

SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 172ND YEAR

PIONEER NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

WINTER EDITION



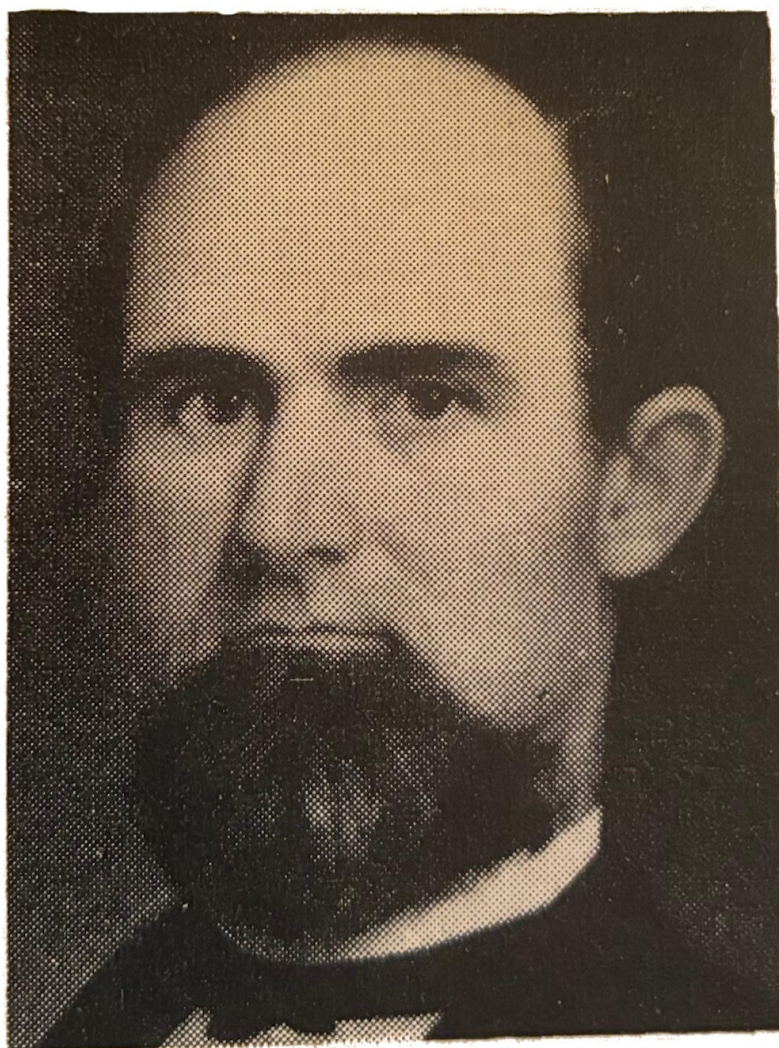
President's Message

**William F. Knox:
Pioneer Builder of
Sacramento**

**1871 Pioneer Hall and
Library Association
Concert and Lottery
Ticket**

**1872 News Article:
Pioneer Membership
Certificate**

**Pioneer Apparel
Available to Order**

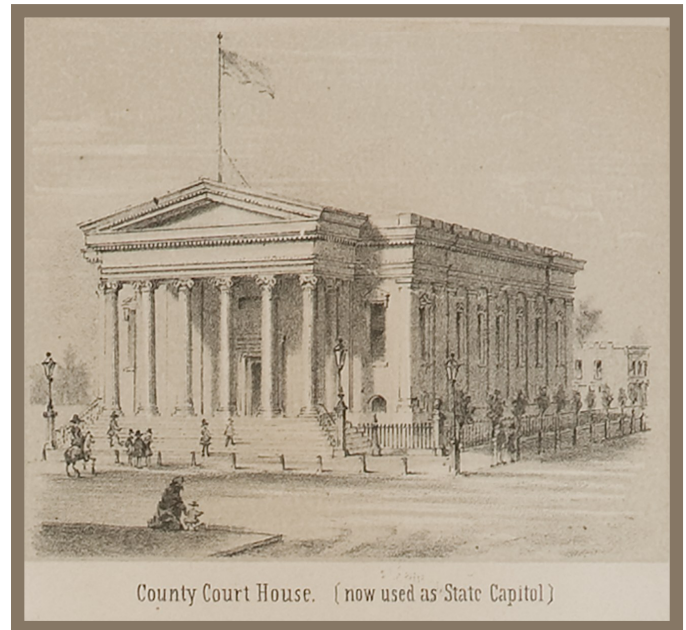


W. F. Knox
1827-1894

Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter

IN MEMORIAM

Gary Kurutz



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Vice President.....Barbara Collopy
Secretary.....Michael Shepard
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Term ending March 2026

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Term ending March 2027

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The above sketch of Sacramento's Grecian-revival style courthouse appeared in the border art of G. H. Baker's 1857 *Bird's Eye View* map of Sacramento City. W. F. Knox's partner, architect David Farquharson, designed the building and the firm Knox and Farquharson erected it. The California State Legislature met there from 1855 until 1869; the Sacramento Pioneer Association occasionally held meetings there as well.

Sacramento Pioneer Association Pioneer Newsletter™

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President's Message

Dear Members,

I'm thrilled to step into the holiday season, especially after such a wonderful start at our Pioneer Annual Holiday Party on Thursday, December 4th, at the Sutter Club. A heartfelt thank-you to Jennifer Sander for creating an evening filled with good food, great company, and holiday spirit. Eighty-nine members and guests gathered in the beautiful and historic Sutter Club Library - I can't imagine a better way to begin the festivities.

Since March, Molly Wiese, Jennifer Sander, and Trisha Setzer have been hard at work organizing an incredible lineup of events. Many of us enjoyed our annual picnic at the historic Orchard Gables home in Walnut Grove, generously hosted by Rusty and Julie Areias. Trisha and Mark Setzer also planned a memorable weekend adventure in Virginia City, complete with a cocktail reception at their Minden home and a delicious dinner at a local Basque restaurant. There was no shortage of time to reconnect, laugh, and even win a few dollars at the Carson Valley Inn.

Our Board has been busy doing what we do best - promoting our organization and preserving Sacramento history. I'm pleased to welcome our newest members: **Gloria Naify, Richard Rader, Brian Van Camp, Diane Mizell, and Jeffrey Johnson**. We're delighted to have you with us and look forward to calling each of you a fellow Pioneer.

Over the summer, we learned that our Pioneer Hall tenant, Le Macaron, was unable to continue operating due to financial challenges. Board member Roger Bilstad stepped in and worked through the situation with professionalism and care. Thanks to his efforts, we successfully concluded the former lease and welcomed a new tenant, **Crème Coffee**. This mother-daughter team brings experience, enthusiasm,

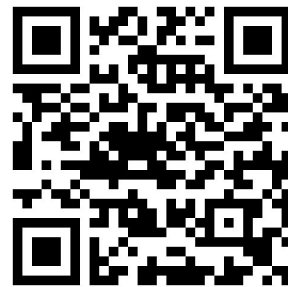
and a vision that aligns beautifully with our mission. They are working tirelessly to open their doors soon. When they do, please stop by for a cup of coffee or a bite to eat - and most importantly, introduce yourself.

In other news, Barbara Collopy has been busy connecting with college counselors in the Sacramento City School District to distribute our scholarship applications for students pursuing four-year university degrees. Gary and Mindy Bazlen have stepped into the leadership of Pioneer Grove, taking the reins from Rob Taylor. Rob has provided decades of steady guidance, and we are grateful he will continue to offer insight as needed. I have every confidence that Gary and Mindy will carry on his tremendous work.

Being President of the Pioneers remains a true honor. Alongside such a capable and engaged Board, I want to extend a personal thank-you to our dedicated administrator, **Shelley Ford**. She keeps us all connected, supported, and able to shine - and she shows up time and again with her family when extra help is needed. Shelley, we are grateful.

Wishing each of you a cozy winter season and joyful holidays spent by the fire with family and friends.

Katie



Scan the QR Code with your phone
for a visit to the
Sacramento Pioneer Association website

William Franklin Knox: Pioneer Builder of Sacramento

By Michael Shepard

When historians recount tales of early Sacramento development, they often invoke certain names as cornerstones of leadership whose labor, vision, and conviction shaped the city. Names like Sutter, McClatchy, Crocker, and Stanford come to mind. Among these architects of Sacramento's commercial and civic foundations, William F. Knox should stand pre-eminent. Surprisingly, this builder, public servant, fraternal leader, and past president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association remains little remembered in the annals of Sacramento history, not for lack of information, but rather, it seems, an oversight by Sacramento's nineteenth-century biographers. Even Winfield J. Davis, legislative historian and official historian of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, failed to include a full biography of Knox in *An Illustrated History of Sacramento County, California*, published in 1890, and only mentions Knox's name in passing in that extensive work. More inconspicuous sources, such as city directories, census records, and sparsely scattered articles within old issues of the *Sacramento Daily Union* over the course of nearly fifty years, reveal a man whose remarkable life remained interwoven with Sacramento development, through business and service, from the Gold Rush into the city's industrial expansion.

Born on July 25, 1827, in Holliday's Cove, Brooke County, Virginia (now Hancock County, West Virginia), William Franklin Knox learned the trade of carpenter and builder. At the age of twenty-two, he succumbed to the allure of California's gold and, like many young Americans, journeyed westward by overland trail. Knox's obituary states: "He arrived at Weaverville September 1, 1849, thus being among the earliest pioneers of the State." The membership roster of the Sacramento Pioneer Association confirms that arrival date. Almost no details have emerged regarding Knox's emigration except for a single citation in *Across the Plains, Mountains, and Deserts: A Bibliography of the Oregon-California Trail, 1812-1912* (2015), which references "Letters of William Franklin Knox Written to Mary Jane Knox Reporting His Trip West in the California Gold Rush, 1849-1850." These letters to his sister, archived at the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library in Independence, Missouri, have yet to be examined, but could provide fascinating insight.

Within months of Knox's arrival in Weaverville, at the foot of the Trinity Alps in northern California,

he relocated to Sacramento, a bustling riverport settlement that would remain his home for the rest of his life. The 1850 U.S. Census, enumerated on October 12 of that year, recorded the young Knox in Sacramento as a carpenter and property owner, already possessing \$2,000 in real estate.

Knox formed a partnership with David Farquharson, a fellow Mason in Sacramento's Lodge No. 40, under the firm Knox & Farquharson as early as 1853. That year, the May 25 edition of the *Sacramento Daily Union* printed an advertisement that read, "Knox & Farquharson, Builders and Carpenters, L street, north side, between 2d and 3d. Work done at moderate prices, and in the most approved style." The firm quickly secured major civic contracts, including construction of the new Sacramento County courthouse at I and Seventh Streets, designed by Farquharson and completed January 1, 1855. The California Legislature convened in this courthouse until 1869 when it moved into the permanent State Capitol building.

In 1857, Knox married Harriett Ann Farnsworth at the Cave Valley House in El Dorado County. Census records reveal that she also came from Brooke County, Virginia. Together they raised four children: William F. Jr., Edward, Margaret, and Hattie.

By the 1860s, Knox had entered his most consequential professional partnership with fellow Pioneer and contractor William Turton. The firm of Turton & Knox became one of the most prolific infrastructure builders in California. Their work reshaped the physical and economic landscape of the state: grading and constructing rail lines from Sacramento to Auburn, Watsonville to Soledad, Healdsburg to Cloverdale, Galt to Lone, and Colfax to Nevada City, under contract with the Central Pacific Railroad; building levees along Butte Creek and the Sacramento River; constructing irrigation and drainage works; paving Sacramento's streets; and raising entire city blocks to protect the capital from annual flooding. As their business endeavors advanced, so did Knox's growing involvement in Sacramento's social, fraternal, and civic institutions.

A devoted Mason, Knox served four terms as Master of Sacramento Lodge No. 40, rose to Grand Commander of the Knights Templar of California, and attained the 32nd degree in the Scottish Rite. When the Masonic Order laid the cornerstone of the California State Capitol on May 15, 1861, the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons assembled under the order of Grand High Priest William F. Knox at the Sacramento Pioneer Association's Pioneer Hall (then located at Confidence Engine Company on Third Street near J). Masons and Pioneers then marched together in procession to the Capitol

building site. In addition to Knox, several other notable Pioneers belonged to Sacramento Lodge No. 40, including Dr. John F. Morse, Rev. O. C. Wheeler, James Anthony, and John Quincy Brown.

William F. Knox played a long and active role in the Sacramento Pioneer Association. Founded in 1854, the Association sought “to cultivate the social virtues of its members, to collect and preserve information connected with the early settlement and conquest of the country, and to perpetuate the memory” of those who arrived before statehood. Knox’s name appears in a list of Constitutional members of the Pioneer Association printed in the *Sacramento Daily Union* in 1858. According to the Association’s Constitution and Bylaws, reprinted periodically until 1920, he served as Director (1861–62), Vice President (1862–64), Director again (1865–66), and President for the term 1866–67. He subsequently continued to serve as Director for many years, including the terms 1868–75 and, after a one-year interval, 1876–77.

In 1872, Knox served on a Pioneer Association committee that designed the Society’s ornate lithographed membership certificates, which depicted scenes of early California life, Sutter’s Fort, the State Capitol, and other symbols of settlement and progress. The certificate displays the Sacramento Pioneer Association’s name as the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers. The Board of Directors voted in November 1866, during Knox’s presidency, to change the name from “Association” to “Society.” In 1873, Articles of Incorporation, signed by Director W. F. Knox among others, made the name change official, and it remained so until 1966.

From 1854 onward, the Sacramento Pioneer Association met in various locations, including leased buildings, courthouses, and fire stations. In 1866, a committee composed of several Pioneers, including President W. F. Knox, “was appointed to report on the practicability of the Association purchasing or erecting a hall for its own use.” On January 22, 1868, the Pioneer Hall and Library Association, a joint-stock entity, filed Articles of Incorporation to “purchase a site and erect, improve, repair, alter and occupy” a hall for meetings, library rooms, and cabinet apartments for the Association, with the power to rent out unused portions. The Pioneers constructed their permanent hall on Seventh Street between J and K Streets, designed by architect N. D. Goodell and dedicated on January 4, 1869. As president of the Pioneer Hall and Library Association in 1877, Knox presided over its dissolution and the transfer of its assets to the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers, which already held most of its stock.

In 1862, Knox’s introduction to civil service commenced when he received an appointment to the Sacramento Board of City Levee Commissioners, along with Charles Crocker and others, as well as a board position with the State Agricultural Society. This launched a public career that spanned decades. Knox ran for the office of mayor as a Democrat in 1866, but fellow Pioneer Charles H. Swift, the Union candidate, won the election. Later that year, both Knox and Swift were nominated as candidates for the presidency of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, but Swift declined the nomination and Knox assumed the office.

Sacramento voters elected Knox to the Board of Education for the term beginning in January 1874. Controversy almost immediately beset the Board. During the preceding summer of 1873, the outgoing Board had adopted a resolution allowing Black children, upon examination, to attend the city’s Grammar and High Schools, a decision that quickly became a political flashpoint. After the new directors, including Knox, took office on January 5, Superintendent A. C. Hinkson ordered teachers not to admit Black students to white schools without his approval and suspended Grammar School Principal A. H. McDonald for disregarding the directive. Board of Education President and fellow Pioneer Felix Tracy called a special meeting to address the suspension.

At the January 8 special meeting, Knox voted against overturning the superintendent’s action, arguing that the issue was a legal matter that could not properly be decided at a special session. He offered a resolution declaring the 1873 integration decision a “palpable violation” of Section 1669 of the California Political Code, which required separate schools for children of African descent and for Indian children. Another Board Member amended Knox’s resolution to assert that the 1873 policy was nonetheless in harmony with the Constitution and laws of the United States. Knox opposed the amendment, but after it passed, he voted for the amended resolution. According to the *Daily Union* account of the meeting, Knox expressed that “He regretted this interference with the schools as much as any man, and said that when he came into the Board as a member he felt like resigning, rather than enter it, with these troubles hanging over it.”

The dispute continued into the spring, but in March 1874 the California Legislature amended Section 1669 to specify that if no separate schools existed, Black and Indian children were to be admitted to schools for white children, clarifying the legal ambiguity at the center of the controversy.

From 1874 to 1879, coinciding with his 1874 term on the Board of Education, Knox served six

consecutive years as Second Trustee of Sacramento (a position comparable to deputy mayor). The *Sacramento Daily Union* initially printed editorials critical of Knox for his Democratic Party affiliation following the Civil War and for being a “railroad man” at a time of dominating railroad influence in politics. Nevertheless, an editorial printed on March 11, 1878, stated: “The good citizens and taxpayers, regardless of party, placed Mr. Knox in the position of Second Trustee, and I believe every candid man will admit that in his official acts he has ignored politics, has worked faithfully for the best interests of the city, and is recognized as a vast improvement on any of his predecessors.”

When Ulysses S. Grant visited Sacramento in 1879, William Knox received the honor of dining with the President and his retinue at the Golden Eagle Hotel, accompanied by fellow Pioneers James McClatchy and George S. Evans. The Sacramento Pioneers extended honorary membership in the Society to the President, which he graciously accepted during his official appearance at Pioneer Hall.

In the following decade, Knox and Turton continued directing railway construction from Willows to Tehama, Putah Canyon to Lake County, and the ambitious San Pablo & Tulare extension, while Knox simultaneously served as District Drainage Commissioner, State Agricultural Society Director, and Trustee of the State Bureau Grounds. In 1890, friends across the political spectrum urged Knox to run for Mayor of Sacramento, which he considered but ultimately declined. In November 1891, he made an unsuccessful bid to serve on the Board of Directors of the newly established Sutter Club; fellow Pioneer and former Governor Newton Booth received ample votes to serve as president of the exclusive private social club for a second consecutive term.

On July 21, 1894, at the age of sixty-six, Knox collapsed at the downtown home of a friend while engaged in conversation. His death was sudden. At the service that followed, the Sacramento Society of Pioneers joined Masonic bodies and other civic organizations in forming a long funeral procession that contemporary reports described as one of the most imposing and extensive seen in the city. Members of the Pioneer Society marched alongside other groups to honor a man who had spent much of his life in Sacramento and who had held numerous positions in institutions devoted to improving the city he called home. William F. Knox lies interred in Pioneer Grove in the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery in the company of his fellow Pioneers.



Sacramento Daily Union, December 3, 1872

PIONEERS CERTIFICATES. – The Sacramento Society of California Pioneers have just received their certificates of membership, lithographed by Ferd. Mayer & Sons, of New York, from a design decided upon by a committee composed of W. C. Felch, O. C. Wheeler, A. P. Andrews, N. G. Goodell and W. F. Knox. The lithograph is in three tints, and in size 18 by 24 inches. In the oval center, which is 9 ¾ by 7 ¼ inches, are a view of Sutter’s Fort and the seal of the Society. At the bottom of this center lies a dead grizzly, a rifle lying across him, and surrounded by sheaves of grain, a plow and horn of plenty. Surmounting the center is a view of the State Capitol, and surrounding the same are illustrations of California’s progress since the gold discovery – the various modes of travel by which the El Dorado was reached, prospecting, mining, lassoing horses, the harvest fields, the vineyard and the railroad. The certificate is very neat and appropriate, worthy of a handsome frame, and bears these words “This certifies that _____, who arrived in California in 1849, is a member of the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers.”



At a special meeting on Friday, February 3, 1871, held by the Pioneers of Sacramento at Pioneer Hall, members present were asked to "consider and adopt some plan to liquidate the indebtedness of the Hall and Library Association." The building of Pioneer Hall, including the lot, cost \$14,000. The *Sacramento Daily Union* reported the remaining debt of the Association to be about \$4,000. Pioneers agreed to host a concert and lottery for the community - a money-making venture not uncommon at the time.

Courtesy of the Robert D. Livingston Collection



PIONEER APPAREL



A large assortment of
shirts, hats, aprons, bags, etc.,
all expertly embroidered with
the Sacramento
Pioneer Association emblem,
may be procured by visiting:

[www.companycasuals.com/
sacramentopioneer/start.jsp](http://www.companycasuals.com/sacramentopioneer/start.jsp)



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Calendar of Events

2026

January

Sunday, January 4

Anniversary of the 1869 dedication of Pioneer Hall.

Saturday, January 24

Anniversary of James Marshall's discovery of gold at Coloma in 1848 and the first meeting of the Sacramento Pioneer Association in 1854.

March

Thursday, March 5

Annual Dinner Meeting at Del Paso Country Club

December 2025