



CCCHS Annual Membership Meeting an Historic First *Editor*

Your Historical Society was proud and pleased to hold its annual membership meeting in the newly-opened Concord Museum and Event Center. After years of planning, fund-raising, and restoration by the incredibly dedicated Concord volunteers, our organization was the first to hold an official event in this unique and historic building.

While we had two great speakers, the food was good, and the raffle was popular and successful (we made around \$400), it was the building itself that was the real center of

attention.

It was two and one-half years ago that we visited the Concord Historical Society (see Bulletin, Summer 2015). At that time, the Event Center was very much a work in progress. The lovely old building, originally a Masonic Lodge constructed in 1922, was donated to the Concord HS, but that organization had to figure out how to move it to its present site close to the Galindo home, and raise the money to achieve that goal. The accomplishment of this goal was the subject of the talk by board member Lloyd Crenna.

By the summer of 2015, the building was resting securely on its new foundation, and much restoration work had been completed, but much remained to be done. At the right is a photo taken during our visit. The man with the apron is board member Chuck Gabrysiak, who was in charge of much the work that had been done. At this time, the wood flooring had been refinished, but, as can be seen, the interior walls were still unfinished and practically all the wiring and plumbing remained to be installed.





At left, we see the completed main event room, on the occasion of our membership meeting, December 2, 2017. Quite a change.



At the right, we see another view of the main event room, looking in the opposite direction, toward the stage. At the time of our membership meeting, the stage had been completely rebuilt. Below is a picture of the room above the main event room, taken in 2015. This beautiful space will eventually become the Concord Museum.



According to board member and speaker, Lloyd Crenna, (right) the cost of moving and restoring the old lodge building is now over one million dollars. That doesn't include the additions that are planned for the near future, to give the site a fully functioning kitchen and more room for the museum. That the organization was able to raise this kind of



money speaks to the wisdom and dedication of the board and the volunteers. Lloyd did point out, however, that the society has been blessed by attracting one particular donor, who has been very generous in her support of the restoration efforts. By the way, if you recognize the name Crenna, you are probably of a certain age. Lloyd is related to the actor Richard Crenna, who began his career in the old comedy series, "Our Miss Brooks," starring Eve Arden.



Our second speaker, John Keibel, is also a member of the Concord HS Board of Directors, and he talked about his book, *Behind the Barbed Wire: History of the Concord Naval Weapons Station*. John proved to be an excellent speaker who has put together a very detailed and timely history of a county site currently very much in the public eye, owing to plans for its redevelopment.

Our meeting ended, as they often do, with a raffle, led by our Treasurer, Steve James, ably assisted by our E.D., Priscilla Couden, and volunteer Maxine Brown.



Thanks to everyone who helped out at this event or who just attended. A particularly

hearty thanks to our board member and event coordinator, Tara Weber, for putting everything together in the smooth, professional manner to which we have become accustomed.

District 3 Supervisor Visits HC *Steve James*

Supervisor Burgis with Board members Scott Saffler, John Mercurio, and Beverly Lane



Photo by Steve James

CCCHS was pleased to welcome the newest County Supervisor, Diane Burgis, for a tour of our archives. Diane has lived in many cities in CCC and attended Alhambra High School in Martinez, so she was well versed on local history. Like all first-time visitors, she was amazed at the original records we house, dating to before California's statehood. She was very interested in our 1923 city of Antioch (in her district) map, that had both the original street names and the converted alpha-numeric naming convention that exists today. Our disappointment was, of the many high school yearbooks that we have, we do not have the Alhambra HS yearbook of her class. Hopefully, one will be donated in the future. CCCHS is grateful for all the support given to us by each of the County Supervisors. A special thank you goes out to Diane for taking the time to visit.

Holiday Surprise

Priscilla Couden

When Kaori Evans volunteered to work on a 4th grade program for the Contra Costa County Historical Society last year, we had no way of knowing how her circle of friends and acquaintances would end up impacting the Society. In 2016, Kaori brought a friend into the Society's History Center in Martinez to advise and consult on the 4th grade project. In July 2017, that friend, Roseanne LeRoy, came back to the History Center, offering to look into the possibility of Amy's Hallmark in Pleasant Hill, where she works, being involved in a fundraising event. That offer turned into the weekend fundraiser that was held from October 20-22, 2017 at Amy's Hallmark, 20 Crescent Drive, Pleasant Hill, CA.

Ultimately, Roseanne and manager Monique Peladeau, together with their corporate offices, decided that 15% of sales for the whole weekend would be donated to the Contra Costa County Historical Society. What a wonderful opportunity it was for many to double the impact of their spending dollars as they prepared for the holidays with cards, gifts, ornaments, and much more at the same time as helping a deserving non-profit.

Board member Steve James was the lead for the CCCHS; he and other board members, staff, and volunteers of the CCCHS were at Amy's each day to meet and greet those who came in. It was a very successful weekend for the Historical Society. We were happy to receive a check in the amount of \$1,274!! Needless to say, we are interested in following up with another fundraiser in 2018. This also illustrates one of the many ways in which members and supporters of the History Center and the CCCHS can be of help to the Society. We thank Kaori from the bottom of our hearts and her friends Rosanne and Monique for making this such a memorable occasion!



Richmond's Shipyards

Donald Bastin



The historic photos used in this article are courtesy of the Richmond Museum of History

Richmond, California, had never been known as a ship-building town. But during the war years between 1941 and 1945, it earned undying fame by producing more ships for the war effort than any other city in the country. From early 1941 to August of 1945, a total of 747 ships were launched at Richmond's Kaiser shipyards. One of these yards (Yard Three) still exists, and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. In the year 2000, the National Park Service officially dedicated its **Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park** in the city of Richmond. This is the only such park in the nation, honoring the home front effort during the Second World War.

Four shipyards were built in Richmond, all under the general supervision of Henry J. Kaiser.

The construction of the first, Yard One, began very early in 1941, fully a year before the United States became involved in the Second World War. Its initial purpose was to construct 30 cargo ships for England. On August 16, 1941, the first of these ships, the *Ocean Vanguard*, slid down the ways. This simple, sturdy ship was basically a traditional English tramp steamer, and burned coal, which was plentiful in England.



Ocean Volga, launched April 21, 1942

Referred to as Ocean-class vessels, all were named *Ocean V----- (Vanguard, Volga, Vista, etc.)*. The Ocean class vessel became the template for the Liberty ship, produced in great quantity, and which formed the backbone of the allied cargo ship fleet.

Yard Two (now the site of Richmond’s marina) was also in operation before America’s entry into the War, and it had the distinction of launching the first Liberty ship, the *James Otis*, on December 31, 1941. In all, yards one and two would construct a total of 489 Libertys (in addition to the 30 Ocean-class vessels). Yards one and two were also responsible for the construction of 142 Victory ships, which were also cargo vessels but which were much more sophisticated (and faster) than the Liberty.

Sherburne, Victory Ship (AP-5)



The Victory ship was actually produced in three configurations (AP-2, AP-3, and AP-5). 110 of those launched in Richmond were AP-2s. The only remaining vessel constructed in the Richmond yards was an AP-2, the *Red Oak Victory*. Owned by the Richmond Museum Association, it is also on the National Register, and is currently berthed in Yard Three.

Construction of Yard Three began in early 1942. Yard Three was unique in that it was expected to have a life after the war. All of the other yards constructed ships in the traditional manner, on slanted ways. When the ship was ready for launch, the ways were greased, the holding blocks knocked out, and the ship slid, stern first, into the bay. In contrast, Yard Three was built with five concrete basins, or dry docks.

Ships were constructed on the level, and when ready for launch, the basins were flooded and the ship towed out, bow first, to the fitting-out docks. The only type of ship built at Yard Three was the C-4 Troopship, which was larger than any of the other vessels constructed in Richmond and far more sophisticated. Only 35 C-4s were launched from Yard Three.



General Brewster, C-4 Troopship

Yard Four produced three different types of vessels: the LST (Landing Ships-Tanks), the Frigate, and the C1-M-AV1 (or “baby” Liberty). Of all the ships built in Richmond, only the frigate qualified as a true warship, the others being cargo and munitions carriers, or troop carriers.



Albuquerque, Frigate

The frigate was something like a destroyer, and it served as a convoy escort ship, protecting the plodding cargo vessels on their long journeys across the Atlantic.

The C1-M-AV1 was a smaller version of the Liberty, powered with a diesel engine (rather than a steam piston engine).

Amador C1-M-AV1

The “baby” Liberty was designed as a



coast-wise carrier, and was expected to provide useful service after the war.

The last ship launched in the Richmond shipyards during WWII was the troopship *Marine Snapper*, sent out of its dry dock on August 12, 1945 (just 3 days before the surrender of Japan). As expected, Yard Three continued to operate, primarily offering ship repair services. But in the early 1980s, this yard, too, ceased operation. The basins are now sometimes used to provide berthing for derelict vessels.

The *Red Oak Victory* and the shipyard in which it is berthed (Yard Three) are part of the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park.



As such, they are open to visitors. And both are on the S.F. Bay Trail. For hours and tours, visit the park website at

<https://nps.gov/rori>. The ship's website is:

<https://richmondmuseum.org/ss-red-oak-victory>

The only remaining vessel of the 747 constructed in Richmond, the Red Oak Victory, in her berth in Yard 3. Alongside is one of the "Whirley" Cranes used in Richmond during WWII.



The Board is looking for Contra Costa County residents interested in history to fill several vacant board slots.

Board members are expected to attend the monthly meetings at our History Center located at 724 Escobar Street in Martinez. Members are also typically active volunteers helping out with various events put on by the Society.

If you are interested in learning more, please drop an email to our Board President, John Mercurio, at johnmercurio@astound.net.

Our mission is to preserve, protect, and provide public access to the records and heritage of Contra Costa County.

Next Author in the Archives: The Story of Louise Arner Boyd



Author Joanna Kafarowski recounts the tale of a local Diablo woman in the earth's polar regions.



Joanna has gleaned much of her information from our archives: "Over the ten years that I have been researching and writing this book, the staff of the CCCHS has been of great assistance and I have used your archives many times. Thanks!"
Hear Joanna at the History Center, Saturday, April 21, 2018.

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.

From the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

A very Happy New Year to you!

In the middle of the first and worst major rainstorm of the year, a group of hardy volunteers gathered to help create an oral history of Betty Maffei—the History Center’s founding Executive Director. The purpose was to gather Betty’s memories and knowledge of the Center’s history to add to our knowledge of the CCCHS corporate history. To that end, Betty and her friend Diane Donahoe, a long-term volunteer herself, arrived at the History Center on Monday, January 8 to meet Traci Parent, long-time CCCHS Board member and oral historian for the East Bay Regional Parks District, Crystal Jimenez, who will transcribe the interview, the members of the Martinez Historical Society’s Video project—Tom Zamaria and Jon Marangoni (video), Art Miller (sound), and Debbie Zamaria (coordinator)—as well as CCCHS president John Mercurio and I, to accomplish this milestone for the Society. It took an hour to set up, 1-3/4 hours for the interview, and another half hour to take down all the equipment! Thanks to all who took part! We plan to have a special viewing for you, our members, probably on May 19th, Betty’s birthday.



Meanwhile, I’d like this to be the year that our membership grows by leaps and bounds. At only \$40 for the year, membership comes with a 10% discount in our bookstore, the opportunity to do research at no charge, the quarterly *Bulletin*, events, and other member perks. We need each current member to secure one other. Doing so will get you a month’s extension on your own membership. Please be an ambassador for CCCHS and make it your goal to bring in at least one new member this year.

Here’s to a safe and healthy 2018!

Priscilla

From the President



In early December, we had a spectacular event—our annual meeting, held in the **Concord Museum and Event Center**, as noted in our lead article. We were their first “customer” and for that we should be proud. We look forward to working with the Concord HS in the future—in any way we can. Thanks to all who attended and contributed.

Speaking of the future, I think I have mentioned before that the board is now working on a strategic plan to lay out a path forward for perhaps the next 20 years. As a historical society, our main task involves different ways of looking at the past. But with the strategic plan, we strive to look ahead to our future. In effect, we want to influence what our future history is going to be. We might be able to own our own building, for example, if we plan properly and have adequate funds set aside for such a purpose. It would be a great advantage not have to pay rent each month and be able to direct more funds toward our mission. Before the end of this year I will share with you the vision we have developed for the society. Maybe you have a way to help us, so stay tuned!

In December, the History Center was closed for two weeks. This was a good time for us to make minor improvements to our space. We had a fine cadre of volunteers and board members on two separate days. Several projects were completed, but I think the major one was installing new shelving in a couple of our rooms. The new document storage space was created after moving non-archive items to storage space the county has temporarily provided for us. Now we can better store archival items and make room for new acquisitions. The new storage space allowed us to receive a number of old maps from the County, which will soon become part of our archives.

Two thousand seventeen is now in the history books. We look forward to making some “new” history of our own in 2018.

John Mercurio

