

Pioneer Mutual News

Pioneer Mutual Hook & Ladder Society
3230 J Street
Sacramento, CA. 95816

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**Mark your
Calendar for the
PMH&L Annual
General
Membership
Meeting to be
held April 20,
2019 at: Metro
Fire Station 21,
7641 Greenback
Lane, Citrus
Heights, CA
Meeting Starts at
10:00 am. The
Interim Museum
will be open to the
public also. We
hope to see you**

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Pioneer Mutual News

Spring 2019

Rose Parade 2019 — An Excellent Adventure by: Doug Lent, Member at Large

John and Sandy Schwartzler are the folks who bring their Gold Rush era wagons to events such as Gold Rush Days. They also bring their amazing American Cream draft horses to pull the wagons.



The Schwartzlers have always wanted to participate in the Rose Parade in Pasadena on New Year's Day, and this year they were chosen to do so... a very big deal when you consider that only 18 equines entries were chosen out of the many that applied. The theme this year was Melody of Life, and the clincher for the Schwartzlers and their Gold Rush Fire Brigade may have been the fact that they recruited an old time brass band to be part of the festivities. The Gold Rush Fire Brigade personnel come mainly from the hills in and around the Georgetown area. So you might think that the band was some sort of makeshift outfit with few musical skills. Well let me tell you, this band is comprised of mostly professional musicians, and they sounded terrific.

Let me back up just a little. When the Schwartzlers got the nod from the Rose Parade committee, they immediately started a fund raising effort that was fully supported by the Native Sons of the Golden West. One of the past Grand Presidents, David Allen from the Auburn Parlor, started a fund raising effort by contacting all the CA parlors and asking for their support. The members came through with flying colors and raised enough money to send the Gold Rush

Fire Brigade contingent to Pasadena.

This turned out to be a very big logistical challenge. As it turns out 4 wagons, all the livestock to pull the wagons, campers, trucks, livestock carriers, feed for the animals, decorative material and many other things had to get to the LA area. This took time, energy, money and person power.

The word came out that John was looking for volunteers who wanted to be in the parade and who were also willing to help with the preparations beforehand. We were also



Doug Lent & Craig Barmby

warned that the parade route was 5.5 miles long and that we needed to be able to walk at least half that distance rather than ride on one of the wagons the whole time.

I had pretty much decided that I didn't want to spend the money (rooms were scarce and expensive) and wasn't sure I could walk at a fairly fast pace so I declined the invitation. Sometime later Craig Barmby contacted me and said he'd like to go but didn't want to go alone. He offered a very good deal on a rental travel trailer and asked if I'd go with him. Well shoot....that offer was too good to turn down especially for such a prestigious event so I jumped in. And started going to the gym three days a week to get in shape. Kevin Summers, a retired Sac Metro guy (and one of our fellow Red Shirts) drove down to also be with the group.

Down to Burbank we go. We stayed at the LA Equestrian Center which was about 10 miles

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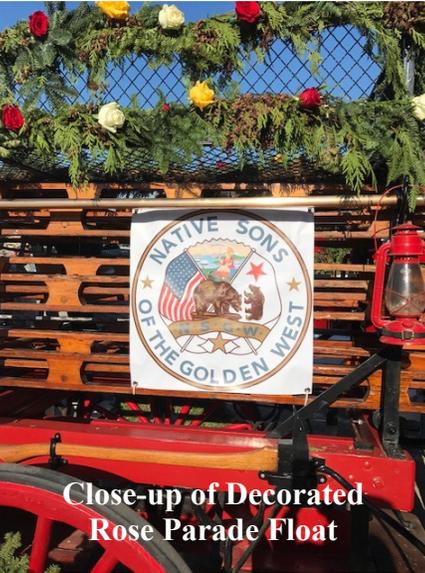
from the start of the parade.

That's where all the livestock was boarded for all of the equine entries. It was a beehive of activity. That's where we did a boatload of prep work... cleaning and decorating the wagons and participating in the

Equestfest which is a showcase for the equine entries and a warm-up for the parade.

Enter the weather factor. It was COLD. It turns out that we had a week of record or near record low temps, and none of us were fully prepared for it. Brrr.

On our first night there we were treated to a Wells Fargo welcoming



Close-up of Decorated Rose Parade Float

dinner. Several hundred folks enjoyed the food, beverage and general hospitality of Wells. Later on we got to see their three beautiful stagecoaches up close and personal.

Craig and I, and most of the rest of our delegation, had set up camp in the RV area at the Equestrian Center. They had minimal amenities, but at least we had an electrical hookup and fresh water.

What about food? No food trucks, fast food or restaurants in the immediate area, so what were we going to do? To the rescue come two guys who should be sainted; Paul Barry and Hans Enz of the SFO Fire Department. These gents have been helping our Red Shirts out at events for several years. They set up a temporary cooking area and fed all of us for the entire week. You can't imagine how comforting it is to be served a hot lunch when you're shivering in your boots. Thanks guys!

Work continued on the wagons for two days before the parade. There was brass to be shined, equipment to be cleaned, and then all of the flowers and greenery had to be attached to the four wagons. About 25 of us walked/rode in the parade, and an additional 15 or so folks helped with till the prep work.

The day prior to the parade the wagons had to be moved into the staging area. The night before the parade the livestock had to be moved to a temporary "horse pit" staging area near the start of the parade. Part of one of the LA freeways was completely shut down to accommodate all of the livestock and trucks needed to transport the horses.

On to parade day. We set our alarms for 3:00am (ugh) left our camping area at 3:30, arrived at the staging area around

4am and then stood around in 35 degree weather for three hours. Some of us walked up the hill to where all of the floats were staged for two reasons; to see the floats up close and to move around to try and warm up a little.

We were able to get within inches of the floats, and they are magnificent. Up close you can see the detail of the materials used for decorations.... Everything has to be organic, fruits, vegetables, seeds flowers, etc. Wow...we could see things as small as sesame seeds pasted on the floats. You name it, it was there. Lima beans, cranberries, corn husks, eggplants. You name it. We were also able to see inside a few of the driving compartments. Some of the floats have no direct vision to the front and so are driven via cameras. A couple of the driving compartments looked like space capsules.... very sophisticated and complicated.

So finally we move up and hitch up the wagons and get ready to line up in our assigned spot to enter on Orange Grove Avenue to get into the parade. We were to follow a float, the longest one, made by the Chinese American Heritage Foundation. It was a beauty consisting of two locomotives face to face on two separate trailers.

We pull our wagons onto Orange Grove Avenue and slowly move up to the main bleachers where all the TV cameras are located. BOOM. The locomotive float in front of us shoots a big display of streamers and confetti in the air. Wow sez us... we wonder if they are going to do this along the whole route or just in front of the stands. HISS... they shoot up a large column of white smoke from one of the locomotive stacks.. simulating a real steam engine. WAIT.... What is that brown smoke coming from the front locomotive? Why is the driver bailing out? Why is the float drifting backwards towards us? Why is everyone yelling? The key word they were yelling was FIRE! Well dang, we were told to get our wagons off the street and out of harm's way. No siree sez John Schwartzler. We've worked too long and hard to stop now. We can get the wagons around the disabled float and be on our way, so that's what we did. Our lead wagon had already bailed to a side street, so we lost them for the remainder of the parade, but the rest of us, three wagons with assorted personnel strutted on out... the brass band in the band wagon breaking into the Yellow Rose of Texas with skill and volume.

The rest was almost anticlimactic... if you can call about a million spectators yelling and having a great time anticlimactic. We were very well received by the crowd and had fun interacting with the people. They had also braved the cold night and early morning to get front row seats, many on the hard asphalt.

Five miles later it was all over. We were tired but exhilarated. Dinner and a few, ahem, adult beverages later we were refreshed and embraced in the amazing glow of having been is one of the truly epic celebrations anywhere.

It was excellent.



Please consider including Pioneer Mutual in your trust or will. There may be tax advantages in doing so, and it would be a great way to perpetuate Pioneer's goal of keeping alive the history of the fire service in the Sacramento Valley region.

2017—2018 Board of Directors

- * **Chairman** **Forrest Adams**
- * **Vice Chairman** **Phil Reif**
- * **Secretary** **Ric Dorris**
- * **Treasurer** **Craig Barmby**
- * **Collections Manager**
 Randy Wootton
- * **Restoration Supervisor**
 Gil Aymeric

Members-at-Large

- * **Dave Dolson** * **Lloyd Ogan**
- * **John Dorris** * **Dennis Powell**
- * **Jan Dunbar** * **Henry Ogg**
- * **Dana Hunt** * **Jonathon Williams**
- * **Doug Lent** * **Rick Viegas**

Rose Parade Ladder Truck Float



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 Email: pmhandls@att.net
Web Site: sacramentofiremuseum.org

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP (or membership renewal form)

Pioneer Mutual Hook and Ladder Society was founded on April 24, 1990 to establish a fire museum in California's capital, Sacramento. To join our noble effort, please fill out this application and send it, with your tax deductible contribution, to:

**PIONEER MUTUAL
 HOOK & LADDER SOCIETY**
 3230 J Street
 Sacramento, CA 95816

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Indicate your contribution level:

\$24 Contributing (yearly)
(Pipeman)

\$50 Sustaining (yearly)
(Engineer)

\$500 Life (one time)
(Foreman)

\$750 Patron
(Assistant Chief)

\$1000 & up Benefactor
(Chief Engineer)

501(c)(3) IRS tax exempt I.D. Number 68-0256228

*Restoration Supervisor
Gíl Aymeric*

At the restoration shop, the busy crew is preparing items for the new museum site in West Sacramento. Anticipating a firehouse dormitory display, we're refurbishing old beds that were saved from Sacramento City old fire houses. Many of the beds were hand-me-downs from hospitals and other institutions, and given to the Fire Department to use.

We are also preparing Fire Dept. ladders for a ladder display, a breathing equipment display used over the years, along with various tools used in the fire service. We will be building hands-on educational displays for aspiring junior firefighters. Remodeling of the building continues at the new museum site. A large roll up vehicle door is in place. Fire sprinklers have been relocated, the HVAC system has been upgraded, rough electrical has been installed, the floors have been cleaned and sealed. Sidewalks, entryways and bathrooms have been upgraded to comply with ADA regulations.

We've finally vacated the warehouse where we've stored some of our equipment for approximately one year. The wrecking ball was hovering. The restoration crew also relocated all our rolling stock to West Sacramento. Many thanks to the crew for accomplishing these mighty tasks smoothly and efficiently.

Attention all Firefighters~I need your stories for my book that I'm currently writing. Subjects may include, stories of humor, experiences of terrifying moments, stories of any significance that makes an impact. So far, I have collected and written 55 short stories. But, I need many more to finish my book. Tell me your story. Give me your verbal permission to use your name and your story. I will gather your story by phone interview, how simple is that?! Thanks for your consideration. Please call me at **916-705-2518. Thomas Kim, Certified Fire Investigator, Retired**

Continued from page 3—PMH&LS Museum Project

Improvements should be completed by the first week of March after which the collection will be moved to the new site. Opening should occur sometime in June or July.

We want to acknowledge the Landlord, UA 393 and MacLaughlin and Co., Property Mangers for all of their work in making this happen.

Treasurer's Report-Craig Barmby

First of all I would like to thank everyone who attended Pioneer Mutual's 28th annual crab feed. We had over five hundred people again this year and I think everybody had a good time. And again this year the food and especially the crab were excellent. Thank you to Conrad Frausto and all the great kitchen staff for a fine job as usual. Phil Reif presented another great raffle with Cheryl Croxton and the ticket ladies handling the raffle ticket sales. The raffle is an important part of the crab feed as it is all profit thanks to all the donations made for raffle prizes. Thank you all who contributed. Bob Luttrell and his crew kept the drinks flowing at the bar as he has done for all 28 crab feeds. Thanks Bob. The other thing that Bob does is he lines up our servers for the night. The Sacramento State Rugby girls have been our servers now for quite a few years and they really do a great job. We also had four volunteers from the Sacramento Fire Reserves to help us clean up. Thank you to everybody who worked so hard to make this crab feed another success. On the financial side we should net close to last year's profit which was about \$14,500. I don't have all the totals as of this writing and some of our costs did increase somewhat but I think we will be close to last year. I think I have forgotten to mention one person and that is our crab feed Chairman Doug Lent. Doug is the guy who coordinates the whole event and makes sure it all runs smoothly. Thanks Doug for another job well done.

There will be a lot of changes coming soon to Pioneer Mutual. We are close to opening our new museum and with that will be some changes in how we do business. At some point I hope we will be able to do more things on line such as membership renewals and merchandise sales. We are working on it and it will happen.

Lastly I would encourage all members to attend the **Annual General Membership Meeting** coming up in April. It's a good opportunity to find out what's going on and hear about the progress we are making. Hope to see you all there.

Future Events

The Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Old Sacramento will be March 16th at 1:00 pm

The Transcontinental Railroad's 150th Anniversary Parade from Capital Avenue to Old Sacramento will take place on May 8th at 10:00

Gold Rush Days is now called Old Sacramento Waterfront Days. It will be held May 25th & 26th (Memorial Day Weekend).



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to see Pioneer Mutual News in color.
Scroll down on the opening web page
and click on an issue to view.

Rose Parade Report

Gil Aymeric - Restoration Supervisor

It was a cold dark morning on January 1, 2019, in beautiful downtown Pasadena. The brave and colder members of the Gold Rush Fire Brigade, and the newly formed Gold Rush Band (along with two Pioneer board members), were assembling for the world famous Rose Parade. The boys were decked out in their finest red shirts, their wagons were elegantly decorated, and the magnificent horses were prancing with steaming breaths, eager to work.

In front of the Gold Rush units was a gigantic float with old time locomotives on it. The time came and the giant float started to move, with the Gold Rush contingent following.

Suddenly the locomotives belched smoke from their gigantic stacks and steam from their drive pistons. A dirty black smoke was also emitted from the float. The cry of "FIRE" rang out...the float is on fire! The Gold Rush Fire Brigade sprung into action, saving the damsels in distress...AND THE BAND PLAYED ON.

.....

Sacramento Regional Fire Museum
A Pioneer Mutual Hook
& Ladder Project
By Ric Dorris, Board Secretary

By the time you are reading this article Pioneer Mutual (PMH&L) should be in possession of its new museum building. Located at 3650 Industrial Blvd. in West Sacramento, the almost 14,000 square foot building will be home to the vast collection of artifacts and vintage fire apparatus. In order to generate new funding for this project, the new facilities will also serve as an education and event center. It will be available for rent for private functions such as birthdays, retirement parties, etc.

After an extensive search of the greater Sacramento Region, this building was selected as the most suitable for the project. PMH&L was searching for a building that was of sufficient size, affordable and as close to downtown as possible. A short drive from Downtown, the new building is easily accessible from I-80.

Several months ago the Board of Directors entered into a 5-year lease. Since that time the building has been undergoing major tenant improvements to make it ready to house the museum. Improvements included, new flooring, new ADA approved bathrooms, wall relocation and a roll-up door to accommodate apparatus.

Continued on bottom of page 6

Who was *Challenger Fire Apparatus*, and Who Was Ollie N. Hirst?

By: Jan Dunbar

It is not known by many in the local fire community that there once was a notable fire apparatus manufacturing facility in our local Sacramento area during the 1930's and 1940's. It was located on Arden Way, just north off of Del Paso Blvd. in North Sacramento. Its name was "**Challenger Fire Equipment Company**". Just who was this company called **Challenger**, what was their influence on the local fire community, and what happened to them?

This intriguing story must start by first looking at the biography of the individual who founded **Challenger**. His name was Ollie N. Hirst. Ollie was a fire fighter with the San Francisco Fire Department during the first decades of 1900's. He at one point rose to Engineer, and was assigned the special duty

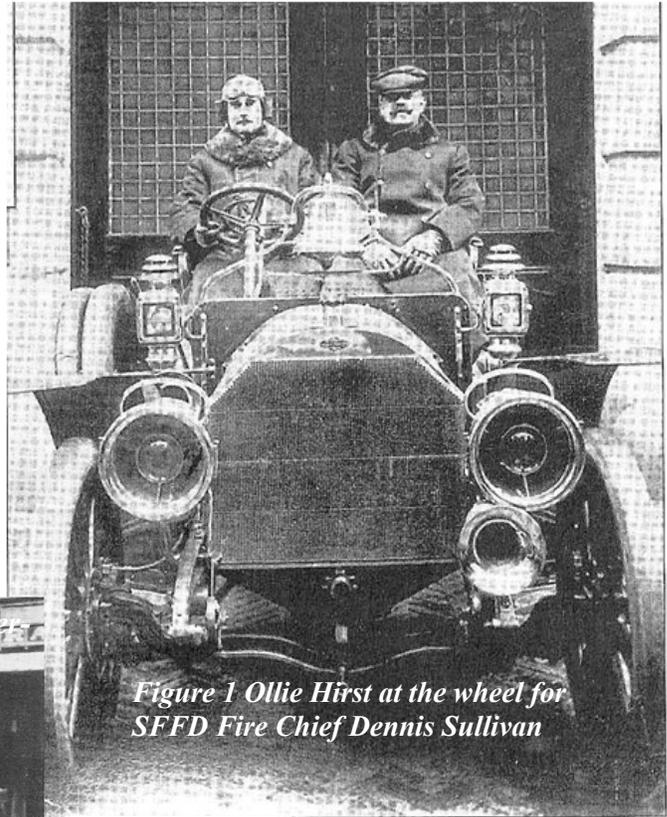


Figure 1 Ollie Hirst at the wheel for SFFD Fire Chief Dennis Sullivan

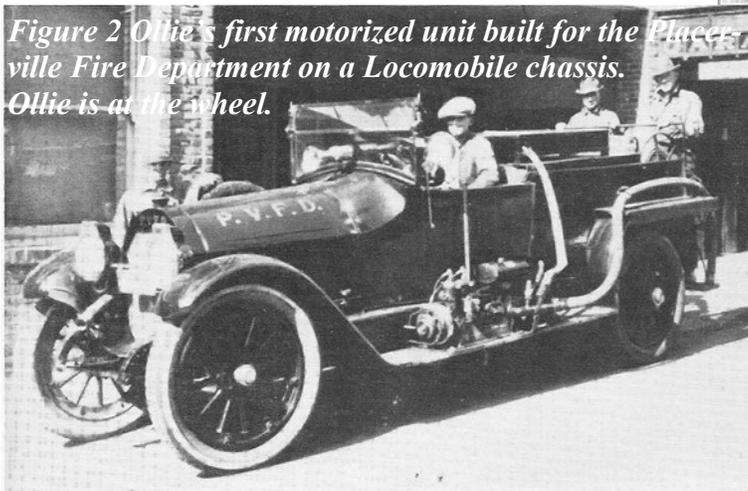


Figure 2 Ollie's first motorized unit built for the Placerville Fire Department on a Locomobile chassis. Ollie is at the wheel.

Rather abruptly, Ollie departed the SFFD (unknown if he retired or just quit), and moved to Placerville, CA. before 1922. There he went into business building small portable pumps for farmers for their irrigation needs. His favorite pump to use was an Evinrude, and the engine too was a 1 cylinder 1.5 HP Evinrude which was introduced

of being the Fire Chief's personal driver, a position he held for many years. It included maintaining that position for fire chief Dennis Sullivan during the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and fire, where Chief Sullivan lost his life due to a building collapse (*see figure 1*). Later Ollie spent some time in the San Francisco Fire Department shops working on apparatus, and was evidently included on the design and manufacture by the SFFD shops of their now historical aerial Water Towers.

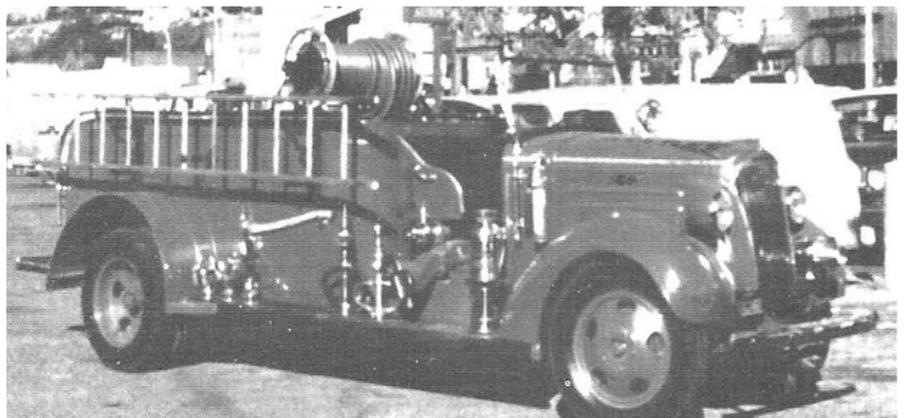


Figure 3 1937 500 GPM 11.5 a Chevrolet chassis for Truckee F.D.

by the innovative outboard motor company of the time in 1909. The popularity of Ollie's portable pumps grew and so did his business reputation. During this time, the Placerville Volunteer Fire Department approached him to

inquire if he could build for them a more powerful and roadworthy unit (see figure 2). He accepted this request, and purchased a touring car from the Locomobile Automobile Company and converted it for his first piece of motorized apparatus. Locomobile went out of business in 1922, hence the 1922 date noted above as the latest he could have departed SFFD.



Figure 4 Ollie at the wheel delivering Hagginwood's first 500 GPM 1938 Fageol pumper

of apparatus *Challenger*. He provided units for Truckee F.D., Quincy, and for East Bay Municipal Utilities District, Benicia, among others. By 1936 he moved his business to a larger facility at Arden Way and Del Paso Blvd in North Sacramento. One of

the first pieces of fire apparatus Ollie built at Arden Way was a 500 GPM pumper on a 1938 Fageol chassis for the Hagginwood Fire Department (see figure 4). The powerful gasoline Hall-Scott engines (with rare overhead cams) were his favorite motor and proved excellent for climbing the steep dirt roads of the Sierra foothills. His success brought him many new orders. Between 1937 and 1942 orders for his powerful units increased to include the fire departments of Fremont, North Sacramento (see figure 6), Del Paso Robla, Ashland, Oakland, Crockett, Stockton, and the Auburn Volunteer F.D., with two more for Hagginwood (see figure 5).



Figure 5 Hagginwood purchased 3 units from Challenger, this Rescue Squad was and Salvage their 2nd order from Ollie.

During WW II he closed his operation on Arden Way and took the job of the first fire chief of Sacramento Signal Depot when it officially opened September 24th, 1945. It was re-named Sacramento Army Depot in 1962.

Ollie Hirst passed away in 1948.

Business was good, and he switched to using Pierce Arrow chassis for the other apparatus he built for several other surrounding communities in the foothills of the Sierras, including a unit for the (South) Lake Tahoe Fire Patrol.

Perhaps seeing a possibility to expand his new lucrative business in fire apparatus manufacture, Ollie suddenly departed his ties with Placerville in 1932, and moved his business to Franklin Blvd, Sacramento. It is unknown how many pieces of motorized fire apparatus Ollie built at the Franklin Blvd location, but business was evidently very good. Fageol was now his favorite chassis and he named his line

Figure 6 North Sacramento received this Challenger 500 GPM pumper in 1940. Picture taken on Arden Way.

