



BULLETIN

SPRING 2014

Wonders of Treasure Island Highlighted at CCCHS Annual Membership Meeting



The annual meeting of the general membership of the Contra Costa County Historical Society was held on December 14, 2013, at the Veterans Hall in Martinez. On hand for a very special talk was Elena Paras Noble, whose father,

George Paras, was a freelance photographer who covered the construction of Treasure Island in the late 1930s and the opening and progress of the San Francisco World's Fair, otherwise known as the Golden Gate Exposition, which ran from 1939 through 1940. A large and enthusiastic crowd of CCCHS members were treated to a wonderful show of color slides, which



have had only limited exposure in the past. In addition to the beautiful images, Ms. Noble enlightened her audience with little-known facts about the construction of the island and the stories behind the various buildings and displays.

For those who have not been to Treasure Island recently (or ever), now is the right time to visit, as the island is poised to undergo significant transformation in the near future, as development plans go forward. High-end housing is planned, and it cannot be doubted that Treasure Island will ultimately become a very trendy place to live or visit. But right now one can walk around and see the old buildings from the Fair and marvel at the outstanding views of the bay and the city of San Francisco, while the island is suspended in a transitional moment. So visit soon!

Naturally, we conducted some business at our meeting. Here, our treasurer, Steve James, outlines the economic progress of our society. Considering the



considerable expense of our move last year, our financial situation is fairly good. But we will need all of your support to meet our needs in the future, so don't be surprised if you receive requests for

donations over and above the regular membership. Don't forget that we still have a limited supply of original brass "medallions" (ash trays) that are available for sale at the History Center. They are a terrific gift and can be had for \$150.



The California Historical Radio Society

Donald Bastin

As a board member of the Contra Costa County Historical Society, past director of the Richmond Museum of History, and one of the founding members of the El Sobrante Historical Society, I thought that I was pretty familiar with the historical societies in our area. But I had never heard of the California Historical Radio Society, just a few miles away, in Berkeley. I first heard about it from Larry Drees, who lives along Wilkie Creek and who has been very helpful in assisting our creek restoration group, SPAWNERS, which has been creating a small instructional park near his property. Larry, it turns out, has been volunteering for years at CHRS, along with a dedicated group of (mostly) guys who love old radios and have a deep appreciation and affection for local radio history. I learned that they are a non-profit educational corporation, formed in 1974 “to promote the restoration and preservation of early radio and broadcasting.” In addition, their goal is to “enable the exchange of ideas and information on the history of radio, particularly in the West, with emphasis on collecting, preserving, and displaying early equipment, literature, and programs.” Sounded great to me, and I had to wonder that, being a history buff myself and having lived in the bay area all my life, I had never heard of these guys. In any case, Larry generously offered to take me on a tour of their museum/facility, which I happily accepted.



Larry and I met, in early September, at the society's home, which, appropriately enough,

happens to be the historic KRE radio station, built in 1937. The building is located at 601 Ashby Avenue in Berkeley, at the south end of Berkeley's Aquatic Park (if you get lost, just look for the tall broadcasting tower).



Larry Drees, right. At left is Jim Bradt, expert cabinet restorer.

The old radio station, I learned, was one of the first facilities built in California specifically for broadcasting, and has been transmitting AM signals for over 75 years. It was featured in the movie “American Graffiti” with radio personality “Wolfman Jack.” The Society has been raising money for years to buy the old station and was hopeful of closing the deal recently, when, sadly, it was learned that the owner had other ideas. Thus a new location must be found. More of this in a moment.

CHRS began as a place for those who love old radios and radio equipment to share their knowledge and to repair and restore old sets. However, it has become much more. Around four years ago, the group merged with the Bay Area Radio Museum and its Hall of Fame. In the words of President Steve Kushman (right), this merger brought to CHRS

“thousands of audio clips and the bios and histories of our local radio personalities and the stations in which they worked.” In addition to the BARM archives, CHRS has acquired the assets of



The Society of Wireless Pioneers (SOWP), an organization that represented telegraphic operators from the 1890 through the 1980s. Thus, CHRS has become much more than a society of radio set collectors. It is **the** source for the local history of radio (and television) related information in the bay area.

But it is the old radio sets, lovingly restored, that captured my immediate attention. The radios are everywhere. The building is broken up into many small spaces and everywhere I turned there were more beautiful sets.

In addition to the old sets, the society has collected rooms full of written material, technical and cultural, spanning the entire 20th century.

Not only is the history of radio covered, but television as well (in fact there are several rooms set aside for old TV sets). This is a



radio parts, available for the restorer to use.



The expertise of the volunteers is also available.



The fellows in this picture are participating in a radio repair clinic. From left: Larry Drees, Cliff Farwell, Scott Robinson (V.P.), Seth Arp, guest, Stephen Hampel. Both members and non-members of the Society are free to bring in their old sets to work on and to receive expert guidance. Cliff Farwell is the winner of the 2013 radio restoration contest, while Scott Robinson is a guru of radio technology history.

For anyone interested in the history of broadcasting in the Bay Area, a visit to the California Historical Radio Society is a must. Unfortunately, such a visit is not possible at present. Just like CCCHS, CHRS has found it necessary to move, and the move is still in progress. The society has signed the papers on the



tremendous resource for the radio collector and researcher. In addition to the written material, the society has collected thousands of tubes and other



purchase of a building located at 2152 Central Avenue in Alameda, but additional funds must be generated. To get up-to-date

information, *stay tuned* and take a look at their website, at californiahistoricalradio.com.

Martinez Historical Society

Gay Gerlack

Martinez Museum - The Borland Home

1005 Escobar Street

Built 1890

Owner: Contra Costa Community College District
(Leased by Martinez Historical Society)

Dr. John S. Moore, a dentist, and his wife Emma purchased a lot at the corner of Escobar and Court Streets in 1889. They built their house on the site with the intention of using it for a combination home and dental office. The county assessor evaluated the building at \$1,500 and the dental instruments at \$200. Unfortunately, Dr. Moore died the following year before he opened his dental practice. His widow gave the house to their daughter, Emma, and her husband, James Borland. They moved into the house in the mid-1890s and from that time it has been known as the Borland Home.

In the 1970s, two architects described the house as “an authentic late-19th century house, which we find to be a very simple, yet fine, example of an early ‘carpenter gothic’ Victorian house. The detailing, including the decorative pointed shingles, carved multifoiled entablature moldings and the many curved brackets are original.” These homes, once common downtown, disappeared with downtown development. The Borland House is the sole survivor.

The layout of the house has changed little, though a room at the back was added. Originally, gas was used for lighting and cooking, as it was built before downtown Martinez got widespread electricity in about 1920.

In 1975, renovation work revealed the house exterior was originally white. In 2002, the Martinez Historical Society repainted the exterior in colors reflective of Victorian-era paint schemes.

The interior woodwork is original, except for the finials and spindles on the staircase. Note the ornate moldings around doorways and window openings, with rosettes at the corners. The baseboards are deeply carved also.

The wallpaper in the dining room, known as anaglypta, is original, and has been repainted. (Anaglypta is a heavily embossed wallpaper that

started being produced in 1886 and was popular in Victorian times.)

Emma Moore was James Borland’s third wife. His parents had emigrated from the British Isles to the United States in 1848. James Borland was involved in many public service projects, including piping water into town, bringing in natural gas and generating electricity for street and home lighting. He also “established telephone service in Martinez in 1881 with the founding of Contra Costa Telephone Company (absorbed by Pacific Bell telephone Company at Pinole in 1892).”

James’s brother Robert, his wife and two sons moved into the house in 1902. They subsequently sold it to James R. and Matilda Lucas, who sold it to the developer and city promoter, Clarence “Cappy” Ricks. He divided the house into two apartments (upstairs and downstairs).

In 1949, the Contra Costa Community College District purchased and remodeled the building for offices by adding acoustical tile to the walls and fluorescent lighting. Fortunately, the college did not change the basic structure or the exterior appearance. When the District moved into a new building across the street, the house was slated to be torn down to make room for a parking lot.

In 1973 a group of citizens, who later formed the Martinez Historical Society, bonded together to save the building, and succeeded in preserving and restoring the home for use as the Martinez Museum.



The Martinez Museum

Martinez, California

The museum is open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-3:00, and the first four Sundays of the month, 1:00-4:00. Visit on-line at: martinezhistory.org.



From the Director

Dear Members,
 Spring is here with its beautiful white and pink flowering trees, daffodils, and violets. It's my favorite time of year. At the History Center, we are launched on a new year of entering data, scanning photos and newspapers, and answering queries from far and wide. We have begun to post photos on Facebook to expand our outreach, and we are in the midst of planning for a 4th grade program to launch next year.

We are also appreciating every one of our donors: the County that contributes 35% of our much needed funding, the Leshner and T.J. Long Foundations who have committed operations funding for *this year* (another 20%), our members who have helped to sustain our unique archive, our corporate and professional members who help us expand our outreach, and individual donors who have made extra efforts on our behalf (all adding up to another 20%). We are making the most of your donations, but I regret to say that even more is needed. All of the above accounts for 75% of the income needed for operating costs each year. That leaves 25% that still needs to be covered. It is here that your extra efforts and donations beyond your dues make the difference.

Our rent will rise next year, and our income will need to rise with it in order to make our future sustainable. Please consider using one of the new ways we have in place for giving—a gift of odd lots of stock, for example, or a sustaining short-term pledge of a certain amount per month. Even \$10 per month equals \$120 per year; and if you could do more, it would all go to making sure that the History Center remains the vibrant center that it is today.

Thanks so much for anything you can do. As always, I am open to your thoughts and suggestions. Please feel free to contact me at my new e-mail address, director@cocohistory.com (the old one still works).

Sincerely, **Priscilla**

From the President

Learning from history for tomorrow....and for today too!

We all know that the study of history, and preserving today's events to enrich history tomorrow, has awesome benefits in the world we are leaving our kids. But in our warp-speed lives, it is easy to forget just how much society values our work to preserve and pass along those lessons, until we encounter a reminder. I had such a reminder recently during a visit to Halifax, in Atlantic Canada.

When the liner Titanic encountered an iceberg one freezing night in the North Atlantic in 1912, rescue ships were dispatched from Halifax, one of the closest ports. They arrived too late to save anyone. However, they recovered the remains of over 300 victims. Identification was difficult. Many bore no legible identification, and since many immigrant passengers in steerage consisted of entire families, no close next of kin existed. After lengthy efforts, over 100 bodies remained unidentified, and were interred in a special section of a beautiful cemetery in Halifax.



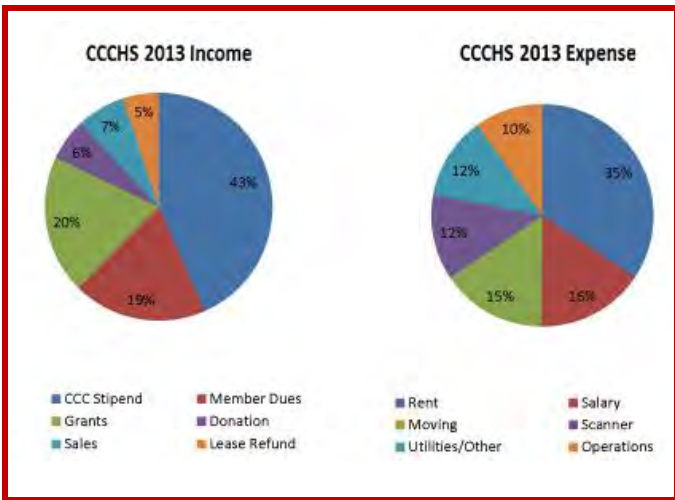
But the rest of the story reminds me of an amazing goodness in society, those Angels Among Us...for after 100 years, researchers still labor to put names to the victims. What motivates volunteers to continue such endeavors, with success so uncertain and so unlikely? I submit it is simply the good heart found in people everywhere, exemplified by these researchers - like our own Traci Parent and her career-long endeavor to solve similar puzzles at the Rose Hill Cemetery in Antioch. I find this story full of nobility, which can inspire the best in us.



One 2-year old girl remained nameless until DNA technology in 2012 permitted her to be identified. The family descendants elected to leave her at rest in this hallowed place, where her fellow victims lie.



I have the best job in the Society: I get to meet and work with special people just like the Halifax researchers: our volunteers, our members, and our community. Thank you for this experience! **John**



CCCHS Thanks the following donors in our 2013 Summer Appeal

John Burgh, Stanford & Carole Ann Stanford, Stuart Swiedler, Harriett Burt, Steven & Priscilla James, Anita & Pete Heiser, Cindy Silva, Donald & Marianne

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We appreciate all donations!

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Your membership renewal date can be determined by checking the address label on this newsletter. If you receive your newsletter via e-mail please call the History Center at: 925-229-1042

Consider CCCHS in your estate planning. It is simple, and any gift is tax deductible.

Gifts To The Society in 2013 *Listed Chronologically*

Lynn Gould—Framed portrait
Maxine Frost—New HP Printer
Michael Hill-Weld—Pittsburg High photos
Mavis Ferreira—CC Times Map; small items
Larry Pointer—Book: “Grice” by donor
John Nutley—1962 Dollar House floor plan
Rita Gott—CC Gazette, 1930-1931
Marciel Wood— Rpt, Wm. Welch/Maria Galindo
Rick Yarborough—Cowell Cement Sack
S.Oregon Hist Soc.—Branding Iron, Russi&Sonner Grain Bag, US Mail Bag, Lic.Plate, County Seal
Rod Plaisted—2 Train Pics; Miners1st Aid Manual
Jim Van Buskirk—Orinda Country Club History
Robert Gardella—WWII newspapers; 1963 Post Mag.; Silk Milling Cloth; Rosie the Riveter tote bag
Lorraine Bray—Reward Poster, 1931
Walnut Creek Hist. Soc.—2 Colored Wall Maps
Harriet Burt—Framed Map of the World, 1860; Receipt for Pierre Saffores funeral/burial, 1921
W.E. Hoch—2 RR Spikes from local Elect. RR
Beverly Bollman—Minutes, Cnty Sup Conv., 1939
Sup. Mary Piepho—Music, “Song to Contra Costa”
Paul Grunland—Pamphlet, city parks, 1930
Dean McLeod—6 Photos of Waterbird Reg. Pres.
John Robinson—12 Photos of Port Costa Brickwks Record for the new Pacheco Pioneer Cemetery
Christine Louise—Bd. Of Supes Action & Approval of bldgs for inclusion into the HR1; Tapes & DVDs
Frederick Garcia—Hist. Micfilm Index, 1969-2002
Helene Frakes—CCC Planning Comm. Docs
Diane Essary—Photo, Crane Bros Plumbing, Pitts.
Clifford Gambs—1913 Real Estate Advertisement
Betty Maffei—12 photos, CCCHS 1999-2002
Carol Emerick—Info re Mazolo & Lambruschini Families, & St. Catherine Cem., 3 Photos
Peter Carpenter—Framed Photo, SFBB, 50th Anniv.
Paul Grunland—4 Books re West County Walks
Walter Brooks—Ink Drawings, San Pablo, Lafayette
Robert Gerdner—Glass Plates, Un. Oil Co, Rodeo
Dave Weinstein—8 Copies, “Fisherman By Trade” by Ghio; Calendar; Misc Folders & Booklets
Traci Parent—“The Curtain Rises,” CA Thtr, Pitts.

Moraga Hist. Soc.—18 Vol. Assessor Atlas; 12 Box Microfilm CC Gazette; 8 Vol Midwk Sun; 4 Vol CC Times; 3 Vol Lafayette/Orinda/Moraga Sun; 1 Vol CC Gazette clippings; 1 Vol NY Times 1892
Steve Lane—Cowell Cement Co Auction Brochure
Rodeo Library—News Clips, Rodeo/Herc/Crockett
Richard Reeves—Photo, Const. Cald. Tunnel, 1930s
WC Hist. Soc.—2 Aerial Photos, WC; 1893 Map
Beverly Lane—1914 Map, O&A RR; 3 Train Photos WC Station; 1 Map, E. Shore & Sub. Railway
CA Newspaper Partnership—11 File Cabinets, Photos, CC Times
Rich McDrew—Book, “The Mt. Diablo Guide”; Sp. Lang. School Book, 1915, Mt. Diablo School
Kristin Henderson—Docs, Images, Spreadsheets
Dave Weinstein—Heather Farms Golf Course Scorecard, 1960s; 1974 Map Orinda; CA State Parks Ad; Book, “Richmond Tales” by Summer Brenner; WC Presb. Church Annual Rpt, 2005
Lynne Gould—Inst. Book, Mare Island, 1941; Misc Pics of People, Structures and a Ship
Nancy Kaiser—Book “Ohlone Curriculum”

New exhibit at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley: “Cowboys and Cattlemen,



Ranching in the San Ramon Valley”

*Open from
January 28-
May 4,
2014*

Programs are scheduled throughout the exhibit, including Saturday speaker, ranchers talking with visitors each Saturday. Several special events are planned, included a branding demonstration and ice cream social on Sunday, April 27, several Saturday lectures, a Cattlewomen’s Association program on beef, a tour of Hap Magee Ranch Park and Saturday opportunities for young and old to try using a lasso.

Visit the website at museumsrv.org for more info.

