

Santa Cruz Owes Much To Samuel Leask, The Elder



This picture is rather symbolic. Not only did the Good Lord allow "Old Sam" Leask a great deal more time on earth than the average man gets, Mr. Leask utilized his time to a great deal better effect than the average man seems capable of accomplishing. Incidentally, the clock has been in the Leask family since the 18th century.

Santa Cruz county public schools will fall nearly seven million dollars short of revenue anticipated from the state treasury in the 1982-3 fiscal year that started July 1.

The county school department (James Maxwell, business manager) tells us that overall the fifty-five or so separate public schools (exclusive, of course, of Cabrillo college and the university called UCSC) receive

\$100,000,000 from the state treasury. They had anticipated a 6.7% increase, will receive no more than last year.

In Watsonville, the Pajaro unified school district, largest of the county, anticipates an 8% drop in revenue. Cabrillo College budget is down \$1,000,000 from last year because of state financial conditions; how much of a deficit may accrue (they anticipate some) won't be known until November, according to Peggy Ard of the financial department.

UCSC's budget is down \$450,000 according to Victor Kimora, of the financial department.

As this is being written, the legislature has returned from recess to take up the problem of supplying new money for schools out of an empty treasury. The old malarkey about not having money for schools is spread thick.

FRONTIER GAZETTE last fall decided to attempt to tell the story of the county by addressing the history of local businesses, commencing with FORD's Department store, oldest in the state, then fully moving into Santa Cruz. We gravitated to Noel Patterson and his association with the Hihn company for the Christmas number, hoping to finish it this issue. Death of Sam Leask III shortly before Thanksgiving determined us to do this number on Leask's Seaside Store and the interesting family of its founder together with a brief history of the times in which "Old Sam" opened is business here June 22, 1892.

But so many teachers and school board members have recently spoken to us about the present financial mess that California educational system faces that we tossed in the original copy to tell the story of Samuel Leask from a civic leadership standpoint.

In an era when most others were against him, Samuel Leask was Tom McHugh's friend. To lay down a few of the facts concerning his Americanship as cogently as imperfect knowledge permits for the purpose of enlightening modern Santa Cruzans on a few of the realities of local politics is the essence of loyalty to the past at an age when the average citizen seems to have lost all sense of outrage with the shoddy public polity that has this county down.

Tho' he may not have been "ahead of his time," as the saying is, Mr. Leask was most assuredly ahead of his Santa Cruz contemporaries in a rapidly changing commercial world. And remained ahead of them nearly to the hour of his death Sunday, August 30, 1964, at age 102 years.

Noel Patterson, the Hihn representative here for more than half a century, remembers Mr. Leask as I do. Mr. Leask and Mr. Patterson were members representing Santa Cruz on the state chamber of commerce committee on revenue and taxation during the depression years.

"For a year or more I drove Mr. Leask around the state to meetings or the committee. We met a variety of men supposedly experts in the field of taxation. They had been in it for years and years. But when the cards were on the table, it was Mr. Leask who had the answers. It was really an experience to witness those people... all looking to him - all asking

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It's In The Constitution

SCHOOLS MUST GET ALL STATE MONEY, SHOULD NEED EXIST

"Apportionment of State Revenue. Support of Schools. Sec. 15. Out of the revenue from State taxes for which provision is made in this article, together with all other State revenues there shall first be set apart the moneys to be applied by the State for the support of the public school system and the State university. The legislature shall provide for the raising of revenue by any form of taxation not prohibited by this Constitution in amounts sufficient to meet the expenditures of this State not otherwise provided for and in amounts sufficient to apportion, and shall apportion, to each county or city and county" (San Francisco-11m) "of this State, an amount equal to the entire amount required to be raised by each such county respectively under the provisions of Sec. 6 of Art IX* of this Constitution; provided, however, that all sums so apportioned shall be considered as tho' derived from county school taxes for the support of county government and not money provided by the state" (within the meaning of Article IX). California Constitution Art. 13.

This has been California law since July 1, 1933. It is the preamble of the state sales tax law - engineered for the most part by "Old Sam" Leask, founder of the Santa Cruz department store bearing his surname.

Sales taxes were supposed to provide money for the support of public instruction.

That law has always been distinguished more in the breach than in the observance.

If you were to speak, as I often have, with legislators they would laughingly tell you: "That is true" (the money should go to schools) "but we have never implemented the law."

Indeed, the people seem twice foolishly to have amended it under the instistance of their "leaders" in Sacramento until today, in the place of two or three cents sales tax in Santa Cruz county we pay 6 1/2% toward services the nature of which is beyond discovery unless it be to increase the salaries of scads of highbinders at the public trough. The countless buildings housing these creatures at the state capital alone are a municipal outrage.

I have to wonder what Mr. Leask would say today if he saw to what extent his ideals has been polluted by venal and conniving politicians.

Governor Brown to the contrary notwithstanding, his proposition to add to the educational opportunities of high school pupils has always been the law, only his ilk has never attempted to fecundate it by other than lip service.

You will note language of Sec. 15 is both prohibitory and mandatory. Quotes from Art. 9 has been in the Constitution since the first was adopted in 1849.

Before the sales tax, it was the practice in

*This is the constitutional division dealing with our school system.

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A Bit O' History

"YOUNG SAM" LOS ANGELES' CITY MANAGER

Several Sam Leasks have marched across the stage of late times; but in our Frazier Lewis days (who among us youngsters forget the Victoria chocolate?) there were only two: "Old Sam" and "Young Sam," the latter of whose whole name is Samuel Johnson Leask - the middle name being that of his Mother's family.

So when it came to writing about Samuel Leask, jr., we simply could not compel ourselves to do it; but "Young Sam" in today's confessions tells us how this came about. Young Sam served during the first war at Columbus, New Mexico, in a cavalry outfit. Some of the ladies, young ladies at that time, with whom we chanced in later years to become acquainted, said he was the most handsome soldier on the reservation.

Our acquaintance with Young Sam found its gratifying expression in the contest for president between Herbert Hoover, the Republican incumbent, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, governor of New York, the Democrat challenger.

A group of us young Turks, getting our first taste of politics, gathered around Bill Horton (see Winter 1981-2 issue), county assessor and warhorse of the local Democracy who served us as treasurer, and whipped the pants off Hoover. Several of our political bull sessions

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Opened Watsonville Store

Younger Brother, James Bonar Leask, Died Here June 4

James Bonar Leask, born here June 30, 1901, died here after a long illness 26 days before his 81st birthday anniversary. He was the youngest of the four sons of Samuel Leask. The elder Mr. and Mrs. Leask had six children: Margaret (Mrs. R. P.) Franklin, the youngest, had a twin sister who did not survive. Jimmy was the first of his generation to go. They had been together most of 77 years, a long lived, happy family.



James Bonar Leask

Named for his uncle who had served "Old Sam" so well in the business of the Seaside Store, Jimmy opened and managed the Watsonville store. The family had had long, cordial association with the Pajaro Valley. Clara Lydia (Johnson) Leask was born in Castroville but raised in Watsonville where her

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"Young" Sam Leask addressing the assembly at dedication of the Santa Cruz public library April 28, 1968. "Old Sam" was responsible for a 33.3 percent increase in the Andrew Carnegie gift to Santa Cruz for construction of the original public library building. The library previously had been housed in City Hall that then stood on Front street on the site occupied by the former jail. Mr. Leask, Carnegie and the latter's financial representative, were Scotsmen from the vicinity of Aberdeen. Carnegie, the steel salesman whose commissions made him first a multimillionaire and finally, from shrewd investments, the steel tycoon of his age, put up \$20,000 for the edifice and its site on Church street.

We haven't seen "Young Sam" for nearly 20 years, but believe this is a good representation of his appearance. That's Sam the Third, sitting closest to the camera behind his Dad. He was then a member of the city council, one of the speakers, substituting for Mayor Raymond Goodrich, who could not be

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Late Store Manager

SAMUEL LEASK III, CITY BUSINESS AND POLITICAL LEADER

Born in Santa Cruz March 5, 1920, Samuel Leask III departed this life October 29, 1981, 61 years, seven months and 24 days later. He had led an exemplary life of service to the community.

Descended from veterans of the Revolutionary War for freedom in American, he followed them, his Father and uncle, Haswell, into the army of the United States; he being a veteran of the second world war.

Having ancestors who aided in development of the nation latitudinally, Sam could also boast a patriarch who helped spread the fame and fortune of the United States of America across the continent.

Through his Mother (nee Marjorie Drullard)

Sam III, his children and his sisters children, could boast of a progenitor who accompanied the (Captain Meriwether) Lewis & (Wm) Clark expedition in 1804 to reduce to possession of this government the Louisiana purchase from France a year earlier. This man's name, now lost to antiquity, was

Anglicised to Drullard. Dr. Thomas W. Drullard, veteran of the Civil War with Illinois volunteers, dentist, three times mayor of Santa Cruz, was a great Grandson of that French-Canadian voyageur.

Sam followed in his Grandfather Drullard's footsteps, having been appointed to the City Council in 1964, by election as Mayor in 1967.

Graduated from Santa Cruz high school, he attended Santa Clara university for a time before service in the United States army. At war's end he matriculated at University of Southern California, entered the employ of the May company in Los Angeles, where his Father had once been an executive, did brief tours of duty with various other firms for the experience and returned to Santa Cruz in 1948 as an aide to his uncle, James, from whom he eventually took over management of Leask's.

His furtherance of civic and business interests was statewide. He served as chairman for Blue Cross in northern California. Following in the footsteps of his Grandfather, he was a member of the California state chamber of commerce which in 1977 honored him as one of the leading businessmen of the state, member of the Commonwealth Club; president of the California Retailers Association, a group which his grandfather had helped form and which he and Samuel Johnson Leask, his Father, also served as presidents.

He was a gentleman of little emotion, at least on the public side, with a word as good as his bond. At an age when an association with

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