



BULLETIN

Spring 2015

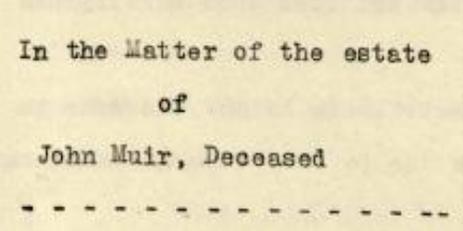
From the President's Desk

Scott Saffler



When I walk into our archives, I see in our old books, newspapers, photos and maps past events within our county as lived and documented by the people of

that time. To open up a probate book, as fellow board member and volunteer Lisa Gorrell and I did a couple months back, and see the final settlement of the estate of John Muir was an astounding and humbling experience. This was not some history book discussing the land holdings of the man, this was the actual legal document as submitted by his daughters to the Contra Costa Probate Court. There was no big headline on the book or the page containing this court case saying "Look here folks, the estate of the well-known naturalist John Muir," it was just one document among many others noted in the Probate



In the Matter of the estate
of
John Muir, Deceased

Court proceedings on that particular day.

Another example of the untapped wonders within our walls came shortly thereafter, when another member came by to look through some of our collection of local newspapers from the 1950s and 1960s. During our discussions, he mentioned that he was the first baby born at Kaiser in Walnut Creek and gave me his birthdate. Off we went to the book containing the



Contra Costa Times of that day, and there, in the middle of the front page, was a small article detailing the birth of the

first baby at Kaiser Hospital. It doesn't get any more personal than that, does it?

Whenever I give a tour of the History Center, I like to point out to people that, while we have catalogued many thousands of documents and newspapers, there is still much content within those documents and newspapers that we don't know about. Also, for every photograph that our volunteers have painstakingly documented, classified and entered into our database, there are at least another five photographs in our possession that we have barely looked at, let alone classified or cataloged.

My point is that this is our Society, and it is only as good as we make it. We greatly appreciate the financial support from our members over the years. Without your membership dues and generous responses to our fundraising appeals, it would be hard to keep the lights on and the building at an appropriate temperature. And I'm sure that Priscilla will agree with me that we have a terrific group of dedicated volunteers who do a great job maintaining the books, assisting visitors with their research requests, cataloguing our holdings and many other

tasks that make the place run as smoothly as it does.

Still, we can always use extra help. If you have a child or grandchild who is looking to earn service hours for high school, either during the school year or during vacations, encourage them to look at our Center as a potential opportunity. If you are retired and looking for something to do for a few hours a week, look us up. You don't have to commit to working 7 hours a day, 3 days a week to be of great value. Many of our volunteers work no more than one morning or afternoon per week. And their contributions are just as valuable to us as those volunteers that practically live there. Even if you are still working and can't make it during the week, the Center is open on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 10-2. Come on by and help us then!

So, step up, contact Priscilla at 925-229-1042 during our open hours, and help the cause. You can also email her at director@cocohistory.com if you are interested. I guarantee you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you've helped to find information that could be quite valuable to a researcher now or in the future. And you'll probably get to experience at least one or two "Oh, wow!" moments like those noted above that keep you coming back for more.

Okay, I'll get off the soapbox now. I'd like to talk about some of what I've done in my first two months as President, as well as give you an idea of what we have planned for the next few months.

My first official "act", aside from presiding over the Board meetings, was to speak in front of the County Board of Supervisors in Martinez. The purpose of this presentation, held on February 10th, was a chance to thank the Board for their financial support of the History Center and to give them an update on some of our 2014 accomplishments. If you would like to see my remarks and the fine reception we got from the supervisors, you can go to the following web site: <http://tinyurl.com/ccchs-supes>. This link will take you to the video of the meeting as supplied by the county. You are free to watch all three hours, but if you forward to about 58 minutes into the video, you

will see my presentation as well as questions and comments that came from the Supervisors in response to the speech.

Another event that I attended recently was the Contra Costa County competition for National History Day, held February 21st at the Blackhawk Museum. This event involves students across the country from 4th grade through high school, and encourages them to research, design and build a presentation of a person or group related to a particular historical theme. This year's theme was "Leadership and Legacy in History". The winners of the county competition will go on to the state competition to be held in May in Rocklin. CCCHS was well-represented, with the current President (me) and the two immediate past Presidents of the Society (John Burgh and Beverly Lane) giving up their Saturday morning and afternoon to help in



the judging of this important scholastic event.

Working in teams of two, John and I

looked at and judged posters and presentations on people from Charlemagne to Florence Nightingale to Rudolf Hoess, who was the commandant at the Auschwitz Death Camp during World War II. We both came away from the event impressed with the terrific presentations and poise of the students, each of whom we met and asked questions of regarding their projects. I also think I can honestly say that I learned more than a few things about the people shown in the presentations. If you'd like to read more on the competition, go to

<http://contracostahistory.wix.com/ccnhd>.

As winter turns to spring, you'll be seeing CCCHS spread its wings and getting out there more in the community. Just as you are getting this newsletter, we

are sponsoring or helping with two historical events suggested to us by former board members.

The first event will be held at Diablo Valley College on March 18th as part of “Women’s History Month”. It will be a talk by Linda Gordon, who has written books and other articles on Dorothea Lange and her photography during the Depression and beyond. Thanks to Melissa Jacobson for including the Society in this event.

The next evening, March 19th, former Board member James Wright will be speaking at the Orinda Theater, showing how he renovated the 19th century “Yellow House” in Orinda, using 21st century technology to make the house energy efficient to the point of being self-sustaining, all the while retaining the original structure and, where feasible, reusing the original building materials. As part of James’s presentation, he will be offering tours of the house on Saturday, March 21st and, if demand requires, on March 22nd as well.

Those of you on our electronic mailing list or who are subscribers to our Facebook Page should have seen notices about these events a couple weeks ago. If you are not on our email list and would like to be, please send a note with your email address to info@cocohistory.com, and we’ll get you set up. You can even sign up to receive your newsletter electronically. Not only does this save a few trees, but you’ll get your *Bulletin* a few days earlier than you would via the Post Office.

In May, CCCHS will be manning a table at the Martinez Peddlers’ Faire, Saturday May 16. In addition to our usual line up of books on county history, we will be “cleaning out the attic”, so to speak. Duplicate maps and pictures as well as out-of-field books and more will be out there for you to peruse and buy at very reasonable prices. Look for more information about the event, including our location at the Faire as we get closer to the event.

Finally, we are in the early stages of producing a series of videos on the Society in general and some of the

archives in our History Center in particular. We are hoping to have a major event sometime in June to celebrate the release of these videos, which we hope will make many more of our county citizens aware of our organization.

As you can see, I’m hoping that this will be an active year in terms of getting out the word about our organization and capabilities to the rest of the world. Whether it’s working with other groups on historical events around the county, increasing our social media presence or lending a hand in gathering information and artifacts for a worthwhile event, look for the Contra Costa County Historical Society’s logo to be more noticeable in 2015!



From The Executive Director

Though the winter has been dark and cold, it has been cozy and welcoming at the History Center, where work goes on apace. In January, we held a volunteer meeting and were blessed with the attendance of 26 volunteers!

Our plan is to increase our volunteer perks this year by alternating workshops, field trips, and other events, so that there will be one event per month all year long. Our February event was a workshop on processing archival materials given by Kathleen Mero, and March will feature a tour of the Contra Costa County Superior Courts. Both of these events will increase volunteers’ skills and knowledge and enable them to increase their abilities as ambassadors for the History Center. And we always welcome new volunteers.

As Scott has noted, in 2015, we have big plans for more outreach to our membership. I enjoyed our December meeting and hope to see you at some of our future events. One he didn’t mention that may well be incorporated into our June meeting is a “raise the rent” party, so that we make sure early in the year to make enough to close the gap between the County stipend and the amount of rent that is due.

MAP Report Summary:

During 2014, we were awarded a Museum Assessment Program Organizational Assessment Grant, funded by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and administered by the American Alliance of Museums. After an extensive self-study that involved board, staff, and volunteers, we were visited by a peer reviewer from the Library of Virginia Foundation (formerly the Virginia State Archives). Katarina Spears, the reviewer, was very complimentary to the Society, concluding "The CCCHS is a professionally run organization with a strong volunteer staff, an experienced executive director, and a wealth of fascinating collections."

Specific recommendations included updating our mission statement, improving visitor experience by focusing our reception area with new signs (already accomplished) and new furniture in the volunteer areas, a level of outreach and marketing that includes expanded distribution of the newsletter to include all local genealogical societies, more workshops for the community, and exploring partnership opportunities with outside organizations such as other societies and newspapers. Recommendations were also made regarding collections, security, governance, fundraising (including an increase in our membership dues), and finance. A copy of the full MAP report is available.

As always, please feel free to call or e-mail me with any questions, suggestions, or just to say hello!

Yours, Priscilla

Membership Dues Increased

As noted in Priscilla's MAP Report summary, one of the recommendations made was to raise the cost of membership. As was noted in the report, a considerable amount of staff time is devoted to research requests, and there is a significant amount of staff time directed to making information accessible in the first place; these factors "should be considered when placing a value on membership." In addition,

no increase in our dues has been made in over seven years. And, as you know, our cost of doing business has increased substantially in the last few years. For these reasons, a modest increase in our dues structure was approved by the board at our February meeting, which is reflected below. This was not an easy decision, but we felt that it was only prudent.

CCCHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Renew Gift

Date: _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Please check here if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by e-mail—saves money and trees

DUES:

Individual \$40 Couple \$70 Sponsor \$100

Patron \$200 Corporate \$500

Benefactor \$1000 Student \$20

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, or e-mail info@cocohistory.com.

Please consider CCCHS in your estate planning. It is simple, and any gift is tax deductible. We have a Schwab account that makes it easier for members and others to donate shares of stock to the Society, a good way to make a year-end or other contribution.

Liberty First, Then the Union Civil War Times in Alamo

Beverly Lane

When the Civil War began, people in California felt just as passionate on one side or the other as did northerners and southerners back east. One little-known fact is that Confederate sympathizers were prominent in the San Ramon Valley.

Two sets of brothers in Alamo and Danville were particularly notable. In Alamo and Lafayette, John M. Jones and his brother Nathaniel were both County leaders who supported secession. John and Mary Ann Jones had moved to Alamo in 1851 with their family where he became the first Alamo postmaster and held several positions including County Assessor, Justice of the Peace and County Superintendent of Schools. He was a stalwart Democrat.

Nathaniel Jones, the County's first sheriff and later a County Supervisor, adamantly opposed Lincoln's efforts to save the Union, which he felt had betrayed the U.S. Constitution. He pointed out that, since the Constitution was passed in 1789 as a contract among the states, those states that wanted to secede from the Union were entitled to do so. As the war carnage continued and the Emancipation Proclamation was declared, he became even more adamant.

County Democratic Conventions in the 1860s regularly expressed anti-Lincoln sentiments articulated by Nathaniel Jones. On April 30, 1864, the convention stated that the Emancipation Proclamation meant "the subjugation of the southern States to the condition of colonial dependencies, which would be alike incompatible with free Government and revolting to the national will."

The Convention's resolution also pointed out: "the rebellion of 1861 having merged into a war of frightful proportions is rapidly undermining the fair fabric of our institutions and exerting a baleful influence on human civilization." (From the *Contra Costa Gazette*, May 14, 1864)

In Danville, brothers Daniel and Andrew Inman were well known Democrats. Andrew settled in Green Valley while Dan continued mining during the 1850s. Andrew married Ann Young and her mother, Sarah, lived with them. The 1860 census included Jane Young, age 50, a black servant in Andrew and Ann Inman's household.



Daniel Inman

Andrew was politically active, representing the County in the State Assembly (1856) and the State Senate (1860 to 1862). Lifelong Democrat Daniel Inman was also interested in politics and was widely respected as a man of probity and generosity. The Inman brothers appeared regularly in Democratic Party and Democratic County Convention reports in the *Contra Costa Gazette*.

When Daniel purchased 400 acres at the intersection of the County and Tassajara roads and a hotel and store were built, names for this little village were discussed. Inmanville as a name was rejected. Danville was finally chosen, in part for Dan and in part for Sarah Young's hometown of Danville, Kentucky.

In 1863, Dan was nominated by the County Democratic Convention to run for Sheriff. But it was the middle of the Civil War and Republicans, called the Union Party then, made the election case that to vote Democrat would be disloyal. He was trounced by J. J. McEwen, 1006 to 528 on September 2, 1863. At that same election John M. Jones ran for Assessor (also as a Democrat) and lost 1009 to 515.

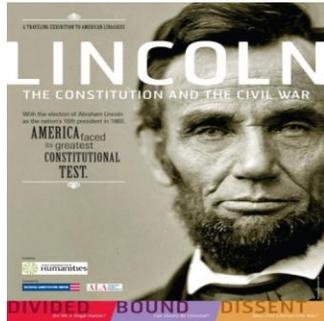
Although President Lincoln won overwhelmingly in Contra Costa County and the nation, the 1864 election results out of Danville-San Ramon gave 91 votes to George McClellan and 76 votes to Lincoln. There were plenty of Union Republicans voting as well; in Alamo the vote was 17 McClellan, 50 Lincoln.

Lincoln Exhibit comes March 19th to the Museum of the San Ramon Valley

This new exhibit focuses on Lincoln's huge impact on the development of our American constitution as he steered the United States through the Civil War. The attitudes of people in Contra Costa County were a microcosm of all of America and many of their stories accompanied with artifacts will also be told. Everyone is invited to visit the exhibit and attend three special events.

Museum of the San Ramon Valley, 205 Railroad Ave., Danville 94526

For information go to www.museumsvr.org



California Celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the P.P.I.E., All Year Long!



February 20, 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, in San Francisco. In honor of this centennial anniversary, a consortium of civic, cultural, and historical organizations is hosting events in San Francisco and throughout the state of California. But the best place to be is where it all began, at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. As of this month, the Palace will be open to the public. New exhibits and a digital animation bring to life the experience of the "Jewel City" of 1915. For more information about the many events occurring throughout the state, visit: www.ppie100.org/

The **Museum of the San Ramon Valley** is hosting its own P.P.I.E. exhibit, opening May 5. Additionally, author Laura Ackley will present her newly-published book, *San Francisco: The Jewel City*, on May 14 at 7 pm, at the Danville Library. More at: www.museumsvr.org.

Remembering . . . Tillie Larkins

January 3, 1916--January 11, 2015

The little lady who knew everyone and everything about Cowell is gone. Will we miss her? You bet. She and her husband came to the History Center in 1984. She said: "Hello, we are the Larkins. I'm Tillie and this is Bill." She said she had grown up in Cowell and I asked if she knew my relatives who also lived on Cowell Road. She and my cousin Norma Ginocchio had gone to school together--they were best friends.



Clotilde "Tillie" Perez was born in Chile. She came to the U.S. when she was 3. Her father found work with the cement company owned by Henry Cowell. The Perez family lived in the family housing in the company town of Cowell. Tillie remembered helping her father pour cement for the foundation of the Cowell smoke stack. She remembered the great depression and the massive loss of work. The plant opened only two days a week and only the married men were kept on the payroll. She worked in the office of the cement company and after graduation from high school went to work at Buchanan Field--in the main office. There she met William Larkins, author and photographer. They were married in 1950, but not before Bill had a "real job." She did not see his work as a steady position (Bill is writing his tenth book) When he began to work at the University of California, and after they had bought a house, they were married. Buying a house before marriage was unheard of in 1950, but, we're talking about Tillie. She would grin when she told of signing the deed with her maiden name.

Tillie knew everyone. When I needed information about Concord, I would ask Tillie. Daughter, Mary Larkins Woelfel tells the story of Tillie meeting a stranger at a bus stop. She asked about his tattoos. By the time the bus came, she knew all about him.

There were many people who came to the History Center because they had met Tillie at a breakfast, a lunch, or a funeral, and had been invited to come in and see our collections. A former Girl Scout leader, member of the Concord and Pleasant Hill Historical Societies, she was my strongest supporter, my advisor, my, mentor--my friend.

Remembering that Tillie always avoided interviews--hated having her picture taken, and always found mistakes in written articles, I have re-written two lines, removed several comments, and tried to ignore the little lady looking over my shoulder.

Betty Maffei

Crockett Historical Society

Erin Mullen Brosnan, President



From left: Dick Boyer, Erin Brosnan, Keith Olsen

The Crockett Historical Society is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of the history of the town of Crockett and its associated communities of Valona, Tormey, Vallejo Junction, and Eckley. We fulfill this purpose by providing educational and research opportunities; by collecting relevant historic photographs, documents, artifacts and cultural objects; by maintaining a museum to display and protect these items; by advocating the preservation of historic resources in the community; by providing a gathering place for important events within the community; and by encouraging others to participate and help further these aims.

The Society was initially organized in the late 1970's by Crockett residents interested in preserving the history of the town, and officially incorporated in time for the 100th anniversary of the founding of Crockett. The first board arranged with C&H Sugar Refinery to have the use of the former Southern Pacific railroad depot as the museum site. The building had been unused since 1969 and needed cleaning, repairs and a paint job inside and out! Volunteers worked hard to accomplish these tasks, accepted donations of historic artifacts, created new and adapted old displays, and opened for business in September of 1981.

Visitors to the Crockett Museum are often charmed by the unique nature of the displays; many exhibits remain from the original ones created almost 35 years ago. The town of Crockett has been heavily influenced by C&H's presence since 1906, and that influence is felt in the display of the evolution of sugar products and the sugar industry. Citizens of Crockett have enjoyed a proud connection with their schools, and trophies and photos abound. Other exhibits share information about the history of the town/area, businesses, churches, the Carquinez Bridge(s), fraternities/social clubs, and military service members. One of the more popular artifacts in the Museum is known as "Joey's Fish," an enormous 468 lb. taxidermied sturgeon (caught on a rod and reel), the likes of which will never be caught again! A complete collection of the Cubelet Press (the house organ of C&H from 1936-1992) is available for research, as well as *Crockett Signal* and *Crockett American* from 1908 until 1976 and *Crockett Signal* magazine 1989 to present day.

The Crockett Museum is open each Wednesday and Saturday from 10am to 3pm. Visitors are always admitted for free and docents are available for questions. For more information on arranging tours or planning your visit, call (510)787-2178, email crockmuseum@aol.com or visit our website at www.crockettmuseum.org.

