



BULLETIN

SUMMER 2010



Volunteer Thank You Celebration

On April 17, 2010, on a bright Spring day, the Volunteer corps of the Contra Costa County Historical Society was thanked and celebrated with a special viewing of the Lincoln Exhibit at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. A highlight of the tour was a 4-Minute Civil War film that was created using each second of the film as equivalent to one week of

the war. There is no narration; just the moving battle lines as the South surges and the North eventually dominates.

Following the tour, refreshments were served, and new Executive Director Priscilla Couden presented a rose to each of the volunteers present, together with the following biographical information for the rest of us:

Jennifer Apkarian – 3 months a volunteer – enjoys art history - a whiz with Excel – created shelf list for Reference works; now working on updating Library database – willing and dedicated worker.

Mark Barbero – Cal State Hayward MA candidate – 10 months a volunteer – works on maps – keeps track of when we eat on Thursdays - great sense of humor.

Diane Donahoe – 10 years a volunteer – motorcycle mom and grandmom – a self-described “floater,” she is a can do anything person. Keeps us hopping on Thursdays – husband is Jim.

Bernard Freedman – 25+ years a volunteer – has written and compiled many reference works that we use every day at the center. Odd hours, usually very early in the morning!

Betsy Glen – 3 months a volunteer – resident of county for 48 years – former newspaper writer - working with Dick on the Veale papers – always in a good humor; brings light to the Society.

Bill Larkins – 25+ years a volunteer – most recently worked in Photo department on Tuesdays.

Tillie Larkins – 25+ years a volunteer – lights up the office when she comes in. We have missed the Larkins and were glad to see them at the event.

Bill Mero – 18 years a volunteer – Bill is my go to guy for map queries, photo queries and just about any other query that comes in on Wednesdays. Developed our database and keeps it working well.

Kathleen Mero – 18 years a volunteer, has been a Board president, filled in for Betty when Betty had shoulder surgery – super administrator – lots of great ideas - soon to be part of Saturday volunteers.

Margie Newton – long-time volunteer – 5+ years at her present “job” as the person who keeps up the membership lists – A Wednesday person, Margie has a wonderful sense of humor and enjoys getting people like “Silent Dick” to speak up.

Scott Saftler – webmaster extraordinaire – 10 year volunteer at the History Center – recruited by Meros – Wednesday/Saturday group.

Dick Sobey – 12 years as volunteer with the Veale papers – works Wednesday mornings.

Mary Ann Savignano – 8 years a volunteer – worked at county library – quietly keeps on top of our obituaries both at the office and at home – A Tuesday person – has lots of great ideas!

Susan Swindell – 10 years a volunteer – genealogist – quilter – our Tuesday staff person - handles e-mail queries - our top administrative person. Direct, opinionated, a heart of gold!

Avice Taylor – 10 years a volunteer – Avice is always in a good humor and adds much to the camaraderie of the Thursday volunteers.

Leland Taylor – 10 years a volunteer – now head of the photo department – provides the Foto Flashes article for the Bulletin – hardworking – detail oriented – former engineer with Bechtel.

Betty Maffei – Started the History Center – has been the face of the Historical Society for 25+ years, has been a Board president – is now graciously volunteering as Librarian on Thursdays.

Board Member volunteers were also gifted with roses, as was the Executive Director.

THANK YOU TO OUR GREAT VOLUNTEER TEAM!

Foto Flashes

Leland Taylor

CCCHS has lots of photos waiting to be identified and entered into its database and digital jpeg files to be used on its website.



Volunteers can be involved in many forms of data research related to photographs. Many prints come with little information; they have no locations or identities, let alone a date. The research starts with whatever is given!

As an easier example, we have many photographs from Les Sipes, an Oakland Tribune photographer, now deceased. Many of his prints are date stamped; some are partially identified. Most recently, Avice Taylor, a volunteer, started with a date stamp, and the words "Walnut Creek" and "Fire." She then searched Contra County County History Center newspapers, which led to the database entry for Photo No. 13,300, as seen here.



PHOTO NO.: 13300	FILE CABINET: FJ
AREAPHOTO: WALNUT CREEK	
DESCRIPTION: Walnut Creek's worst fire takes toll of \$100,000	
CAT1 : EVENTS	CAT2: NA
MEMO: April 24, 1955, date stamped on one of Les Sipes Oakland Tribune photos. Refer W.C. Sun, page 2, Apr 29, 1955 article with other Tribune photos. Destroyed the Acree building 1381-83-85 Main St. and threatened entire business block. Businesses included Simpson Clothing, Jackson's Liquor, John T. Schroder, insurance agent among others. Five fire companies within the county were involved in this 4 hour fire.	
DATE: 1955	
TYPE: PD12	ACCESSION NUMBER: 86-29

The next example—not as easy—is Photograph No. 9415!! All we have found is a print No. 9415 of Sipes collection from a negative with someone's handwritten date of 1952; earlier, this photo was put into the database as UNKNOWN VIEWS AERIAL. We call on members and readers of this CCHS *Bulletin* for help. Does it depict a new school in a central county location someone recognizes?

Contact Lee in the Photo Department or leave a message at 925-229-1042 with any details you recognize.



They Came To Contra Costa
Dean McLeod

Mining gold and silver brought thousands to pioneer California. Less famously, the mining of coal brought many to Contra Costa after the decline in the gold fields. The Mt. Diablo Coal field in the hills east of the Diablo Valley brought about a sudden spurt of population to East County, beginning in the 1860s and winding down after 1910.

The influx of workers to the mines at Somersville, Nortonville, Judsonville, Stewartville and West Hartley resulted in a little known record source found at the History Center in Martinez.

By 1877, a post office was established in Somersville which provided a vital service to residents throughout the mining area and elsewhere in the county. Money Orders were purchased all over the country by relatives and associates of these settlers, and a detailed record has survived of those money orders.

Post Office Record of Somersville, 1877-1910 is a bound volume consisting of about 300 pages, 120 of which are filled in, listing approximately 5,000 money orders sent and received. The information

recorded includes the "date of advice" when it was received at the Somersville post office, a reference number, *the post office where the money order was issued, the name of the remitter, the name of the payee, the residence of the payee, the amount, when it was paid, and remarks.*

will be available. It is called Rose Hill – a Comprehensive History of a Pioneer Cemetery in the Mount Diablo Coal Field by Traci Parent.

HRI Revision/DVC Help

Contra Costa County Historical Society board members Webb Johnson, Melissa Jacobson and Steve Lawton have been formulating a process for revising the county's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). The HRI, which outlines historical properties in Contra Costa County, was last updated in 1989 and is in need of renewal.

Both Webb Johnson and Steve Lawton are on Contra Costa County's Historical Landmarks Committee and Melissa Jacobson is a Professor of History at the San Ramon Campus of Diablo Valley College. All three board members have worked together to create a step by step plan for Diablo Valley College students to earn college credit for helping with the revision of the HRI. Recently, Webb Johnson and Melissa Jacobson met in the county office of Catherine Kutsuris, Director of the Department of Conservation and Development, to further refine the process for our upcoming HRI revision.



Pictured in the photo (from left to right): Webb Johnson, Catherine Kutsuris,

Christine Louie (HLA Committee Member)

A hard copy of the HRI is in the History Center and an online copy is available at:

www.co.contracosta.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=539

ADVISES RECEIVED of Money Orders drawn upon					
DATE ADVICE	WHEN RECEIVED	NO.	OFFICE WHERE ISSUED	REMITTER (The place where drawn on)	
1892				NAME AND ADDRESS OF PAYER	
Nov 9	Nov	10 2223	Concord Cal	E. Oliva	Concord
" 24	"	25 1476	Berkeley	Edith Anderson	Berkeley
" 25	"	27 5308	San Francisco	H. Bryant	San Francisco
" 27	"	27 1698	Antioch Cal	Elta M. Brown	Antioch
Dec 7	Dec	11 1492	Martinez	W. J. Otto	Martinez
" 11	"	13 9660	West City	W. J. Jones	West City
" 20	"	26 7602	Castroville Wash	C. R. Mattarin	Castroville
" 28	"	26 28016	San Francisco	H. J. Underhill	San Francisco
Jan 2	Jan	2 17050	Martinez Cal	L. H. Jones	Martinez
" 13	"	12 613	Concord Cal	W. H. Williams	Concord
" 31	Feb	3 7784	Castroville Wash	Oliver R. Mattarin	Castroville Wash
Feb 9	"	4 13432	Berkeley Cal	Edith Anderson	Berkeley
Jan 31	"	3 6315	Berkeley	Samuel D. Salati	Berkeley
Feb 9	"	4 21109	San Francisco Cal	Robert W. Clark	San Francisco
Feb 19	"	28 6146	Alameda Nevada	H. J. Mulligan	Alameda Nevada
" 21	"	24 6407	Berkeley	S. Donnelly	Berkeley
" 16	"	24 4533	Wilmington Cal	J. Spruce	Wilmington Cal
March 3	March	5 2922	Sanford Cal	R. D. Bell	Sanford Cal
" 19	"	3 3 2586	Black Diamond Wash	J. B. Bonnell	Black Diamond Wash
April 11	April	11 7170	San Francisco Cal	J. H. Bayard	San Francisco Cal
March 3	March	5 19021	Bolton	W. J. Jones	Bolton

Recipients in Somersville, Nortonville, Judsonville, Mt. Diablo, Clayton, Stewartville and West Hartley were the main recipients of these money orders. Surprisingly, people resident in Byron, Antioch, Concord, San Ramon, Pittsburg Landing, San Pablo, Martinez, Brentwood, Selby, Pacheco, Livermore, Sacramento, San Francisco, and New York also received money orders at the Somersville post office. The record is un-paginated and un-indexed, arranged chronologically.

Of the thousands who "went to California" in the 19th century, many notoriously mobile miners became lost to their families back East or in their home countries, and are difficult to trace. But descendants of the miners who stayed in Contra Costa County, even temporarily, now also have a source linking them to their relatives scattered all over the country. This is especially important for the period between 1880 and 1900, when so many people cannot be tracked because of the lack of an 1890 census.

In 2011 a new resource book which provides a historical record of many mine families and of the Rose Hill Cemetery

New in the Archives

Donor	Item(s)
Lorraine Bray, Martinez	Book: <i>Nancy Hanks: The Story of Abraham Lincoln's Mother</i>
Ray O'Brien, Bay Point	Inventory of Concord Naval Weapons Station, Additional papers on Weapons Station Cleanup
Josh Wallen, Martinez	Hagstrom's Meat Market – emergency phone numbers Placard from Union Ice Co., Martinez Drawing of FDR
Joy Woodward, Martinez	Two framed and one unframed documents of the CCC Justice Court – one for selling adulterated milk; one for operating a house of ill repute. (Fines were listed, also.)
Beverly Bowman	1940 Supervisors Convention photo 30" x 8"
Bernard Freedman, Concord	Biography of Abigail Norton Bush 1810-1898
Betty Maffei, Walnut Creek	Nortonville and Concord photos

Recent Inquiries Received

Certified copy of Naturalization petition
We were able to find that this person had arrived New York from Genoa, Italy in 1912

Location of marriage of San Ramon pioneer.
We were able to locate the newspaper article that told the name of the church.

Book on John Muir for dedication highway re-named for John Muir
Checked Amazon.com and found book for inquirer.

Info on pioneer of Clayton
Checked our databases and clippings for inquirer.

Photo of a local nursery in Lafayette
We were able to forward a jpeg for use in time for Mother's Day.

Family history connected with company town of Selby where Selby Smelting was located
We have three folders of information in our "Cities" boxes and many photographs. We also have a whole page of database listings, including court cases.

Research re business in Hercules for writer of book who came from Santa Cruz to our archive.
Several volunteers found interesting information for this inquirer

Obituary request from Maui, Hawaii
We provided the information requested.

Request from a consulting firm for comments regarding proposed telecommunications facilities
We are not able at present to respond to such a request without payment because of the amount of research time involved. Letter to that effect was sent to the firm.

From the Executive Director:

Dear Friends,



The past few months have seen some progress towards my goal of creating more visibility and more funding for the Society. It's been a busy time, fielding the interesting inquiries that come across my desk and helping the people who come in and out of the History Center. I've gathered the documentation needed and will be applying for grants soon. \$10,000 in 2010 represents the break even point where the Society would begin to show a positive cash flow. We would most appreciate anyone who can help us in any way—large or small—toward that goal. We would appreciate funding for an office laptop and scanners that are needed for digitizing more of our photos and maps.

In the coming months, we will have new signage, a new brochure, and we will see some new faces as students come in for summer internships. Do stop by or call 925-229-1042 to connect with me. I am so very interested in hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Priscilla

President's message

Your Historical Society is working to preserve knowledge about all areas of the County and sustain the extraordinary archives which are available at the History Center. Please take advantage of us!



Our June 19th membership meeting takes place at the new DVC facility in San Ramon. Gray Brechin will provide some fascinating information about

New Deal achievements which are all around us. Don't miss this special lecture. See the flyer, on page 7, for details.

At the History Center, the exhibit "KEEP IT WILD, Saving Contra Costa Wild Lands" from the Muir Heritage Land Trust is currently on display until August. There are stunning open space photographs and a recognition of the Trust's 20-year anniversary.

This past quarter we brought Pony Express information to Museum Day at the Antioch Historical Society, volunteers are starting to hold the History Center open on third Saturdays, the web site (cocohistory.com) is getting some new features, and our "thank you volunteers event" at the Lincoln exhibit in Danville was enjoyed by all. Please let me know if you would like to join our new fundraising committee or call me with any revenue-enhancing ideas at 925-837-7715.

Beverly Lane

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Renew	<input type="checkbox"/> Gift
Date _____		
Name(s) _____		
Address _____		
City _____		State _____
Zip _____	Phone _____	
E-Mail _____		
<i>_____ Please check here if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by e-mail—saves money and trees</i>		
DUES:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> Couple \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$75
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$500	
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$15	

Thanks so much to those who have recently renewed your membership. The Renewal Date printed on your address label should now be correct—please contact us if it is not.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

invites you to a

LECTURE

Co-sponsored by
Diablo Valley College
San Ramon Campus



Berkeley High School, Berkeley, California. 1940. Photograph by Gray Brechin

**ANOTHER WORLD WAS POSSIBLE
(AND IT'S ALL AROUND YOU):
EXCAVATING THE NEW DEAL IN CALIFORNIA**

Gray Brechin, our speaker, holds a B.A. degree in geography, an M.A. degree in art history and a Ph.D. in geography, all from the University of California at Berkeley. He is currently a visiting scholar in UCB's Department of Geography and an author and lecturer. He is the founder and project scholar of California's Living New Deal Project, a collaborative effort to identify, map, interpret and commemorate the 75th anniversary of FDR's New Deal, a series of federal programs between 1933 and 1938 designed to create jobs and bring the country out of the Great Depression.

- WHAT:** Lecture followed by light refreshments
- WHEN:** Saturday, June 19, 2010
1:00 PM
- WHERE:** Diablo Valley College
San Ramon Valley Campus
1690 Watermill Road, San Ramon
West Building/Room 212*
- COST:** \$10



Post Office, Lodi, California, 1936

*EVERYONE IS WELCOME!
SEATING IS LIMITED TO 65*

QUESTIONS? 925.254.2295 or 925.372.7146

**Take 680, exit No. 34, Bollinger Canyon. Proceed eastbound approx. 4 miles. Right on Watermill Rd. Left on SRC Campus (located next to Dougherty Station Library). Look for the balloons.*

Mark Your Calendar:

- April 26 – August 23 **KEEP IT WILD** exhibit from Muir Heritage Land Trust
- June 12 History Center open 10-2
- **June 19 – Membership Meeting** (See flier, previous page)
- July 17 History Center open 10-2
- August 21 History Center open 10-2
- New exhibit at History Center
- September 18 History Center open 10-2
- September 25 – Membership Meeting
- October 16 History Center open 10-2
- November 13 History Center open 10-2
- December 18 – Gen. Membership Mtg.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Contra Costa County Historical Society is the dissemination of knowledge about the history of Contra Costa County and the State of California through publications, lectures, workshops, and through the acquisition and preservation of pertinent historical documents.

Contra Costa County Historical Society

Officers:

President.....Beverly Lane
1st Vice President.....Andrea Blachman
2nd Vice President.....John Robinson
Secretary.....Webb Johnson
Treasurer.....Audrey Katzman

Directors:

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Lucille Irish	Melissa Jacobson
Webb Johnson	Mary-Ellen Jones
Audrey Katzman	Beverly Lane
Steve Lawton	Kathy Leighton
Mario Menesini	Traci Parent
John Robinson	Paula Wherity

Betty Maffei – Member Emeritus

The History Center

610 Main Street, Martinez, CA 94553

Phone: 925-229-1042 fax: 925-229-1772

Open Tuesday thru Thursday, 9 am – 4 pm

Now open 3rd Saturday, 10am – 2 pm!

Email: info@cocohistory.com

Website: www.cocohistory.com

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