

SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 170TH YEAR

PIONEER NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2023

SPRING EDITION



Message from
President Lori Gualco

New Tenant
Le Macaron
at Pioneer Hall

The Capricious Luck
of Adolph Cohn
& Albert Priest

Annual Dinner Meeting
Election Results

Pioneers of the Year
Wendel Flint
& Patsy Butler

Scholarship Recipients



Portrait of George Washington in the
California State Capitol Senate Chamber

Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter



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Cover image: Gilbert Stuart probably remains the most renowned 18th century portrait artist in the United States. His Athenaeum portrait of President George Washington served as the model for Washington's engraved image on the \$1 bill. A full-length, life-size painting of President Washington hangs in the Senate Chamber of the California State Capitol in Sacramento, a copy of Stuart's famous Landsdowne portrait (that Dolly Madison saved from the burning Whitehouse in 1812), painted by the artist's daughter Jane Stuart.

As early as 1851, Thomas O. Larkin (Albert Priest's business partner in the Pacific Steam Packet Co.) sought to purchase the painting from Jane Stuart of Newport, Rhode Island, and stated to her in a letter dated February 12, 1851, "It was our intention of making a present of it to California and we supposed the price of it was \$500."

The Journal of the Fifth Session of the Legislature of the State of California recorded the following resolution on January 24, 1854: "That the Senate receive the picture of Washington, tendered to the State of California by Messrs. Thomas O. Larkin, Albert Priest, Wm. D. Howard and Samuel T. Hensley, for so valuable and patriotic a donation to the state of California."

Albert Priest, one of the donors, joined the Sacramento Pioneer Association three years later in 1857.

Sacramento Pioneer Association Pioneer Newsletter TM

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President's Message

Greetings Pioneers!

This is my first President's Message as your new Sacramento Pioneer Association President and my anticipation is high for all the fun and interesting events this year. We have a strong board and I start my tenure in a decidedly comfortable position thanks to our outgoing President Bill Gould. Not only was Bill an excellent leader, but he has a friendly and warm disposition that made our board meetings pleasant and efficiently run. A big thanks to Bill! I am so lucky to have Michael Shepard continuing as Secretary and Thom Gilbert continuing as Treasurer- both of whom provide outstanding services to the Board. And I am very happy to welcome Katie Brown as Vice-President- she is a great addition to the officers' slate. While I am on the topic of the Board, I want to also welcome three new Board members: Pat Mahon, Anthony Dick and Gary Bazlen - I look forward to working with them.

The 2023 Annual Dinner Meeting was a great success and was the venue for announcing the four scholarship winners, all of whom attend McClatchy High School with three enrolled in the Humanities International Studies Program (HISP). Our recipients are Adaleiz Ore, Ethan Machado, Solomae Getahun, and Sage Urban. We had a large and outstanding group of applicants, making it a difficult task for Bill and me to choose the winners.

I am hoping to see you at future SPA events, so please mark your calendars: Sunday May 7 will be a guided morning tour at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum located on the grounds of Lodi's Micke Grove Park and after the tour, a boxed picnic lunch with your fellow Pioneers; Saturday September 16 will be the Annual Picnic and Thursday December 7 will be the Annual Holiday Party.

I am looking forward to my term as President and catching up with Pioneers I know and getting to know Pioneers I have not met. Here's to a fabulous year!

Lori Gualco



Macarons de la Salle des Pionniers

Pioneer Hall has a new tenant! Le Macaron French Pastries, a rapidly growing franchise based out of Sarasota, Florida, is expanding with a shop in Sacramento. Local Le Macaron franchisees Jeffrey and Emily Gramse signed a lease earlier this year with the Sacramento Pioneer Association to occupy the ground floor of our historic one hundred and fifty-five-year-old Pioneer Hall on Seventh Street, between J and K Streets. Pioneer Hall is now undergoing interior remodeling to transform its décor to reflect the ambiance of a Parisian café. Le Macaron will be open for business this spring.

The macaron is a light and airy merengue sandwich-like cookie made with whipped egg whites and almond flour. They come in a vast array of delightful colors and delicate flavors, and are an iconic treat found in many Parisian pâtisseries. The macaron is not to be confused with the dense, moist, and sweet coconut macaroon more common throughout the United States.

In addition to signature macarons, the menu at Le Macaron will include gourmet chocolates, French gelato, classic pastries, artisanal European-style coffees, wine and champagne. The pâtisserie will offer dine-in and take-away service and can even cater for your next special event.

We wish Jeffrey and Emily success in their new endeavor and look forward to a long relationship with the entrepreneurs. We also look forward to sampling some delectable pastries, perhaps accompanied by a café crème or flute of champagne.



The Capricious Luck of Adolph Cohn & Albert Priest

By Michael Shepard

“Twenty years ago, a man of modest means, established a general merchandise business in the German city of Braunschweig. But luck did not favor him. His business failed, he lost everything, and he remained indebted to his creditors.”

So began a story that appeared in newspapers throughout Germany in the Summer of 1850 printed in the stylized *Schwabacher* Gothic script still prevalent in the 19th century German Confederation. Periodicals such as *Bayreuter Zeitung*, *Dresdner Journal*, and *Dem Hamburger Correspondenten* captivated readers with the account of poor Adolph Cohn whose story unfolded like a Grimm Brothers rags-to-riches fairytale.

Young Adolph ventured into the world according to his 1850 newsprint biography (translated from the original German with assistance from Pioneer Association member Thea Rygg). His luck, however, worsened in England where he spent three homeless nights in Liverpool until he found refuge and opportunity at a Hebrew benevolent society in that city. The charitable organization paid for his passage to America where his luck began to change.

In Long Island, New York, Mr. Cohn found work successively as a schoolteacher, a night watchman and an accountant for a sawmill. Not yet content, he embarked on a six-month journey across the American wilderness, over the Rocky Mountains, to Oregon. He arrived in the Pacific coastal territory no later than 1848.

Far from home, veritably on the other side of the Earth, Adolph Cohn learned about the new gold-land of California. He and several acquaintances pooled together their meager resources and journeyed again through the wilderness. According to the 1850 German newspaper accounts, Adolph Cohn arrived “where Sacramento city now begins to rise and promises to become one of the most important cities, there was then only Captain Sutter’s fort with a few huts.” Mr. Cohn found a friendly reception there. As one of the first non-natives who planned to settle in Sutter’s domain, Cohn had the exceptional opportunity to set up a trade that dealt in all the wares he could find that might appeal to the ever-increasing influx of miners.

While in business at Sutter’s Fort, Adolph Cohn changed his name to Albert Priest. In two years, he became a rich man. Rich enough that he founded a steamship company with connections to New York. Adolph Cohn maintained contact with his family back home even while he struggled financially. Now,

he wrote to them of his good fortune and told them to let his creditors know that they would soon be paid. He returned to Braunschweig, and in all the cities in America and England where he had stayed, he generously donated to charitable institutions in amounts totaling 15,000 thalers.

The German narrative concludes with the spectacle of Adolph Cohn’s gold treasure. “Everyone admires the lumps of solid gold still interspersed with rock, the gold dust, and the bracelets made of raw gold plates of odd shapes. He likes to show everyone his curiosities and among them the linen sack with which he once roamed the wilderness of America.”

The fantastic German narrative of Adolph Cohn appeared to end *happily ever after*, but his adventures as Albert Priest had just begun. Details of Albert Priest’s accomplishments in Sacramento appear within several California newspapers. These articles always refer to him as Albert Priest and never Adolph Cohn.

The business that Albert Priest established at Sutter’s Fort in 1848 operated under the name of Priest, Lee & Co. His partner, Barton Lee, also arrived in California from Oregon Territory. According to the memoir of a third partner, P. B. Cornwall, the second largest mercantile house at Sutter’s Fort “was that of Priest, Lee & Co., which occupied a large compartment within the fort, a little to the right but almost opposite the great gate, the first compartment south of the Central Store House.”

Priest’s success allowed him the opportunity to become a founder and major stockholder of the California Steam Packet Co. with partners Thomas O. Larkin and Wm. H. Davis. Investors intended the company to operate as an “independent steam communication between San Francisco and Panama.” Albert Priest sold his “right, title and interest, in the firm Priest, Lee & Co. to partner Barton Lee, and posted notice in the February 12, 1850, *Daily Alta California* that he “will leave for the United States on the 1st day of March next” to purchase ships for the California Steam Packet Co.

The trip to New York took less than a month. Several Californians in the Empire City, including Thomas O. Larkin and Albert Priest, hosted a dinner on May 1 at the Irving House in Manhattan heralded as a “*Re-Union de los Californiensis*.” Shortly after the collation, Mr. Priest must have embarked to Europe for his fabulous story to appear in the June editions of German newspapers. Rather than rest on his laurels and retire a wealthy man in Braunschweig, he returned to California; the December 4, 1850, edition of the *Daily Alta California* announced his arrival in San Francisco.

Business in California required the attention of Albert Priest. His former partner, Barton Lee, expanded the mercantile enterprise to include exchange brokering, banking and dealing of real estate. Lee became one of the wealthiest men in Sacramento. Then, on August 6, 1850, Sacramentans awoke to the news that Barton Lee had overextended his assets due to excessive land speculation and became insolvent when real estate prices dropped. Mr. Lee still owed Albert Priest \$400,000, and to complicate measures further, some in the community believed that Albert Priest bore responsibility for the debts of Barton Lee because of the old firm Priest, Lee & Co. Later that year, reports surfaced of the dissolution of the California Steam Packet Co., although without significant loss to investors.

Albert Priest remained in Sacramento for the first half of 1851 attending to his financial affairs. During that time, he served as a manager for the charitable May Ball given by Sacramento Engine Co. No. 3. Many of the gentlemen whose names appeared on the list of sponsors and volunteer organizers of the event would later appear in the rosters of the Sacramento Pioneer Association.

According to the *Sacramento Daily Union*, Albert Priest left San Francisco aboard the steamer *Pacific* on July 14, 1851, with his lady - a surprising revelation because no reference to Mr. Priest's relationship status has yet appeared either before or after this statement.

For the next few years, Albert Priest settled in the village of Jamaica in Queens Borough, Long Island, New York, where in 1853, he served as a trustee of the village. The local newspaper, *Long Island Farmer*, reported that he donated liberally to the village's Protection Engine Co. No. 1. His generosity toward distant California continued as well. In January of 1854, the California State Legislature recognized Albert Priest, his friend and former partner Thomas O. Larkin, and two others, for gifting the State a life-size portrait of President George Washington. That portrait still hangs in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol.

In 1857, Albert Priest once again crossed the Central American isthmus and braved the ocean voyage to the western-most state. He arrived in Sacramento on May 20, 1857. The *Sacramento Daily Union* remembered him to its readers "as the leading member of the firm of Priest, Lee & Co. in the halcyon days of our city" and as "our old friend and pioneer of 1848." At the time, the Sacramento Pioneer Association had existed for over three years. Mr. Priest submitted his application to become a member of the pioneer society, which his former partners Barton Lee and P. B. Cornwall had already

joined. Members duly admitted Albert Priest at their meeting on August 14, 1857. During that same meeting, President A. C. Monson announced that his term as chief officer expired in a few days, after which business compelled him to take the next steamer to the eastern states.

Coincidentally, Albert Priest and A. C. Monson both boarded the *S. S. Sonora* in San Francisco for Panama on August 20, 1857. They crossed the isthmus by way of the Panama Railroad and connected with the *S. S. Central America* at Aspinwall on the Caribbean side. The steamship departed from that port on September 3, 1857. The wind became noticeably stronger as the steamship approached the Carolinas en route to New York. Unbeknownst to the captain, crew and passengers, the *Central America* steamed headlong into the path of a fast-approaching hurricane that stretched from Norfolk to the Gulf of Mexico.

A severe gale persisted throughout the day on September 11, 1857. The *S. S. Central America* took on water in the heavy seas as waves crashed over its deck. The fire went out in the coal furnace for the starboard engine and the ship lost maneuverability. The captain ordered the evacuation of all women and children onto lifeboats, as well as a few fortunate men including both A. C. Monson and Albert Priest. The *S. S. Central America* went down in deep water off the coast of Cape Hatteras in the early hours of September 12, 1857. Of the 578 passengers and crew, 425 perished. Thousands of freshly minted 1857-S \$20 gold Double Eagles, other gold coins, gold ingots and gold dust (in all, over \$1.6 million worth of treasure) also sank with the ship.

Albert Priest's name appeared on survivors lists printed in New York and California newspapers. The California papers recognized him as a Sacramentan, while the *Long Island Farmer* claimed him as a Jamaica resident. Strangely, Albert Priest seems to disappear from the public record following the wreck of the *S. S. Central America*; further references to the German immigrant, Sacramento pioneer and Long Islander remain elusive. Even his obituary has not yet been found. Considering, however, that Albert Priest's former life as Adolph Cohn had been veiled within historic German newspapers for nearly 175 years, perhaps new evidence will one day surface. His story certainly warrants further investigation.

Adolph Cohn, der dort den
Namen Albert Priest angenommen
hatte, wem nach zwei Jahren
sich als ein sehr reicher Mann zurück-
ziehen konnte.

A sample of 19th century *Schwabacher* script.

2023 Annual Dinner Meeting

One of the largest gatherings of Sacramento Pioneers in recent memory coalesced on the evening of Thursday, March 9, 2023, at Del Paso Country Club to conduct the Association's annual business of elections, and more importantly to bring old and new friends together for the much-anticipated event.

Business Meeting Called to Order

President Bill Gould, on the final evening of his tenure as chief officer of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, welcomed all in attendance, and expressed the pleasure it has been to serve the organization. He praised the membership, as well as the board of directors with whom he served, as an outstanding collection of ladies and gentlemen. Gould acknowledged Events Committee Co-Chairs Katie Brown and Barbara Collopy, and Administrator Shelley Ford, for arranging a splendid evening. President Gould then called the annual meeting to order.

In accordance with the bylaws of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, President Gould appointed this year's Nominating Committee comprised of Steve Huffman, Barbara Collopy, and Martha Hughes. President Gould gave the floor to Nominating Committee Chairman Steve Huffman to conduct elections. The membership unanimously approved the election of the following nominees:

Officers with terms ending March 2024:

President Lori Gualco
Vice President Katie Brown
Secretary Michael Shepard
Treasurer Thom Gilbert

Director with term ending March 2025:

Pat Mahon

Directors with terms ending March 2026:

Gary Bazlen, Tony Dick and Peter Noack

Scholarship Awards

Newly elected President Lori Gualco, chair of the Scholarship Committee, reached out to counselors in the Sacramento City Unified School District to encourage university-bound seniors to apply for the annually awarded Sacramento Pioneer Association scholarships. This year, the Scholarship Committee selected four graduating students who exhibited scholastic excellence to receive awards. Pioneers awarded Adaleiz Ore the Joan Kibbey Taylor Scholarship for \$5,000; Solomae Getahun, Ethan Machado and Sage Urban each received a Sacramento Pioneer Association Scholarship for \$5,000. All four McClatchy High School students attended the annual dinner meeting, each with a member of her or his family. We wish Adeleiz, Solomae, Ethan and Sage success in all their scholastic endeavors.

Pioneer of the Year Award

Each year the Sacramento Pioneer Association recognizes a member, or in this case members, who contributed significantly to the benefit of this organization. Secretary Michael Shepard introduced this year's recipients of the Pioneer of the Year award - Wendel Flint and Patsy Dwyer Butler.

Wendel joined the Sacramento Pioneer Association in 1988 upon nomination for membership by his friend George Artz. Wendel, in turn, nominated Patsy for membership in 2013.

During Wendel's earlier years, he frequented the TNT Club, operated by Gary Moon, in the Pioneer Association's historic Pioneer Hall on Seventh Street, between J and K Streets. The Hall's back room served as a popular watering hole among judges and lawyers. Shepard recalled that Wendel once jokingly suggested that more court cases were settled in that back room than in the court room.

Shepard mentioned that Wendel's beverage of choice was bourbon. Wendel later noted that he prefers gin. Whichever the liquor, it was not beer – a beverage that played a significant role in the vocation of Wendel's ancestors here in Sacramento. Wendel Kerth and Louis Nicholaus, both related to Mr. Flint, owned Capital City Brewery on Twelfth and I Streets – a brewery that they purchased from original Sacramento Pioneer Association member Martin Arenz.

Wendel Flint served as the Sacramento Pioneer Association's 76th president from 2015 to 2017. Patsy Butler served as secretary of the Association from 2013 to 2017. During Wendel's tenure, he oversaw the Association's charitable donation to Sutter's Fort that facilitated the complete renovation of the Fort's blacksmith shop.

Wendel and Patsy live on the historic Nicholaus Ranch in Galt. The original grant deed bears the signature of former California Governor and Sacramento Pioneer Association member Newton Booth. Over the years, Wendel and Patsy have hosted several Pioneer events at the ranch including the Annual Picnic in 2009. Most recently, in October of 2021, Wendel and Patsy invited the board of directors to hold a meeting in the Nicholaus Ranch barn. And what a barn it is! – beautifully renovated! At that meeting, Wendel presented as a gift to the Association a framed photograph from 1878 that depicts 109 portraits of members of the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers, which his friend, the late George Artz, gave to him several years ago. That photograph now hangs in the foyer of Pioneer Hall with a plaque that recognizes George Artz as well as Wendel Flint for the generous gift.

Following an exuberant applause, Wendel and Patsy approached the podium and graciously accepted the gold prospector statuette, representative of the Pioneer of the Year award, with a few words of gratitude delivered by Wendel.

President Lori Gualco, Scholarship Recipients and Pioneers of the Year



Adaleiz Ore



Solomae Getahun



Pioneers of the Year
Patsy Butler & Wendel Flint



Ethan Machado



Sage Urban



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Calendar of Events

2023

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Sunday, May 7 | Day excursion to San Joaquin County
Historical Museum at Micki Grove Park |
| Saturday, September 16 | Annual Picnic (location to be announced) |
| Saturday, October 7 | Overnight trip to the Dangberg Ranch
Minden, Nevada (details to follow) |
| Thursday, December 7 | Holiday Party (location to be announced) |