



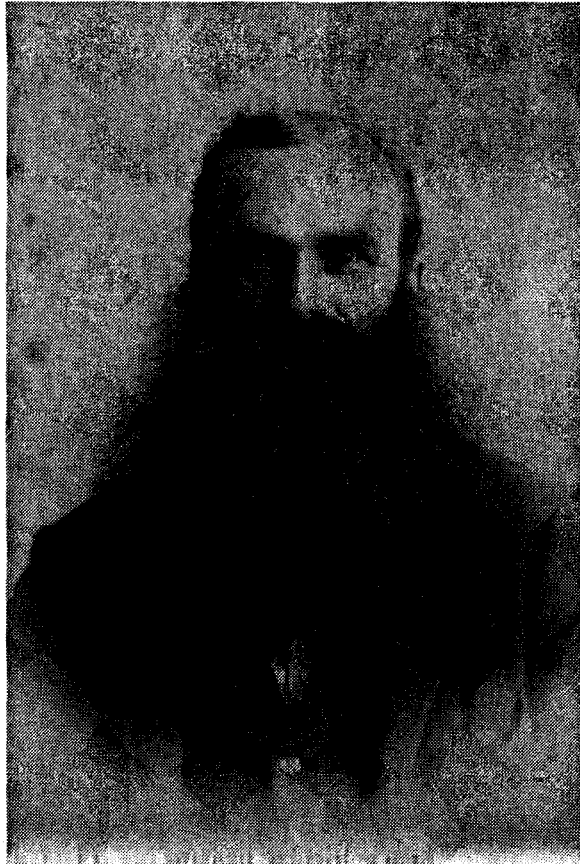
THE BOARD AND BATTEN

Newsletter of the Pacific Grove Heritage Society

August / September 1994

The Inside Stories

- ☞ R. G. Mitchell,
the first
postmaster?
- ☞ Julia Platt's six
shooter
- ☞ A lion visits the
Grove
- ☞ Democratic
Landslide
- ☞ Boo to Science!



*Robert Grant Mitchell "Whistling Bob"
(1850 - 1919)*

25th Annual Victorian Home Tour
Sunday October 9, 1994

2



107 12th Street, home of R. G. Mitchell and his family. Girl in front may be Phoebe, one of the daughters. Notice Christian Church in background. Photo circa 1898

R. G. Mitchell

Bob Mitchell was born in 1850 in Indiana. Little is known concerning his life in Indiana, but on his way west, he worked for awhile as an express messenger for Wells Fargo Co. When he arrived in California, he settled in the San Jose area and spent much of his remaining life between San Jose and Pacific Grove. He was always referred to as "Whistling Bob" because it seems he was always whistling.

He is also referred to as Pacific Grove's first postmaster. Originally the position of postmaster was tendered to Willis B. Joyce; Mr. Joyce, however, declined and John B. Norton, appointed May 21, 1886, was the real first postmaster in Pacific Grove. Records indicate that the office was discontinued on July 16, 1886. It was later re-established on January 6, 1887, when "Whistling Bob" was appointed the first postmaster of the current post office. It was said that he also kept carrier pigeons to deliver messages back and forth with his relatives in the San Jose area. He served as the postmaster until 1894 when he was succeeded by E. B. Dangerfield.

For the last 14 years of his life, he was a successful orchardist on Willow creek near San Jose, where he died in March 1919. He left a wife, Carrie, and four children: Phoebe, Almira, Harry and Roberta. Almira (Mrs. Robbins) died at the age of 92 in Pacific Grove in 1987.

The family home, built in 1892, is still at 107 12th Street. Although it was always the Mitchell family home, early tax records indicate the actual owner was J. B. Snively from 1892 until his death in 1904, when Daniel Snively was listed as the owner. In 1906, R. G. Mitchell became the owner of record. No one seemed to know who Snively was or what the arrangement was between the two. Mrs. Robbins always insisted her father was the owner since it was built.



1979 photo of 107 12th Street. Notice board and batten replaced by horizontal siding and front porch enclosed.

W

Julia Platt Wielded Mean Six-Shooter

(As told by Julia B. Platt in the Tribune of 12/20/32)

In the fall of 1899, I came to Pacific Grove, attracted by the little city's world-wide fame in the field of biological research. Soon thereafter I bought five lots extending from Laurel Avenue down Seventeenth Street, built thereon a small cottage (229 17th) and started a garden and lawn.

There was at that time a wood yard below Laurel between Sixteenth and Forest, enclosed by a high board fence with a wide opening on Sixteenth Street through which chickens strolled on scratching tours by day and horses wandered upon browsing expeditions by night. These creatures appeared to feel that long and unprotected use of the lots which I had purchased gave them rights and privileges thereon which were not listed in my deed. In self-defense I built a wire fence six feet high about the property. The chickens simply flew to the top thereof and crowed insult, adding to injury. Thereupon I went to Dr. Trimmer, who was then the Mayor of Pacific Grove, told him my grievances and asked permission to shoot these chickens. "Why, certainly, certainly," he replied, looking somewhat amused, probably confident that I would do nothing of the kind. However, I bought a second-hand pistol, opened the gate in my wire fence and dared the chickens to come in. Two of them accepted the challenge. Bang, bang, and two dead chickens were thrown over the fence.

The whole neighborhood went up in the air. Messages flew hither and yon. "Lives of the passing public had been endangered". "People within their thin-walled cottages were not safe." A listener might have pictured me shooting wildly at the sun and stars and accidentally killing the chickens standing at my feet. Marshall E. B. Rich appeared and solemnly told me that my permission to shoot was withdrawn. For a day or two I studied trapping devices. Then Constable Lee called to ask if I would circulate a petition asking the city trustees to pass an ordinance prohibiting chickens at large. He said he had received many complaints but could not arrest a chicken and was otherwise powerless to act in default of an ordinance covering the case.

A goodly number of signatures were quickly obtained and I presented the petition at the next board meeting. Now it so happened that some of the city trustees - including the chairman of the ordinance committee - kept chickens that ran at large. But they were all nice chickens that never did any harm which apparently warranted the conclusion that chickens as a whole were grievously maligned. My petition was courteously received and placed on file.

I attended the next board meeting and the next, awaiting action on that petition. In those days it was unusual for a woman to attend board meetings. As I appeared time after time there was an exchange of smiles and whispered confabs with glances in my direction. Trustee B. A. Eardley went to Alaska, returned from Alaska, and finding me still in attendance, remarked, "Haven't they considered your petition yet, Miss Platt? I move that it be made an order of business for the next meeting." Motion carried and on the sixth day of October, 1902, an ordinance was passed prohibiting the running at large of chickens and other domestic fowl in the City of Pacific Grove. Monterey hooted at the big city airs of Pacific Grove. But, as I remember, that city passed a similar ordinance in less than a year thereafter.

Grove Welcomes Lion Movie Hero

(From July 11, 1930 issue of P. G. Tide)

Headed by Mayor J. P. Pryor and a reception committee of the town's most prominent citizens, Pacific Grove gave a rousing welcome to Leo, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lion, Wednesday noon. This beast, the most famous lion in the world, paid a brief call here as a portion of his world tour, now in progress. Leo has a deluxe cage, fitted with glass and all "modern comforts and conveniences." In fact, he travels in pullman style.

Following the official welcome by the mayor, Volney Pfeiffer, the chief attendant of the renowned king of beasts, described in glowing terms the nature of his royal charge. He gave all the statistics in regard to the lion. As the speaker was dressed in a brilliant red uniform, he was quite an intimate part of the show. Leo was induced to perform a few simple tricks to show himself to advantage to the large crowd of local people who gathered to witness the event. The festivities took place in front of the Grove theater.

To the tune of popular melodies played on a calliope, Leo left the city, being escorted by the city fire truck and a caravan of autos. To the movie fans, Leo is known because of his appearance at the beginning and ending of every M.G.M. film, under the motto, "Ars Gratia Artis."

Owner of Unique Home Turns Fireman

(From the 8/12/32 issue of the P.G. Tribune)

A small blaze that might have developed into a serious fire was extinguished at noon yesterday through the quick action of Mrs. Vincent Adams.

When a defective water heater started a blaze at her home at 144 1/2 Carmel avenue, Mrs. Adams first called the fire department and then began a bit of fire fighting on her own account. The Grove fire department was quick, but Mrs. Adams, being on the spot, was quicker. Using a garden hose, she not only doused the blaze in short order, but soaked herself and a few inquisitive children in the bargain.

Thanks to Mrs. Adams, the hose and the presence of the fire department, an interesting little home was spared further damage. The place was built by a ship's carpenter working under the direction of Mr. & Mrs. Adams. As the structure could measure only six feet by 26, special construction talents were needed. Things had to be compact and ship-shape. So a ship's carpenter got the job.

As a result of his ingenious work, everything in the Adams' home folds up and disappears in marvelous fashion. It is a model institution.

7



107 12th Street soon after construction, probably a housewarming party. Bob Mitchell & his wife Carrie on porch roof left side. Other man on roof is Horace Keesling and his wife Annie Bacon, sister of the actor Frank Bacon. The other people are friends and relatives from San Jose.

7

July 11, 1911

Down The Piney Path

News of old Pacific Grove from the Salinas Weekly INDEX (August - December 1887)

by E. C. Davis

- + The extension of the Southern Pacific to the Grove is believed to be a thing of the near future.
- + A new town is being established by Mrs. Milton Little and (Delphin) Delmas, halfway between Pacific Grove and Monterey.
- + Dr. O. S. Trimmer has joined his wife in Pacific Grove in their cottage.
- + Pacific Grove is filling up again. Sacramento and Stockton people are now coming in. El Carmelo (Ed. note: the hotel, not the cemetery) is crowded with guests.
- + A millinery establishment has been opened at Pacific Grove.
- + The Grove has about 1500 visitors at present including 300 ministers attending the Methodist Episcopal conference. The Methodists propose to build a temple there next year capable of seating 1500.
- + The Pacific Grove Retreat Association has received from the Pacific Improvement Company control of the ground one mile around the chapel (Chautauqua Hall). The Association is an incorporated association of ministers and laymen.
- + Mr. and Mrs. Eardley will soon move to Pacific Grove where Mr. Eardley will engage in the real estate business, having already purchased a block of lots as a starter.
- + Within the last fortnight the fishermen have been in their glory on account of the advent of vast schools of mackerel that were chasing and feeding upon myriads of sardines. The sea lions also participated in the sport.
- + The notice "gone to San Francisco for a few days," accounts for the deserted appearance of our usually attractive drug store and the absence of Mr. Tuttle, its popular proprietor.
- + A survey of Caledonia Park has been made by Mr. Ulrich, the famous Del Monte landscape gardener.
- + The plans for the new Methodist Episcopal Church have been received from Philadelphia and the ladies of the congregation are busy planning for furnishing the same.

8

Democratic Landslide Engulfs Pacific Grove

(From the Nov. 6, 1936 Tide)

Pacific Grove, for the first time in the city's history, has gone Democratic. This city, along with practically the entire nation, was engulfed in the landslide for the reelection of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Vice-President John N. Garner. Pacific Grove likewise joined in the overwhelming victory of Congressman John J. McGrath in his campaign for reelection, giving him a substantial margin over his Republican opponent, Alonzo L. Baker of Mountain View.

The one Republican candidate to win out in the election was State Senator Edward H. Tickle of Carmel Highlands. He defeated Attorney Ray Shellooe of Salinas. Pacific Grove gave him a wide margin, as did other Monterey Peninsula communities and also San Benito county, while Shellooe carried his home district in the Salinas Valley.

Other presidential candidates receiving some votes in Pacific Grove were from the Prohibition, Socialist and Communist parties.

Boooo For Science!

(By Bill Gould in the 11/06/36 Tide)

Modern science may have worked wonders for the comfort and ease of the American people, but it has just about wrecked the age-old traditions of Halloween.

So far as we have been able to ascertain, there wasn't a single gate stolen in Pacific Grove last Saturday. Time was when the morning after Halloween one could look along most any street and see at least two or three gates hanging from the tops of telephone poles. People just do not build fences and gates any more.

So far as we could tell, this week, the town had not one wagon put up on the roof of the schoolhouse - or any house. Kids today are willing enough, no doubt, but there just aren't any wagons to be found. Even the favorite stunt of sneaking a rope out of the belfry of the schoolhouse, up on Pine avenue, and of ringing the bell from a nearby tree, was not attempted.

Mouse Escapes!

(From the 5/17/29 Tide)

Eight men, 3 dogs, 4 small boys and a whole 8-foot cord of wood declared war against one measly, diminutive, consumptive mouse last Monday at Tom Work's wood yard. It is needless to remark that the mouse escaped.

9

Others Saw Us Through Postcards



Sent to Mrs. E. J. Bolce in Salinas c/o the Natividad Mail Carrier.
Postmarked May 8, 1906.

25th Annual Victorian Home Tour

This year's home tour will be held on Sunday, October 9. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend as we need and encourage your attendance. Tickets are still only \$10.00 and can be purchased now, or on the day of the tour, at the Chamber of Commerce office at the corner of Forest and Central. Please call the Chamber office at 373-3304 for further information.

Some of the homes on this year's tour are: 352 Central (1888), 483 Laurel (1905), 410 Lighthouse (1903) and 227 Granite (1907). Other homes are pending.

New Members

Jodeen (Fisher) Colletto
Shirley Colangelo
John & Louise Fredrickson
Lorraine Chamberlain
Fred Adam Steiner
Nancy Selfridge

Douglas & June McKnight
Donald Wright
Laurie & Mark Baker
Mrs. Judi Lovell
Thelma & Delbert Cram
Millie Rickey

Share The Heritage With A Friend Annual Family Membership \$10.00

Members receive *The Board and Batten* newsletter of the Heritage Society of Pacific Grove.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

\$ Please return to The Pacific Grove Heritage Society
Box 1007 ♦ Pacific Grove, CA 93950 ♦ Telephone 372-2898

*The
Heritage Society
of Pacific Grove*
P.O. Box 1007
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Permit No. 30
Pacific Grove,
CA 93950

Board of Directors

President: Geoff Welch
Vice President: Pat Harr
Treasurer: Don Beals
Secretary: Carrol Patterson

Marilyn Arioto Bob Gunn
Bobbie Hall Lucinda Jaconette
Christie Martine Elizabeth Moore
Patrick Price Muriel Pyburn
John Renz Irene Tope
Pam Verduin Adam Weiland

The Board and Batten Staff

Adam Weiland
Colin Gough
Typesetting courtesy of
Pro-Log Corporation

The Barn

Laurel & 17th
(408) 372-2898
Hours
Sat. 1-4 p.m.

**NATIONAL TRUST
MEMBER
ORGANIZATION**