



## THE PIONEER SOCIETY

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and the response was indeed gratifying. Thirty pioneers signed the original charter and many others were added in the years that followed.

To become a member then, the applicant had to arrive in California prior to December 31, 1850, or have been a resident of the county no later than April 26, 1853. Requirements were later changed to include residents of California as late as December 30, 1860, and these rules have been relaxed since then.

They convened in various locations until the log cabin, in its final state, was dedicated in Lugo Park (now Pioneer Park) in 1911; in the old Court House on Court and "E" Streets; the old City Hall near 3rd and "D" Streets; the Native Son's Hall, etc. But, no matter where they met, the halls rang with the joyous voices of these brave old men (in age, but not in spirit) and their wives, who were allowed to join the Society at a later date. Usually a square dance followed the meeting, to the music of a piano and hoe-down fiddler.

Their aims were simple: to preserve the history of California and San Bernardino County; to form a library and collect relics and curios; to create a fund to purchase property and erect a memorial hall thereon and to perpetuate the memory of the brave pioneers who left their comfortable homes in the East to brave the dangers of the plains in search of new land.

Their first President was George Lord, 88 years old, a New York expatriate who came to California in 1852. He served as the executive officer for six years. Other early presidents, or vice-presidents, included John Brown, Sr., a Rocky Mountain trapper and Spiritualist, who entered California in 1849 (his biography appears in this issue); David Seeley, a Canadian who joined the famed Pomeroy train that rescued the ill-fated Death Valley party in 1849; James W. Waters, Trapper, trader, hotel-owner, banker and builder of San Bernardino's famed Opera House; William F. Holcomb, who struck gold and hunted bear in the mountain valley now bearing his name, and who also served as County Assessor during the 1870's and as County Clerk from 1882-1890; and Nicholas Porter Earp, veteran of the Mexican War, Justice of Peace in Colton and father of the notorious Earp Brothers of Tombstone, Arizona fame. John Brown, Jr., became charter secretary of the Society and served in this position until his death in 1932.

They accomplished many noble aims. By their intervention, Sutter's Fort was saved from destruction. A pavilion in Lugo Park was a monument to their endeavor, and it was through their persistence over many years that a free road was finally completed to San Bernardino mountain settlements. They marched in every city parade over the decades and their membership ranks included not only furtrappers and miners, but Confederate and Union veterans of the Civil War; gathered for true fellowship and an abiding faith in one another. Veneration for the aged was one of the Society's primary virtues.

Many of its members were great men, in every sense of the word, and in future issues of Odyssey, we will print their fascinating biographies.

