

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Pioneer Firefighting**

Early California Firehouses and Equipment is the subject of a series of keepsakes, numbering 12 folders, being distributed to the members of the Book Club of California during 1961.

They are edited by Albert Shumate and designed and printed by Lawton Kennedy of San Francisco. Each deals with an aspect of pioneer firefighting.

The first in the series is "The Story of Old Broderick," the first fire engine built in California, 1855. The text for this story was written by Marcia Tucker, of the public relations department of the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company.

The second is the history of the Columbia State Historical Monument's first fire department established by the Tuloume Engine Company No. 1 in 1861. Dr. Aubrey Neasham, secretary of Western Heritage Incorporated, formerly State Historian of the California Division of Beaches and Parks, wrote the text for this article.

Sacramento Engine Company is No. 3 in the series. Hero Eugene Rensch, author and historian of Sacramento, contributed this number.

May W. Perry, secretary of the Placer County Historical Society and curator of the Historical Museum at Auburn, is the author of the Auburn volunteer firefighters and firehouses.

The Nevada City Hose Company history is written by Helen S. Giffen, librarian of the Society of California Pioneers and a former resident of Nevada City.

Number 5 has Oscar Lewis, author, and member of the board of directors of the Book Club of California, as the historian for the early day fire engine of San Francisco. Each folder is illustrated.

The story of Old Broderick, the first fire engine built in California (in 1855), relates that a visiting fireman vacationing in British Columbia made a discovery that brought back to San Francisco one of the earliest and most colorful citizens - Broderick No. 1.

Weather-worn and stripped of its brass trim by souvenir hunters, "Old Broderick" was found by a Daly City volunteer fireman in a park in the town of Kelowna, B.C.

The find was reported, and in 1947 the old hand-drawn pumper was bought and returned to its home city with pomp and parade. Painted and newly fitted, the engine now stands on public display in the main lobby of the J. B. Levison Memorial Collection of early firefighting equipment of the San Francisco Firemen's Fund Insurance Company.

Marcia Tucker writes: "The discovery and return of this doughty veteran of San Francisco's volunteer days disclosed a story to delight the heart of any fire buff. It is the story of youth and bright triumph, decline, disuse, indifference. . . then recognition, a new paint job and green pastures. This then, is the story of 'Old Broderick' . . ."

In the spring of 1855, San Francisco watched with pride and interest the activity in the Pine street shop of William E. Worth, patternmaker. Mr. Worth had designed and was now supervising, the construction of a fire engine for Empire Engine Company No. 1, the first volunteer company in San Francisco.

Previously, California fire companies had sent for their engines to what the 31st state continued to call "the States." Foundries in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, or New York filled the orders, and the equipment was shipped to the West Coast around the Horn.

Four years later, with the death of U. S. Sen. David C. Broderick, Empire Engine Company No.1 took on a new name. Broderick, killed in the famous duel with former California Chief Justice Davis S. Terry, had been the company's first foreman. In his memory, his old comrades changed the company name to Broderick Engine Company No. 1, carving the name "Broderick" on the superstructure of their engine.

In 1882 it was sold to the town of Yale, B. C., and on arrival was pronounced by a somewhat reserved press as a "substantial kind that had doubtless done good work in its day." The engine was resold in 1894 to the town of Vernon and in 1904 to Kelowna. It was finally retired to the town park, where it was climbed over by small boys, noted by souvenir collectors, and endured the wear and tear of weather.

But recognition had come at last. After its purchase by The Fund, the old pumper was welcomed back to San Francisco by a flurry of press notices, a parade down Montgomery and California streets and a formal welcome by Mayor Roger D. Lapham.

A footnote, added by Marcia Tucker, ends the story:

“The engine’s place of retirement in Laurel Heights is in sight of the original grave of Its namesake. David C. Broderick was buried nearby, in what was Lone Mountain Cemetery.”