

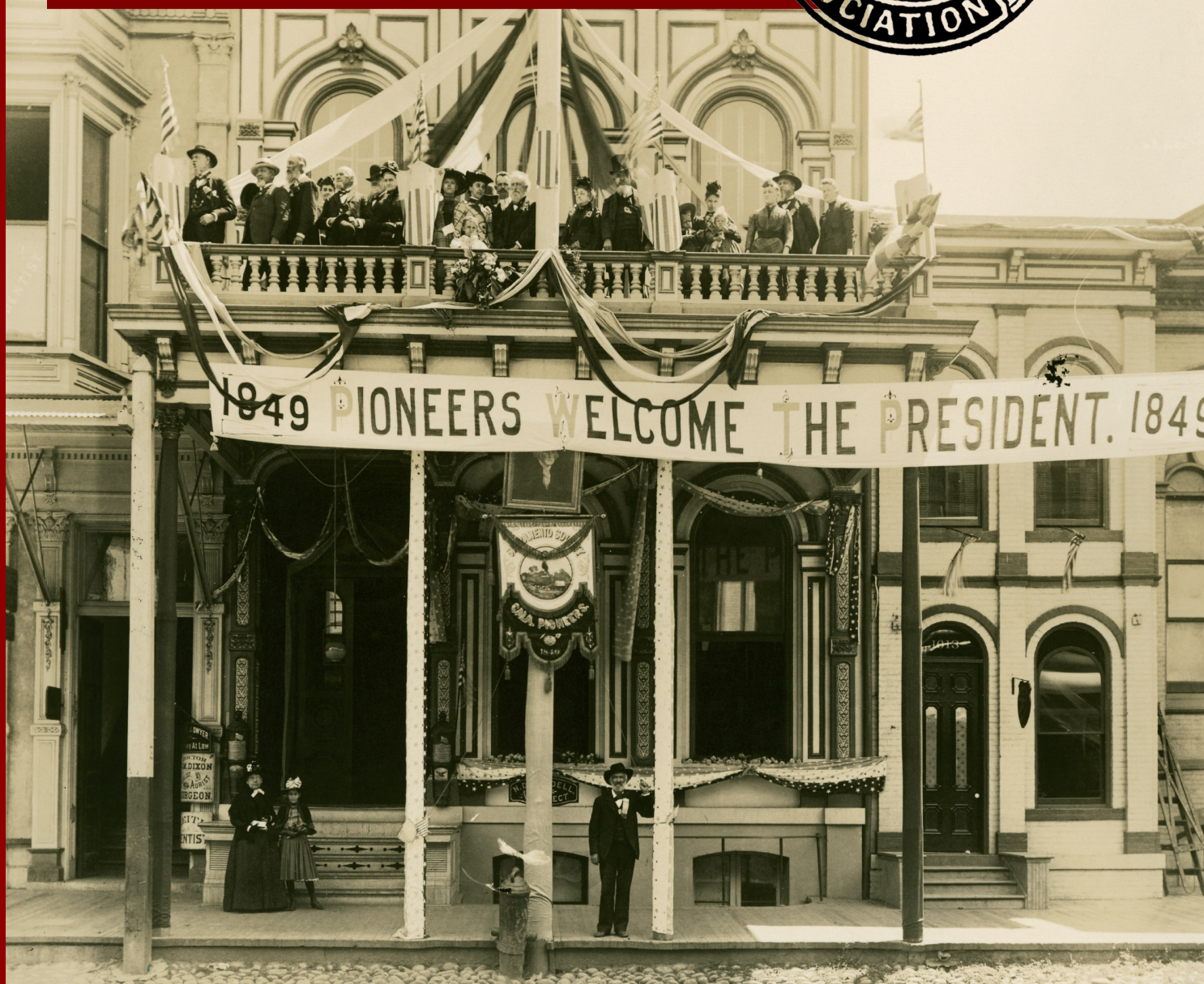
SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 168<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

# PIONEER NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2021

SPRING EDITION



Knickerbocker, Nye and the Hitching Post:  
Unravelling the Mystery of the Pioneer Guns



# Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter



## Officers

President.....Bill Schaw  
Vice President.....Bill Gould  
Secretary.....Michael Shepard  
Treasurer.....Thom Gilbert

## Directors

### Term ending March 2021

Hilton Williams    Fred Teichert  
                             Brian Witherell

### Term ending March 2022

Jim Phillips        Katie Brown  
                             Trisha Setzer

### Term ending March 2023

Lori Gualco        Mark Rathe  
                             Martha Hughes

## Courtesy Directors

Joan Kibbey Taylor

## Administrator

Shelley Ford

## Newsletter Editor

Michael Shepard

## IN MEMORIAM

**Ken Noack, Sr.**

**Daniel Jackson Faustman, Jr.**

### Cover image:

Benjamin Harrison's May 2, 1891, visit to Sacramento warranted this photograph of Pioneer Hall festively decorated for the presidential occasion. The photo reveals in remarkable detail three cannons (circled in yellow at right) that once adorned the Pioneers' historic building. Now, only the left-most cannon remains mounted on the casing of the hall's front entrance.



### Sacramento Pioneer Association Pioneer Newsletter TM

All rights reserved. This newsletter may not be reproduced in any form or part without expressed written permission of the Sacramento Pioneer Association. The Sacramento Pioneer Association is a California 501(c)(3) non-profit. Officers and board members are held harmless.

**Sacramento Pioneer Association**  
1731 Howe Avenue, Box 639  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 447-7411

[www.sacramentopioneer.org](http://www.sacramentopioneer.org)

[sacramentopioneerassociation@gmail.com](mailto:sacramentopioneerassociation@gmail.com)

## President's Message

### *Events –*

We have scheduled our Annual Membership Meeting for March 11<sup>th</sup> this year. The meeting will be via Zoom and will include the election of SPA officers and board members for the coming year. Watch for an email that will include an invitation to the virtual meeting and a list of candidates for these positions.

Other regular events such as our Annual Picnic continue to be on hold pending an improvement in public health conditions. I am optimistic that conditions will substantially improve by midyear and 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.

We will present a second Zoom event on March 4<sup>th</sup> to which all SPA members are invited. Marcia Eymann, Sacramento City Historian, will provide a presentation on Pioneer Women In California based on research which she has done within the last few years. Watch for another email with this invitation to which we'll ask interested members to respond.

### *Board Meeting –*

The SPA held board meetings in January and February via Zoom. Future meetings will be conducted in the same way pending the end (or substantial mitigation) of the pandemic. Discussion was held and decisions made concerning various Association matters including tax returns, investment planning, membership requests, Pioneer Hall marketing, Pioneer Grove transactions, scholarship publicity, and other topics.

### *Pioneer Hall –*

We continue to seek a new tenant for the ground floor space provided by Pioneer Hall. We have extended our listing agreement with Colliers International through June of this year and have completed cleaning and touching up the building's façade. Please let us know if you come across anyone who might be interested in leasing this very attractive, historic business space located less than a block from Golden 1 Center.

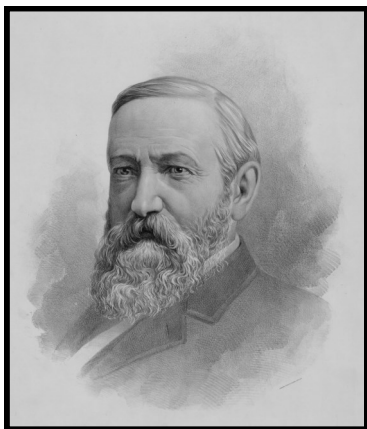
### *Future –*

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

Bill Schaw



## Pioneer Hall - Meeting Place for Sacramento's 1891 Benjamin Harrison Welcoming Committee



**President Benjamin Harrison.** Image from an 1888 engraving, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Sacramento Mayor William D. Comstock invited prominent merchants and businessmen to a meeting at Pioneer Hall on April 9, 1891, to discuss the prospective visit of President Benjamin Harrison to California's capital city during his tour of the Pacific Coast. About forty gentlemen responded and an enthusiastic meeting ensued.

An executive committee formed to prepare the necessary arrangements for the visit including the appointment of subcommittees for finance, invitation & reception and decorations. Pioneer Hall became the base of operations for all committees. Ribbon streamers and American flags festooned the elaborately

decorated building in advance of the anticipated occasion.

On May 2, 1891, the day of the President's arrival, "The procession turned into Seventh street and passed Pioneer Hall, in front of which quite a number of the old '49-ers were drawn up in a line. They cheered the President as he passed, and the latter took off his hat and bowed his acknowledgement, standing up in his carriage by way of special compliment to the Pioneers."

- *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 3, 1891.

## **Knickerbocker, Nye and the Hitching Post: Unravelling the Mystery of the Pioneer Guns**

By Michael Shepard

As long as anyone can remember, a conspicuous, black, iron cannon has adorned the north side of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street doorway of the Sacramento Pioneer Association's historic Pioneer Hall. Few, if any, of the Association's current members know the origin story of this solitary relic, let alone that this gun had a twin: the two artillery pieces at one time symmetrically flanked the Hall's entrance.

The Pioneers mounted the guns for display in the 1870s. They suspected the artillery pieces came from Sutter's Fort, but none knew the full history. Pioneer Association member A. P. Catlin sought an answer from John A. Sutter himself and penned a letter of inquiry addressed to the general in Litiz, Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. Sutter's response of June 12, 1879, reads in part, "These Guns of which your society have two placed at the door of their Hall, are not Russian guns... [but] from the Capt. of an Italian Vessel who was a friend of mine, and brought them for me from South America, and I took them very secretly in the night on board of my Launch and brought them up to my fort (1841)..." Sutter's letter continues, "I am sorry I cannot give you the early history of the guns, but undoubtedly they have been used in the South American war," by which he likely meant Simon Bolivar's wars of independence from Spain.

Sutter also divulged that "the first salute was fired with them, when Capt. Reingold and the other Officers of Wilkes Exploring Squadron arrived to survey the Sacramento river." A diary kept by Sutter, first published in the San Francisco *Argonaut* in 1878, confirms that on August 23, 1841, when Captain Reingold of Commodore Wilkes Exploring Squadron arrived at Sutter's Fort, "I fired a salut [*sic*] and furnished them with what they needed." The twin guns remained at Sutter's Fort for a number of years, even after Sutter himself vacated the Fort to Hock Farm on the Feather River in 1849.

### **The Knickerbocker Gun**

One of the twin guns received attention when, on June 18, 1857, the *Sacramento Daily Union* reported that "yesterday, several of the members of Knickerbocker Engine Co. No. 5 proceeded to Sutter Fort and procured a six-pounder, which fired the salute when the stars and stripes were first raised on the Fort on our acquisition of the Territory. The company intend using it in firing a salute on the 'Fourth,' morning, noon and night."

A *Sacramento Daily Union* article dated January 28, 1906, recollected that, "The fire company at one time had the piece neatly mounted, and was wont to roll it through the streets on parade occasions, and to fire it until it was too hot to handle on Fourth of July celebrations, and other events of similar character." When Young America Engine Company No. 6 received

its brand new engine, which arrived on the steamer *Eureka* on Saturday, October 3, 1857, the Knickerbocker's fired a salute from the levee. The Knickerbockers fired a truly magnificent cannonade of "one hundred guns" on February 17, 1862, upon learning news of the surrender of Confederate Fort Donelson. The gun fired salutes to honor political candidacies and victories. When news of the 1863 nomination of John Conness for U. S. Senate reached the Knickerbockers, they fired their gun in front of the Union Hotel on Second Street. The concussion of the discharge "broke some five or six hundred dollars worth of glass on both sides of the street." In January of 1866, the Knickerbockers lent the gun to members of Sacramento's black community who fired a New Year's Day emancipation salute in recognition of Congress's ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Considering the renown of the Knickerbocker gun throughout the city, it must have been quite an honor for the Sacramento Pioneers when the foreman of Knickerbocker Engine Co. No. 5 presented the well-seasoned cannon to the Pioneer Association. The *Sacramento Daily Union* reported the transaction in an article dated May 19, 1871:

**PRESENTATION TO THE PIONEERS.** - Last night Knickerbocker Engine Company No. 5 presented to the Sacramento Association of California Pioneers, the iron howitzer, long the property of the company, and which has a historical interest as having been...originally mounted by Sutter on Sutter's Fort. The gun had been, previous to the presentation, handsomely painted and appropriately inscribed. John Domingos, Foreman of No. 5, made the presentation speech, which was responded to, on behalf of the Pioneers, by Rev. O. C. Wheeler.

The historically inaccurate inscription read: "The first gun fired from Sutter's Fort, August, 1839. Presented by Knickerbocker Engine Company, No. 5, to the Sacramento Society of California Pioneer '49ers, May 1871." Sutter established in his letter to the Pioneers that he acquired the gun in 1841 rather than 1839. Following the speeches, the Pioneers entertained their donors at the Golden Eagle Hotel.

### **The Nye Gun**

The cannon mounted on the south side of Pioneer Hall's 7<sup>th</sup> Street entrance shared the same South American origin story as its twin, the Knickerbocker gun. Sacramento Pioneer A. P. Catlin told a reporter for the *Sacramento Daily Union* for a March 3, 1879, article that the gun remained at Sutter's Fort "until 1851, when it was purchased by Dallas A. Kneass, then a merchant and hotel keeper on Mormon Island, for the purpose of a

Fourth of July celebration.” The article suggests that, for a time, Mr. Catlin possessed the gun before it passed into the ownership of Captain John Nye, who presented it to the Sacramento Pioneer Association shortly before his death in October of 1878. An inscription read: “This gun was brought from South America for Gen. John A. Sutter, who mounted it on his fort in 1841. Presented to the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers, May 25, 1878, by Capt. John Nye.”

When President Ulysses S. Grant visited Sacramento on October 22, 1879, Pioneers decorated their hall with more than two dozen American flags waving from the hall’s massive flagpole and its rigging. The weekly periodical *The San Francisco Mirror*, dated November 8, 1879, included a sketch of the building, which is the earliest known image of Pioneer Hall. In the lower left portion of the sketch, the Knickerbocker and Nye guns stand sentry on either side of the hall’s entrance. Upon closer inspection, a third gun appears drawn next to the base of the flagpole, its muzzle embedded in the street.

### The Hitching Post

The Salem Mechanics Trading and Mining Association sailed aboard their ship, *Crescent*, from Salem harbor for San Francisco on December 6, 1849. One of the associates noted in his diary that day, “All was excitement this morning in getting ready to sail. We were all very much pleased. Fired the cannon, hollowed, and yelled, and could hardly hold ourselves. There was quite a crowd on the wharves to see us sail.”

The *Crescent* arrived in San Francisco on May 27, 1850, and then continued inland up the Sacramento River to Sacramento city. The Salem Mechanics Trading and Mining Company sold its cargo and ship upon arrival in Sacramento. For more than two decades, the *Crescent*, sat moored between L and M Streets and served as a store-ship with a 6,000 barrel storage capacity.

The cannon from Salem, Massachusetts, remained in the hold of the *Crescent*, perhaps forgotten, or merely overlooked. The residents of Sacramento learned of the gun’s existence when the *Sacramento Daily Union*, on June 2, 1873, reported its acquisition by the Sacramento Pioneer Association: “General A. Redington and Mark Hopkins presented to the society, through G. J. Cross, a cannon found in the hold of the store-ship *Crescent*, which came round Cape Horn in 1849, and has been used as a store-ship since that period. The thanks of the society were tendered the donors.”

A remarkable sepia-toned photo of Pioneer Hall, captured by a photographer at the time of President Benjamin Harrison’s May 2, 1891 visit to Sacramento, shows the historic Knickerbocker and Nye guns mounted to the casing on either side of the Hall’s main entrance, while the gun from the *Crescent* stands upright at the base of the flagpole with its muzzle buried into the street.

After the turn of the century, the three old relics in front of Pioneer Hall caught the attention of a journalist for the *Sacramento Union*. The ensuing article, dated January 28, 1906, acknowledges the *Crescent* gun as a hitching post, and mistakenly sources the piece from Sutter’s Fort:

In front of Pioneer Hall, half buried in the curb, is an old six-pounder, iron ship’s gun, which serves the peaceful purpose of a hitching post. It was placed where it is by G. J. Cross many years ago, and is believed to have been one of the guns which General John A. Sutter had in his battery at his harbor of refuge known as Sutter’s Fort, in this city. It is rusted, pitted, and shows that it has had hard usage, and has done some service in its day.

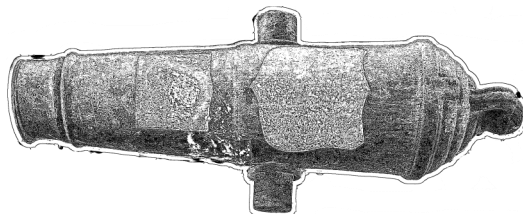
On either pillar of the portal to Pioneer Hall, on Seventh street, is strapped securely to the masonry a four-pounder iron ship’s gun. These guns constituted a part of the battery of General Sutter with which he frightened the Indians and kept turbulent spirits in hand.

The Pioneers removed the Hitching Post sometime after 1906. In all likelihood, the gun sat in storage in the basement of Pioneer Hall until 1967, when Pioneers produced a rather similar-looking cannon to the one depicted in the 1891 photograph to celebrate the dedication of the Sacramento City and County Museum in Pioneer Hall. Pioneers again fired the cannon at the rededication of Sutter’s Grist Mill Wheel at 28<sup>th</sup> and C Streets in 1988.

The cannon fired in 1967 and 1988 (which may very well be the Hitching Post) now resides in the Sacramento History Museum as part of the Sacramento Pioneer Association collection. The placard that accompanies the museum piece reads, “This cannon is believed to be one of six that John Sutter purchased for his fort. Sutter used these and other cannons to announce his presence and establish his authority in the Sacramento Valley.” Perhaps the sign should instead acknowledge the Salem Mechanics and their ship the *Crescent*.

The Nye gun, mounted on the south side of Pioneer Hall’s entrance disappeared sometime after a *Sacramento Union* story dated June 11, 1916, referenced the twin guns. Its whereabouts remains unknown.

The Knickerbocker gun still stands sentry after 150 years of service at Pioneer Hall.



## SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

*PRESENTS*

ACCLAIMED SACRAMENTO CITY HISTORIAN

VIRTUAL  
WEB EVENT

### MARCIA EYMANN

THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021, 7 PM



The Sacramento Pioneer Association  
invites its members to virtually attend  
an online presentation featuring  
Sacramento City Historian

**Marcia Eymann**

### Her Side of the Story: Tales of Pioneer Women of California

Online Webinar Event  
Thursday, March 4, 2021,  
at 7 PM via ZOOM

To request a free login code,  
Please send an email to  
[sacramentopioneerassociation@gmail.com](mailto:sacramentopioneerassociation@gmail.com)



### Her Side of the Story: Tales of Pioneer Women of California

In 2017, The Society of California Pioneers in San Francisco brought on **Marcia Eymann** to create a new exhibition based on its rich collections. On October 11, 2018, the Society opened “Her Side of the Story: Tales of California Pioneer Women,” which is currently touring the state. The exhibition is based on the archival collection of the Association of Pioneer Women formed in 1900. As preparations were being made for the commemoration of California’s Golden Jubilee (celebrating fifty years of statehood on September 9, 1900), a letter written by Mrs. Noble Martin printed in a San Francisco newspaper asked why “no provisions had been made for the pioneer mothers.” The next day several women interested in founding an organization to document their stories contacted Mrs. Noble and shortly thereafter, the first meeting of the Association of Pioneer Women of California took place. Its mission was to collect and preserve the reminiscences of women arriving in California before January 1, 1854.

The Sacramento Pioneer Association  
invites you to our

**Virtual Annual Meeting**  
Thursday, March 11, 2021,  
at 7 PM, Via Zoom.,

For the Election of  
Officers & Directors.

To request a free login code,  
Please send an email to

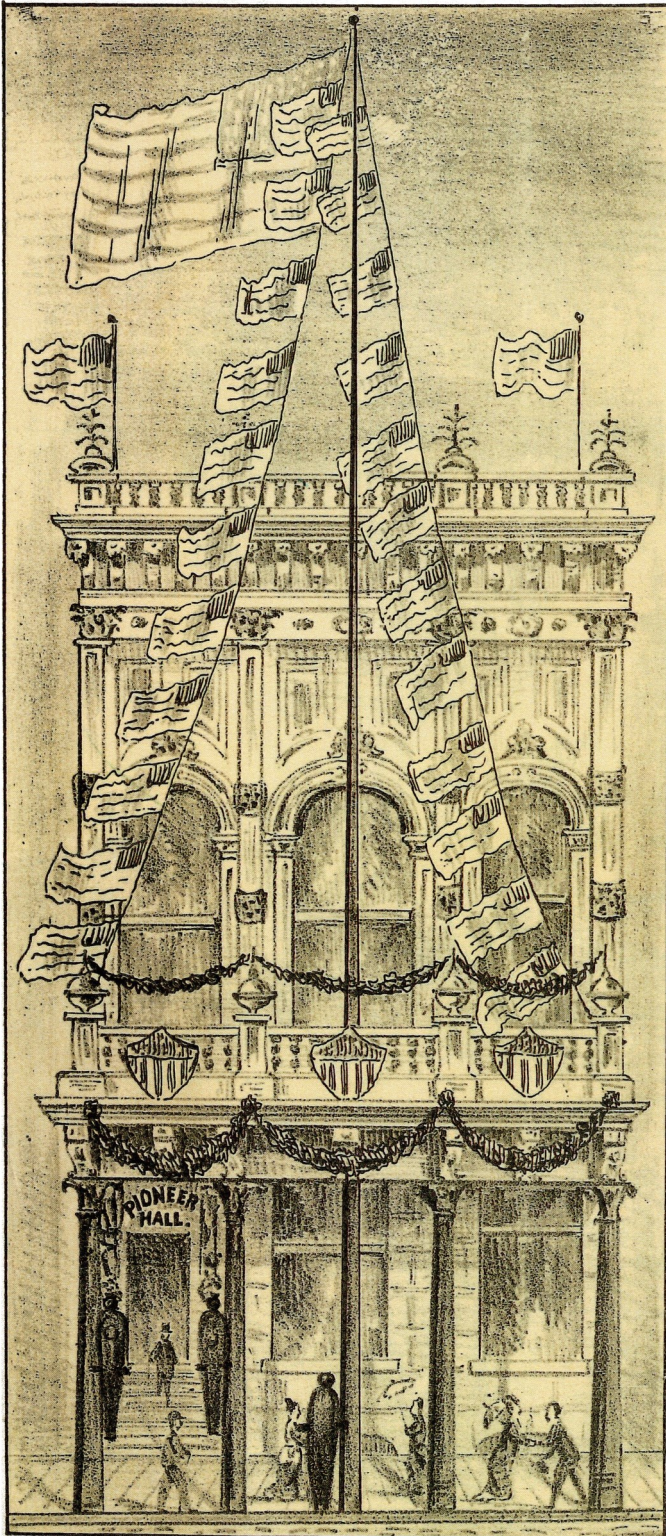
[sacramentopioneerassociation@gmail.com](mailto:sacramentopioneerassociation@gmail.com)



Mead Kibbey poses beside the Knickerbocker gun in front of Pioneer Hall on 7th Street in 1967. At one time, the shield on the barrel contained an inscription placed there by Knickerbocker Engine Co. No. 5, while the square field on the neck depicted a painting of Sutter's Fort.



# Knickerbocker, Nye & the Hitching Post



"Hall belonging to the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers, on 7th St., bet. J & K Streets. Decorated October 22nd, 1879, in honor of General Grant."

San Francisco *Mirror*, November 8, 1879.  
(Note the three blackened cannons at lower left.)



Knickerbocker



Nye



Hitching Post



Mead Kibbey prepares to fire what is believed to be the Hitching Post in front of Pioneer Hall in 1967.



Perhaps the Hitching Post on display in the Sacramento History Museum.





Sacramento Pioneer Association  
1731 Howe Ave, #639  
Sacramento, CA 95825-2209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**FOR  
LEASE**

**1011 7th Street  
Downtown Retail/Office  
Space Available**

**For Lease**

1 block from Golden 1  
Center

±2,488 SF suitable for  
retail or office on  
ground floor

±3,442 SF suitable for  
storage in basement

**\$1.85 PSF MG**

**Great access to  
US-50, I-5 and the  
Cap City Freeway**

**DAVID HERRERA**  
Executive Vice President  
+1 916 563 3032  
David.herrera@colliers.com  
License #01484908

**Colliers International**  
301 University Avenue, Ste 100  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
+1 916 929 5999  
[www.colliers.com/sacramento](http://www.colliers.com/sacramento)

