 1888

The Rolleri Family

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Geronimo Rolleri died of pneumonia. Olivia was left with her ten children, very little money, but with a great deal of courage. There had been thirteen children born of this marriage. Two had died in infancy, and Mary had gone to live in Yankee Hill after her marriage. Friends knew that Olivia was looking for a small business of some kind. John Rodin, of Oakdale, urged her to open a boarding house there, but other friends had heard a boarding house was for sale in Angels Camp. They also knew of the growth of the lode mining activities there, and thought it a better place for her venture. She investigated, bought the property, moved her family, opened for business, and thus the first unit of the Calaveras Hotel came into being.

As time went on, this proved to be a good venture, and properties to the right and left of the original section were purchased. Later the corner building on Main and Bush was added to the business. During this time, "Grandma" Rolleri expanded her business in other ways. She decided to supply the hotel as well. She purchased some ranches, ran a good many cattle, established a butcher shop, and opened a saloon. From the ranches came much of the produce needed: vegetables, fruit, eggs, chickens, meat, milk, and butter. The boys helped on the ranches, and the girls at the hotel. The cooking, however, was always done by Chinese.

Grandma Rolleri taught these young Chinese to make all of the Italian dishes the family—and the boarders—liked so much. Willie Lee became one of the finest ravioli makers on the Mother Lode. Each Sunday evening saw lines of townspeople waiting at the kitchen door with their five-pound lard pails ready to be filled from the steaming kitchen stove, and then to be rushed home for supper. All the help were devoted to Grandma. They stayed for very long periods and always remained a part of the "family."

The saloon, according to the "drummers" who made this territory, was one of the finest this side of San Francisco. The bartenders were always immaculate in their white, pearl-studded vests and bar aprons. When Grandma's friends came to call, one of the grandchildren was always told to "knock on the saloon door," (an inside door from dining room to saloon) and summon the bartender with, "Grandma wants you in the parlor." The ladies ordered sherry, port, or, on a cold winter's day, a hot toddy. The lucky grandchild was rewarded with a circus lemonade.

Children were always welcome and the babies tended at the hotel, while their mothers, in from the ranches, did their shopping at dry goods stores and groceries. Olivia's parlor was the central meeting place for the family and all their friends. She purchased a piano soon after establishing the hotel, and was never happier than when someone was playing. She even gained some fame as a matchmaker.

No one was ever turned away from Grandma's door. If a man was hungry, he was fed. If he was "broke," he got a loan. If he had a mine, he might get a grubstake. Color or creed meant nothing to her. All people were her friends and she was a friend to all people. On her death in 1927, she was mourned throughout the county.

SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES

March Meeting

We were pleased to have President Poore and 1st Vice President Coke Wood back with us again, both of whom had missed recent meetings when on the sick list. Before one of the largest attendances at a regular meeting for several years, Al Gross presented a fine program on Murphys Pioneer Families, as follows:

- Mrs. Hazel Garland on the Walter Mercer Family, written by Mrs. Evelyn Stephens
- Mr. Al Gross reading the Mary Jane Osselin history and some Gross family letters
- Mrs. Norma Harrelson, on the Tanner Family
- Mr. Fred Fisk, reading the Frank Fisk Family History, as compiled by the late Judge Smith
- Mr. Gross on the Tyler Family, by Ed Tyler
- Mr. Drew Garland, who read the story of the Kaler Family, written by Ashley Alexander

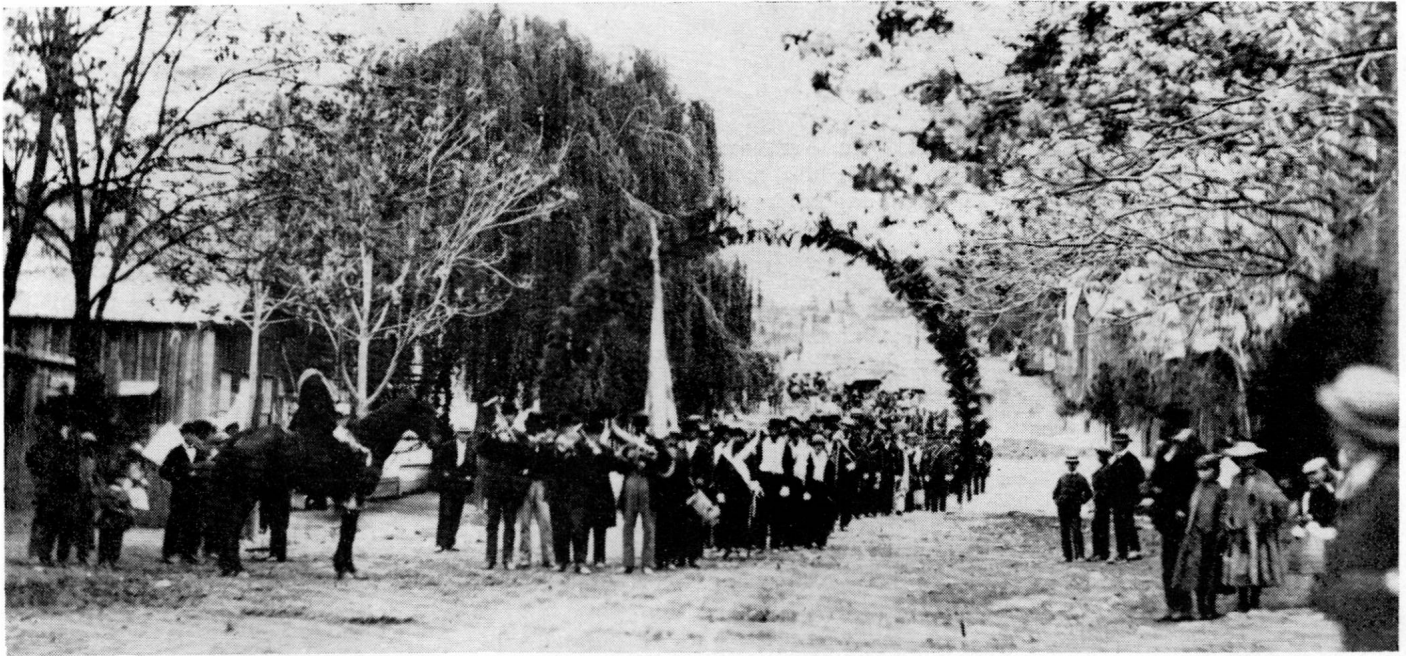
President Poore announced that the Society has acquired the relics of the Camanche Catholic Church. Mr. Poore also stated that the Piler family, of Valley Springs, has donated a loom, spinning wheel, and several articles of furniture used by their forebears. New members Mr. and Mrs. Long presented the Society with a rare copy of the **Republican**, a newspaper that was published at Big Trees in 1891. This, we believe, is the only known copy of the short-lived newspaper in existence.

The **Republican** was not included in our supposedly complete listing of county newspapers in the January 1965 issue of **Las Calaveras**, so we were especially pleased with this gift. Does any reader know of other copies of this paper, or of any details of its history?

New Members

The list of new members is long this time, and all accorded an enthusiastic welcome to the Society.

- Mrs. Otta Leonard, Angels Camp
- Mrs. Doris Castro, Murphys
- Mrs. Dwight W. Chapman, Orinda
- Mrs. Vera S. Fuller, San Andreas
- Mr. Dave Copello, Altaville
- Mr. Douglas Sloan, San Andreas
- Miss Alice Sloan, San Andreas
- Mr. Russ Faussett, Stockton
- Mr. and Mrs. Victor B. Scott, Murphys
- Mr. Don Cuneo, San Andreas
- Mrs. Verna L. Hood, Valley Springs
- Mrs. Mary F. Damon Rude, Tuolumne
- Mrs. Geraldine H. Auger, Murphys
- Mrs. Eula Maxwell, Altaville
- Mrs. Ruth Prutzman, Arnold
- Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hobson, Murphys
- Mr. and Mrs. John P. Lemue, Angels Camp
- Mrs. Sarah K. Golta, West Point
- Miss Louise Golta, West Point
- Stanislaus State College Library, Turlock
- Mr. and Mrs. Earnest W. Long, Altaville



FOURTH OF JULY PARADE — 1885

The Fourth of July celebration at Angels Camp in 1885 was organized and presented by the Odd Fellows. President-of-the-Day was Mark Torrey who may be seen on horseback in this view snapped in front of Fletcher's Carpenter Shop (later the site of the Angels Theatre). The program included music by the Angels Brass Band, singing by the Glee Club, reading of the Declaration of Independence, and the oration by the Honorable W. T. Lewis. In the afternoon there were competitive games for the spectators, such as wheelbarrow and sack and barrel races, King Solomon's bridge, greased pole, shaved pig, and many others.

WADE JOHNSTON GOES TO CALIFORNIA

By EFFIE ENFIELD JOHNSTON

(Brief Excerpts from the W. H. Johnston Talks)

"A crowd of perhaps fifty people had gathered at the Meramec River to see us off. My father was there. We said goodbye for five years, and with two four-ox wagons and a hundred and fifty head of cattle started for California. It was the 4th of April, 1854.

"We arrived in Nebraska on the 2nd of May, and camped near the Missouri River. Here, four hundred head of steers, belonging to a Mr. Nye, came very near running over us. . . . When we reached Camp Kearney, the soldiers were on parade. We camped where we could see them.

"While at the Platt, I bought a new violin bow and an elk skin to keep my violin in. This kept it dry. . . . Jacob Hershbarger and I went out hunting on an island in the Platt River. We were only on the island a few minutes when wolves got the scent of us, and the first thing we knew, we were almost surrounded by them. We didn't lose any time getting out of there.

"One night, about June 6th, we camped just below Fort Laramie on the Laramie River in what is now Wyoming. . . . We later camped along the Sweetwater River, a nice stream about forty yards wide and four feet deep.

It was somewhere along here that old Gideon Adams stampeded the cattle. He was scared by a jack rabbit. He thought it was a bear!

"For miles along the Bear River (in Utah) there was just room for a wagon to pass. . . . At the sink of the Humboldt we passed by hundreds of skeletons of cattle and horses and many deserted emigrant wagons. We went through or near what is now Virginia City and Carson City, then called the Eagle Ranch. I think we were at Carson when we heard of Joaquin's capture. We bought half a deer from an Indian, when we camped at Lake Tahoe, and ate it all for supper!

"We gathered and ate lots of wild gooseberries but were afraid to eat the thimble berries.

"We were crossing the summit about the 24th of August and arrived at Hangtown on the 26th."

Wade Johnston then described his experiences at Yankee Jim's and other nearby camps, and early in May of the following year, he and Billie Smith "said goodbye to Placer County and hello to Calaveras."

OFFICERS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

San Andreas, California

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2nd Vice-President	Mrs. Alice Eldridge, San Andreas
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Editor of Las Calaveras	W. P. Fuller, Jr., San Andreas

Las Calaveras is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. Individual memberships (\$4.00 a year), Family (\$6.00) and Junior memberships (\$1.00) include subscription to Las Calaveras. Non-members may obtain copies of Las Calaveras from the Secretary. The original historical material in this bulletin is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source will be appreciated.

The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Grange Hall in San Andreas—except for dinner meetings which are held each quarter at different places in the county.

EDITORIAL

For the first time since we assumed this chair, **Las Calaveras** finds itself with more material than it can use. For this fortunate circumstance we are most grateful, even though it does pose the problem of selecting the most appropriate articles for each issue. We hope we will be able to publish all the interesting family sketches that are resulting from the Society's pioneer family project.

Those persons familiar with Vallecito will enjoy the Canepa story and will note that the Farbotniks modestly neglected to point out that this ranch is the home of the Vallecito Pepper. Lucca Canepa would be most gratified indeed to know how well received and widely known this delicacy has become, grown by his descendants in the gardens he started more than a century ago.

Although the story of Grandma Rolleri and her Calaveras Hotel in Angels Camp is well known—and was the subject of one of our prize-winning school essays last year—we couldn't resist including Mrs. Olivia Harbinson's version of the colorful Rolleri family in this issue.

A fine collection of early day pictures of Angels Camp arrived along with the all-too-brief Cosgrove history, donated by Mrs. Annetta Chapman to the Society. Two of these are reproduced on another page. We thank Mrs. Chapman for her generosity in giving these historic photographs to our growing archives. We would like to remind others who have photographs of historical value, but who may not wish to part with them, that negatives can be made for only \$1.50 each. These can then be made available to the museum and for publications such as **Las Calaveras**.

ROCKWELL D. HUNT

Probably no one has done more for California history in general and for local northern California history in particular than Professor Rockwell D. Hunt. He was not only extremely effective in motivating others by his teaching and organizational work, but unbelievably productive in his own research and writing.

A charter member of our Society, he was always a friend of Calaveras County and of our membership. Professor Hunt died on the 23rd of January at the ripe old age of 97, bearing many honors and the love of all who knew him. The very active Conference of California Historical Societies stands as one of his most enduring achievements, and the eighteen or more volumes he authored will long be source books in California history.

Forthcoming Meetings

- May 26—Mokelumne Hill Pioneer Families
Allen Peek, chairman
- June 23—Pioneers of Rail Road Flat
Harry Buchanan, chairman
- July 28—Dinner Meeting—place and program to be announced
- Sept. 22—Valley Springs Pioneer Families
Percy Hunt and Jos. White, co-chairmen

Quarterly Dinner Meeting

On January 27th, some 50 members and guests gathered at the Congregational Church in Angels for a delicious dinner prepared by the Congregational Women. Mrs. Alice Eldridge presided. The high point of the evening was an encore by the Bernhardt Jensens who presented a fascinating movie on Viet Nam with explanatory comments by Mr. Jensen. Mrs. Jensen gracefully modeled a lovely Viet Nam dress that she had purchased in Saigon. All agreed, I am sure, that the Jensens, who were pinch-hitting for Coke Wood, who was to have pinch-hit for Mrs. Leland Case, gave a first string performance.

February Meeting

Ed Leonard presented his second roundup of Angels Pioneers on February 24th, with Mr. Farbotnik, Mrs. Lemue, and the Leonards giving papers on the Canepa, Cosgrove, Love, and Marshall families. Two of these are printed in this issue. We are all indebted to Mr. Leonard for a fine accomplishment as Angels chairman.

The Clampers Return

On March 26, the Matuca Chapter of E. Clampus Vitus (revived) dedicated a plaque at Mokelumne Hill honoring it as the California birthplace of the society.

According to B. J. Shannon, in the Golden West magazine for January, Joe Zumwalt and W. C. Wright carried the official papers of E. Clampus Vitus to the West. E. C. V. had been started in the mountains of West Virginia in 1845 as an elaborate practical joke.

Failing to establish E. C. V. in Hangtown, Joe moved to the Hill, and in September, 1851, successfully formed Lodge No. 1001 of this Ancient and Honorable Order.