



# The Cupola

The Newsletter of the Pardee Home Museum

SPRING 2006

Oakland City  
Landmark 1975

National Register of  
Historic Places 1976

California Historic  
Landmark 1998

## Did Dr. Pardee write his memoirs? The Knave said so

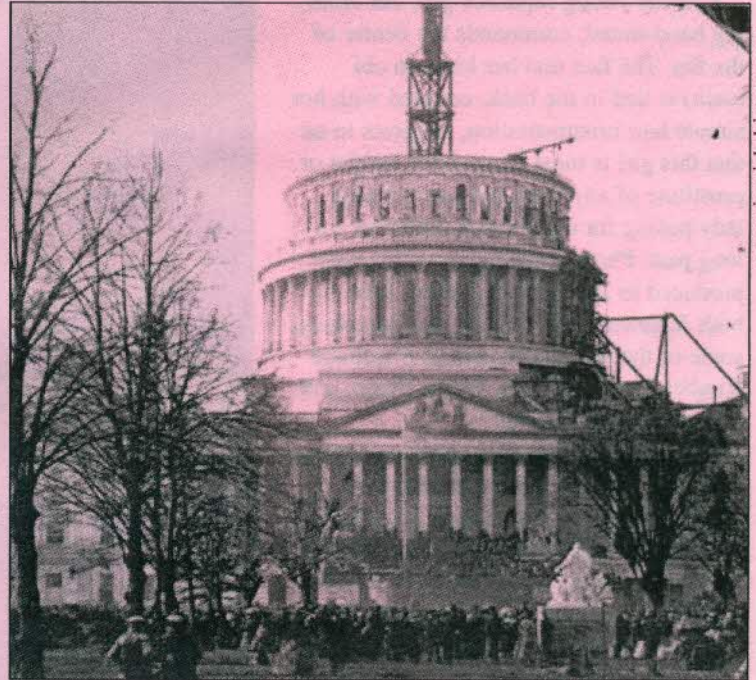
We've just learned that Gov. George Pardee may have written his memoirs late in life—but we have neither hide nor hair of this important document!

It all started when volunteer Phyllis Brislaw was searching our small collection of historic newspapers for any issues from the 1906 earthquake. She came upon this puzzling, even agonizing, item. It consisted of four pages of the September 12, 1937, *Oakland Tribune*, folded open to the "Knave" column. That column ran for many years in the *Tribune* as an unsigned column of local history. One item in that 1937 "Knave" carried the heading, "Dr. Pardee's Memoirs," and it read:

"It is my privilege this week to inform readers that the memoirs of Dr. George Cooper Pardee, outstanding Oakland citizen who was recently honored when five hundred citizens assembled to pay him tribute—just as many years ago another gathering did the same for his father—have been written and may be published within the next few months. What is more, I have been given permission to print just a little out of the forthcoming book. Dr. Pardee, former Governor, leading figure in the successful movements to provide his city with a water supply and harbor, and citizen of consistent public service, can remember back to the [eighteen] sixties, as the following will show:

'In 1862 my father wished to return East for post-graduate work in his specialty, eye and ear, at Rush Medical College in Chicago. The side-wheel steamer, the *Golden Gate*, on which we were due to sail, left San Francisco on July 21, 1862. As my mother wished to go East to visit her home [in Ohio], passage was also reserved for her and myself. Owing to a sudden illness of my mother, we did not sail on the *Golden Gate* as intended, but took a later steamer named the *Golden Age*... When our

**THE NATION'S UNFINISHED CAPITOL**, as seen by a young George Pardee when he accompanied his father to Washington, D.C., and met Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln continued work on the dome during the Civil War as a symbol that the country would emerge unified from the war. This was taken in 1861.



www.jewish-history.com

steamer put into a Mexican port for coal, news reached us of the burning at sea of the *Golden Gate*...two hundred lost their lives in the inferno of the burning vessel or were drowned in the ocean fifteen miles off the coast of Mazatlan, Mexico.

'Upon our arrival in New York [aboard the steamer *Northern Light* from Panama] we proceeded at once to Washington, D.C., where my father had business with Representative T.G. Phelps in the House of Representatives. Washington presented a martial appearance, as many regiments of Federal soldiers in blue were marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, which was ankle-deep in mud. The Capitol Building at that time was uncompleted, and scaffolding about the uppermost part of the dome could be seen through leafless trees as we walked up the muddy avenue. When their business was finished Mr. Phelps asked my father if he would like to meet Mr. Abraham Lincoln, President of

the United States, to which my father gladly assented, as he was an admirer of the Great Commoner. We walked down a lengthy marble corridor to the President's office. Mr. Lincoln arose from his desk and shook hands with Mr. Phelps, who introduced my father to the President. On being told that we were from California, Mr. Lincoln's deep-set, sad eyes lighted with pleasant humor. He looked down at me from his great height. Placing his hand on my head, he remarked: "I am glad to meet a little boy from California." I recall distinctly, as though it were yesterday, the effect of his great personality. I gazed up at this tall, ungainly man, dressed in a wrinkled, long-skirted black broadcloth suit, at his shock of disheveled hair, one unruly lock of which hung over his high, intelligent forehead, on which were deep wrinkles of concentration and worry. I gazed most at his deep-set eyes, in which

See MEMOIRS on page 4

## One-Hundred-Year-Old Fan Found Among Helen's Treasures

By Alisa Tsuji and David Nicolai

Among the many interesting items in Mrs. Helen Pardee's collections is a beautiful, oval, fixed (non-folding) fan. Although this artifact may seem to be just one among the many lovely fans she collected, the intriguing image upon its white silk leaf begs to differ, and the high profile signatures surrounding the image are unusual.

A lovely young Japanese girl, her clothing hand-tinted, commands the center of the fan. The fact that her kimono obi (sash) is tied in the back, coupled with her simple hair ornamentation, suggests to us that this girl is most likely not a geisha or prostitute of any kind, but just a young lady posing for a photographer in an era long past. Photographs such as this were produced in Japan starting from 1860 by both Japanese and Western photographers, some of the best known being Kusakabe Kimbei, Ueno Hikoma, Felice Beato, and Raimund von Stillfried.

These photographs of fresh-faced young Japanese maidens, serene landscapes, famous landmarks and staged images of Japanese daily life were produced primarily for western tourists to Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Upon arrival in Nagasaki or Yokohama, a foreigner would be directed to a reputable photographer's studio, where he would select various photographs to his liking. When his time in Japan was near an end, this foreigner would call on the studio once again, by which time his selected prints would be beautifully bound in a lacquer album, ready to sit upon a coffee table in the parlor back home.

Above and to the right of the young woman's head on our fan is the inscription, "For Mrs Pardee, July 6th, 1905, W. H. Taft, Bohemian Forest." The signatures of 23 other men, famous and not so famous, and one woman fill the remaining background. These signatures were gathered at the Bohemian Forest (now known as Bohemian Grove), 70 miles north of San Francisco in Sonoma County. For over 100 years, it has been the summer retreat of the Bohemian Club. The exclusive San Francisco club was founded in 1872 as a retreat for wealthy Bay Area men from the callousness of frontier life and has functioned ever since like its elite counterparts in Europe.



Alisa Tsuji

**A YOUNG JAPANESE WOMAN** is surrounded by signatures of Mrs. Pardee's well-wishers.

Bohemian Club members—around 2,500 in number in recent years—have included leaders of commerce and government, members of important foundations, and a smattering of artists, academics, and military officers. It has traditionally attracted wide public attention during its spectacular annual July retreat at the Bohemian Forest or Grove, when members and guests from the most diverse backgrounds gather for powerhouse discussions called Lakeside Chats, among many other diversions.

A month before the 1905 retreat, George Pardee attended a private Bohemian Club gathering and solicited signatures on the fan for his wife. Pardee had been invited to join the club right after he became governor in 1903. Among the most famous signatories were William H. Taft, then the

Secretary of War under President Roosevelt, later to serve as President of the United States (1909-1913) and as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1921-1930); Luther Burbank, the world-famous Santa Rosa horticulturalist and botanist; and Alice Lee Roosevelt, the oldest daughter of President Roosevelt. She was then twenty-one years old, less than a year away from her still-famous White House wedding to Nicholas Longworth, the future Speaker of the House, and already a much-quoted society figure.

Other signatories of more regional fame included Benjamin Ide Wheeler, classicist and president of the University of California from 1899 to 1919; H. Morse Stephens,

See **FAN** on page 7

