

SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 170TH YEAR

PIONEER NEWSLETTER

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WINTER EDITION



Sacramento Pioneers to Mr. & Mrs. A. H. Powers Aug 17th 1887

President's Message

Excursion to Dangberg Ranch

**Holiday Gala at the
Julia Morgan House,
Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023**

**Aaron Hubbard Powers:
A Gold Seeker's Silver Legacy**

**Congressional Recognition of
Sacramento Pioneer Association**

Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter



In Memoriam

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Cover image: A silver-plated platter presented by the Sacramento Pioneer Association to past President Aaron Hubbard Powers. An inscription in the upper-left corner reads: "Sacramento Pioneers to Mr. & Mrs. A. H. Powers, August 17th 1887."

Photo: Courtesy of Ann George

NEW MAILING ADDRESS

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President's Message

Happy Holidays, Pioneers!

The fall was busy for the Pioneers and unfortunately, I missed the two outstanding events: The Annual Picnic was held on September 23 in East Portal Park- it was an historic event with a talk on the history of the Italian quarter in Sacramento, Italian sandwiches from Corti Brothers and coaching in the bocce ball courts. Board member Jennifer Basye was responsible for this wonderful event.

The out-of-town trip to Minden, Nevada, took place on October 7, 2023. There was a picnic lunch at Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park and a talk about its history. Then cocktails were hosted by Mark and Trisha Setzer at their home and later the Pioneers enjoyed dinner at JT Basque Bar & Dining. Many members stayed overnight at the Carson Valley Inn & Casino. Trisha Setzer was responsible for planning and executing this fabulous event.

But that wasn't all - the Sacramento Pioneer Association was the recipient of an award and certificates of recognition. A Burnett Award for the Community Partner Award was bestowed upon the Sacramento Pioneer Association at the ceremony held on October 5, 2023. The California State Assembly (Assemblyman Kevin McCarty) and the United States Congress (Congresswoman Doris Matsui) presented Certificates of Special Recognition to the Sacramento Pioneer Association on the same date. Needless to say, it was a touching night for the Pioneers.

I hope you have very happy holidays and a wonderful New Year. I hope many of you attended the annual Holiday Party at the Julia Morgan House.

Best to all,

Lori



Aaron Hubbard Powers: A Gold Seeker's Silver Legacy

By Michael A. Shepard

Shelley Ford, administrator of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, received an unexpected email that piqued her interest. The author of the letter, dated September 21, 2023, introduced herself as Ann George of New York. She explained the reason for the communication pertained to a silver-plated platter that recently came into her possession. The broad surface of the serving platter contained a quaint etching that depicted a pheasant hunt. A careful application of silver polish revealed a previously concealed inscription that read: "Sacramento Pioneers to Mr. & Mrs. A. H. Powers, August 17th, 1887."

Living in the information age of the 21st century, Ann George located the website of the Sacramento Pioneer Association and made contact. She wrote that approximately two years ago, her brother passed away, and during the process of sorting through his belongings, his wife stumbled upon the intriguing heirloom. She believed Ann might have some insight into the platter's origin, but regrettably, Ann had no recollection of ever seeing it in her parents' home.

To provide some context, Ann expressed that she had some limited knowledge about the Powers family (named in the inscription), as recounted in stories shared by her mother. According to Ann's mother, Ann's grandparents served as caretakers on the Powers estate in New York. Both Mr. Powers and Mrs. Powers practiced medicine. Ann believed that Mr. Powers held a medical degree in psychiatry and had collaborated with, or worked under, the renowned Dr. Sigmund Freud.

Ann stated in her letter that the extent of this historical narrative, whether rooted in factual events or embellished by time, constituted the sum of her knowledge. She expressed, however, that she remained eager to learn more about the significance of the platter and the story behind it. The curious silver-plated platter with its noteworthy inscription certainly warranted further investigation by the Sacramento Pioneer Association. After extensive research, a compelling story unfolded.

To understand the significance of the silver-plated platter, one must delve into the life of Aaron Hubbard Powers, the same "Mr. A. H. Powers" referred to in the platter's inscription.

Born in New Durham, New Hampshire, in 1829, Powers moved to Boston at the age of ten. His unremarkable teenage years took a transformative turn in 1848 amidst the fervor of the California Gold Rush. Powers, along with his brother Lucius, made a

life-changing decision to join the Boston and California Mining and Trading Joint Stock Company. This cooperative, limited to 150 subscribers at a cost of \$300 per person, raised \$45,000 in capital, purchased a sailing ship for \$30,000 and mortgaged for \$15,000, leaving \$30,000 for supplies. The ship, christened the *Edward Everett* in honor of then-president of Harvard University, set sail from Boston Harbor on January 12, 1849.

The voyage of the *Edward Everett*, vividly recounted within the individual memoirs of fellow Mining and Trading partners William H. Thomes and Willard B. Farwell, brought the company to San Francisco on July 6, 1849. Upon arrival in California, Powers and fellow members of the mining cooperative tried their luck in the vicinity around Mokelumne Hill with unimpressive results.

The cooperative mining venture faced challenges as some members performed all the work while others could not contribute due to illness or injury. Eventually, the company sold the ship and remaining cargo, settled debts, and distributed the balance among the stockholders. This marked the end of the cooperative, allowing members, including Aaron Hubbard Powers, to pursue their individual paths.

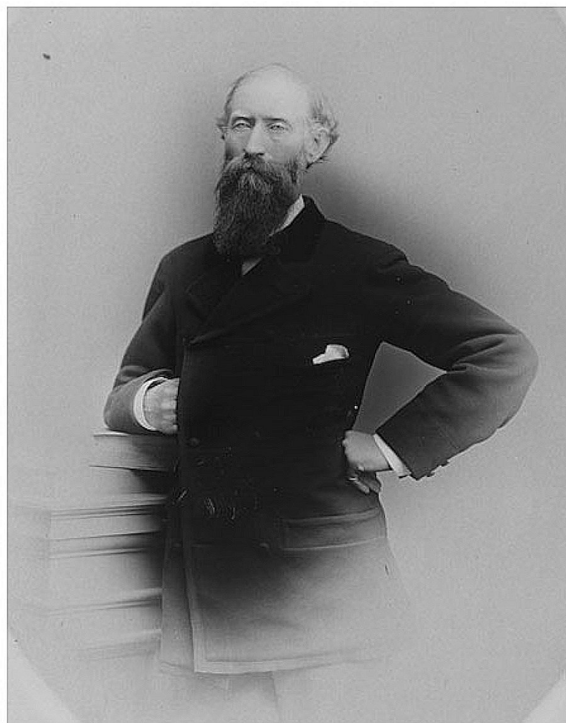
After leaving the mining venture, A. H. Powers established roots in California, marrying Louisa Emma Sweasey on July 4, 1853, in Redwood City. This union resulted in nine children, seven of whom survived to adulthood.

As documented in *Gone to Rest*, a collection of Pioneer biographies published by the Sacramento Pioneer Association in 2001, Aaron's life in Redwood City involved a lumber business that contributed to the development of California's telegraph line and San Francisco's wharf. Ten years following the *Edward Everett's* arrival, the 1860 United States Federal Census placed A. H. Powers in Campo Seco, Calaveras County, and listed his occupation as farmer. Voting records for Calaveras County extended his residency there until 1867. By 1868, Aaron moved to California's capital city and became a clerk at his brother's wine and liquor business, L. Powers & Co., as indicated by *Draper's Sacramento City and County Directory*. Aaron's entrepreneurial spirit led him to establish Powers & Henderson, a grocery and liquor business, with brother-in-law James Henderson on K Street, Sacramento, no later than 1871.

Active in civic life, Powers conducted primary and intermediate school examinations, he affiliated with the Freemasons, and served as commander of the Sacramento Battalion, Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.).

Powers submitted his application to join the Sacramento Pioneer Association in March of 1869.

The board approved his membership the following month during the organization's April 24, 1869, meeting. Powers served on numerous arrangements committees. For several years beginning in 1876, the Association elected him to the duty of marshal and then elected him as a director. According to the August 30, 1882, edition of the *Sacramento Daily Union*, "The newly elected Board of Directors of the California Pioneers met at their hall on Seventh street on Monday evening and organized by electing A. H. Powers President." Mr. Powers served as president for one year.



Aaron Hubbard Powers

A darkly humorous anecdote appeared in the May 24, 1886, issue of the *Daily Alta California* regarding Mr. Powers and his opinion of silverware:

A.H. Powers, the well-known liquor merchant, was out visiting a friend last evening. Refreshments were partaken of, and as Mr. Powers viewed the table, after doing justice to the viands, he remarked to the host: "You have too much silverware. Some of these nights burglars will get in here and make a big haul." Mr. Powers drove to his residence, at Seventh and Q streets, a few hours later, and found that burglars had been there during his absence. An inventory showed the following articles missing: Two dozen silver spoons, half a dozen silver tablespoons, ten silver dessert spoons, half a dozen silver napkin rings, half a dozen plated

napkin rings, an open-faced silver watch, Mr. Powers' Sunday suit of clothing and a small sum of money.

At the age of fifty-eight, the prominent liquor merchant and past president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, decided to retire from commercial life. In 1887, he purchased 250 acres of land west of Centerville, Fresno County, and embraced a new venture in agriculture with his family in the fertile lands of the San Joaquin Valley. The Sacramento Pioneers bid farewell to their esteemed colleague with a memorable celebration on August 17, 1887. According to the *Sacramento Daily Union* dated August 20, 1887:

On Wednesday evening last the "old boys" held forth in a sort of good-by social at Pioneer Hall, in honor of A. H. Powers and family, who were about to depart for Fresno, their future residence. There were about fifty Pioneers and their families present. The presentation of a keep-sake memento to Mr. Powers, and several social hours, with a well-provided banquet, were features of the occasion.

Perhaps the "old boys" of the Pioneer Association recalled with a sense of mirth Mr. Powers' unfortunate incident with his silverware the previous year, because they presented him with none other than a silver-plated platter, etched with a pheasant hunting scene, as the "keep-sake memento" mentioned above, now in the possession of Ann George.

The Powers farm in the San Joaquin Valley surpassed expectations and thrived under the management of A. H. Powers' son, Lucius. In 1906, Aaron Hubbard Powers entrusted the family farm to his capable son and returned to the East Coast for the first time since his journey to California aboard the *Edward Everett*. From the Atlantic shore, he then embarked on a European trip with one of his daughters. In Europe, his life-long adventure ended. At the age of seventy-seven, Aaron Hubbard Powers contracted pneumonia and passed away in the Austrian city of Vienna on April 10, 1907, with his daughter by his side. His remains returned to Sacramento to be interred in Pioneer Grove at the Old City Cemetery.

The children of Aaron H. Hubbard enjoyed successful careers in agriculture, education, publishing, private practice law and the California State Legislature, and medicine. Dr. William John Sweasey Powers, the youngest of the siblings, established a medical practice in New York and employed Ann George's grandparents as estate

caretakers. Ann had suggested in her email to the Sacramento Pioneer Association that Dr. W. J. S. Powers studied under or collaborated with Dr. Sigmund Freud. In fact, his wife, Dr. Lillian Delger Powers, had the affiliation with Dr. Freud in Vienna between 1924 and 1926.

Dr. Lillian Powers became an internationally well-connected psychoanalyst in New York. In a letter dated March 5, 1934, reprinted in *Psychoanalytic Filiations*, published in 2018 by Ernst Falzeder, Dr. Lillian Powers wrote, "I received my own Training Analysis from Professor Freud himself." Falzeder added as an endnote, "Freud remarked that when Powers was his analysand her interests were very much focused on her squirrels (for which she was a noted expert.)" The Powers couple lived at Red Squirrel Farm in Westchester County, New York, so named by Dr. Lillian Powers because at one time she possessed as many as 150 pet squirrels that she had collected from around the world. A curator of New York's Museum of Natural History called this squirrel habitat the "Ritz Squirrelton." In the 1920s, Dr. Lillian Delger Powers even produced motion pictures starring her squirrels.

Red Squirrel Farm might have been the estate on which Ann George's grandparents worked. Ann's grandparents probably received the silver-plated platter as a gift from the Powers estate following the death of Dr. W. J. S. Powers in 1938, or after the death of Dr. Lillian Delger Powers in 1953.

The unexpected email received by Shelley Ford unraveled a captivating story woven through time and across generations. Ann George's inquiry about a silver-plated platter led to the discovery of a remarkable individual, Aaron Hubbard Powers, whose life journey from the New England coast to the California goldfields, and from Sacramento to the San Joaquin Valley showcased resilience, entrepreneurship, and community service. The platter, bestowed upon Powers by the Sacramento Pioneers in 1887, became an unusual keepsake, eventually finding its way into Ann George's possession through a family connection. As the historical narrative expanded, it revealed the remarkable legacy of the Powers family, touching on fields as diverse as gold prospecting, psychoanalysis, and even squirrel conservation. This unexpected exploration not only brought forth the story of A. H. Powers but also highlighted the interwoven threads of lives across time and space, demonstrating the power of historical artifacts to bridge the past and present. The Sacramento Pioneer Association, through its diligent research and commitment to preserving history, continues to unveil the fascinating stories that lie hidden beneath the surface, connecting us to our collective heritage. ◆◆◆

Exploring History: The Sacramento Pioneer Association's Excursion to Dangberg Ranch

West of Minden, Nevada, on the other side of the Carson River, lies historic ground that has witnessed the evolution of American ranching over the course of several generations – the Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park. Recently, the Sacramento Pioneer Association embarked on a journey to this preserved time capsule, where the legacy of Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg and his family unfolds like pages from a history book.

Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg's story is one of ambition, and the American dream. In 1848, at the age of eighteen, he arrived in America from Germany, came out West, and by 1856 settled in the Carson Valley, Utah Territory (now part of the State of Nevada). Through hard work and foresight, Heinrich prospered, expanding his humble cabin into a grand house where he and Margaret Ferris raised five children.

In 1902, the Dangberg family formed the Dangberg Land & Livestock Co., marking the beginning of an era that would see the ranch grow to almost 50,000 acres. The family's influence extended beyond the ranch, as they founded the town of Minden in 1905, establishing businesses in agriculture, banking, and hospitality.

The Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park stands today as a testament to the endurance of the Dangberg legacy. Four generations of the family lived on the Home Ranch, leaving behind a wealth of artifacts, photographs, and documents spanning from the early 19th century to 1990. These treasures offer a glimpse into daily life in Carson Valley and the intimate moments of the Dangberg family.

On Saturday, October 7th, 2023, the Sacramento Pioneer Association, led by member Trisha Setzer, embarked on a memorable journey to the Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park. Approximately 45 guests made the 2 1/2-hour drive from Sacramento to Minden.

The day commenced with a picnic lunch at the historic park, providing attendees with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the picturesque surroundings while learning about the ranch's rich history. A special talk about the Dangberg family and their contributions to Nevada's history added depth to the experience.

What made the visit even more special was the personal connection some Pioneer members had with the Dangberg family. Former member the late Mimi Miller had an uncle who married into the

Dangberg family, adding a personal touch to the exploration of the ranch's history. Director Pete Noack, among the esteemed guests, shared a surprising revelation that he learned from a ranch docent. His great-grandmother, Effie, had a personal connection with the Dangbergs, and within the ranch's archive, a Christmas card from her was discovered.

Following the tour, cocktails were graciously hosted by Mark and Trisha Setzer at their home near Minden. The Pioneers then enjoyed a traditional family-style Basque dinner at JT Basque Bar & Dining.

The Sacramento Pioneer Association's visit to the Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park received much praise from those who attended. As the members explored the well-maintained historic ranch and engaged with its museum-quality artifacts, they not only connected with the past, but fostered camaraderie among their group. The trip, expertly planned by Trisha Setzer, left a lasting impression on all who attended, furthering a deeper appreciation for the Dangberg legacy and the history of the American West.

Pioneer Holiday Gala at the Julia Morgan House

Sacramento's Julia Morgan House embodies the genius of Julia Morgan, America's preeminent female architect. Designed in 1918 and constructed from 1919 to 1922, the house was commissioned by Lizzie Glide as a wedding gift for her daughter, Mary Glide Goethe, and Charles Goethe.

This architectural gem, a splendid example of Morgan's residential prowess, uniquely graces Sacramento as the only one of its kind in the city. Adhering to Morgan's favorite style, the Mediterranean, the Julia Morgan House boasts a symmetrical floor plan, exemplifying the architect's meticulous attention to balance and proportion. The façade, adorned with decorative friezes, molding, and ironwork, reflects a classic aesthetic, while the interior showcases Teak floors, doors, friezes, decorative panels, window frames, stairs, and balustrades that contribute to the house's warm and inviting atmosphere.

Julia Morgan, a trailblazer in her field, earned the distinction of being the first woman licensed to practice architecture in California. Morgan's legacy endures as an inspiration, making the Julia Morgan House a fitting venue for the Sacramento Pioneer Association's December 7, 2023, holiday gala.



2023 Burnett Awards

The Sacramento History Alliance hosted a tasteful awards ceremony on October 5 at the Sacramento History Museum. President Lori Gualco accepted an award on behalf of the Sacramento Pioneer Association for its more than a century-and-a-half commitment of historic preservation in Sacramento. In addition, the Association received honorary recognition in the California State Legislature by Assemblyman Kevin McCarty as well as on the floor of the United States Congress by Congresswoman Doris Matsui. Both institutions provided a certificate signed by the respective legislator.



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Calendar of Events

2023

Thursday, December 7 Holiday Gala at the Julia Morgan House

2024

**Wednesday, 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.**

Thursday, March 7 Annual Dinner Meeting

December 2023