



# BULLETIN

Spring 2019

Contra Costa County Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee

Carol A. Jensen, Chair



## ORIGINAL KNIGHTSEN TOWN SITE AREA

*The Knightsen Town site is important to the overall history and settlement of Eastern Contra Costa County. The settlement of Knightsen was closely tied to the Knightsen Train Stop and rail yard. Included in the Knightsen Town site are a number of single-family residences and commercial buildings that are the original buildings constructed in the early 1900s. Among these structures are the Knightsen Post Office (1900), Knightsen Farm Center Building (1921), Knightsen Saloon (1900), and the Duff Store and first telegraph building (1925).*

The task of the Contra Costa County Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee (“HLAC”) is to advise the Board of Supervisors on matters relating to the identification and preservation of historical resources within the County, including identifying eligible sites and places to be listed in the County’s Historic Resources Inventory (“HRI”). The Committee was created in the 1970s in an attempt to preserve the county’s historic properties, buildings, and communities. Notable entries to the Inventory include the John Marsh Home, Salvadore Pacheco Adobe, Byron Hot Springs Hotel, the Town of Valona, the Stanley Dollar House, and the original Knightsen town site area!

City limit lines have expanded over the years and many landmarks originally under County planning jurisdiction are now incorporated into our growing cities. Cities may create their own local Historic Landmarks Advisory Committees to identify and list historic landmarks, landscapes, or districts within their own government authority. Alternatively, city councils may sit as a committee of the whole absent an appointed historic advisory committee. In the past, the County HRI has focused only on *unincorporated* areas.

## Benefits of Listing Your Properties on the HRI

There are numerous economic benefits to a property owner’s listing his/her residential, commercial, industrial, or public/government property on the Historic Resources Inventory. Details and benefits of these programs are too



**JOHN MARSH HOME**

*Marsh Creek Road 2-1/2 miles south of Brentwood, Structure of Historical Significance/ Architectural Specimen.*

*John Marsh, doctor and first Anglo-American settler in Contra Costa County, was born in 1799, in Massachusetts -- pioneered westward and eventually bought the Rancho Los Meganos (13,316 acres) from Jose Noriega. He married Abby Tuck in 1851 and in 1852 started the mansion for his bride. The mansion, known as the "Stone House," was completed in 1856; however, it was never lived in by the Marshes. Abby died in 1855 and John was murdered in 1856. The home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.*

great to list in our limited space here. Some sources of grants, tax incentives, or special designation include the following:

**Federal Programs**

- Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits
- Conservation / Preservation Easement
- Charitable Contribution Deductions
- Community Development Block Grants ("CDBG")
- Transportation - Enhancement Activities

**State of California Programs**

- Mills Act
- California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA")
- State Historical Building Code
- Seismic Retrofit Property Tax Exclusion
- California Cultural and Historical Endowment

- California Heritage Fund

**Other Programs**

- California Preservation Foundation
- Your City Council and local Historical Society

Featuring the Mills Act

One of the most important benefits of listing an historic property on the Historical Landmarks List is property tax relief afforded under the Mills Act. The act is a state law that grants participating local governments authority to enter into contracts with owners of qualified historic properties to receive property tax relief. This relief is offered to those who actively participate in the restoration and maintenance of their historic properties. Property taxes are recalculated using a formula in the Mills Act and Revenue and Taxation Code. This is an incentive for the preservation of local historic buildings and neighborhoods or Districts.



**BYRON HOT SPRINGS HOTEL**

*Byron Hot Springs Road near County Road J4 Byron, Structure of Historical Significance.*

*Center of recreation and health spa in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1880s and early 1900s. It has burned down twice. Mud baths, hotel, manager's house and cottages are still there. It was a Japanese prison camp during World War II.*

The Mills Act requires that historic property owners spend the property tax money that is saved through the Mills Act on preserving and/or restoring their property. The Mills Act offers owners of historical buildings the opportunity to realize significant property tax savings in exchange for preserving

buildings listed in the County Historic Resources Inventory or contributory buildings to a Historic District. Tax benefits are available both owner-occupied property as well as income property. [The personal rewards for saving your own part of Contra Costa County history? Priceless!



*SALVIO PACHECO ADOBE*

*2050 Adobe Street, now located in incorporated City of Concord, Structure of Historical Significance/ Architectural Specimen.*

*Don Salvio Pacheco- -soldier-surveyor of Pueblo Public Lands- - settled here in 1828. Was awarded this grant called "Monte Del Diablo" in 1835 by Governor Jose Figueroa. The adobe was completed June 24, 1853. In 1853, settlers located west of here and named the place Pacheco. Pacheco was destroyed by great floods. Don Salvio Pacheco gave land surrounding the adobe in 1868 to the Pacheco flood refugees and the settlement became known as "Todos Santos" - - now known as Concord. California Historical Landmark #515.*

The Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee roster consists of individuals from throughout Contra Costa County. The five-member HLAC is comprised of four Contra Costa County Historical Society ("CCCHS") members and the Deputy Director of the Department of Conservation and Development, Community Development Division. Committee members are recommended by the Contra Costa County Historical Society to the Board of Supervisors and serve at the pleasure of the Supervisors for a four-year term. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis, the second Thursday of the month at 30 Muir Road, Martinez, at 2:30 PM. The agenda is posted on the HLAC website. The public is encouraged to attend! There is always an open agenda item for public comment at the beginning of every meeting.

Currently serving committee members are: Carol A. Jensen, Brentwood, Chair; Melissa Jacobson, Martinez, Vice Chair; Melinda McCrary, Richmond; Raymond O'Brien, Bay Point; Aruna Bhat, Conservation and Development Deputy Director; and Dominique Vogelpohl, Staff. Contact Information: Phone number (925) 674-7888. Email [dominique.vogelpohl@dcd.cccounty.us](mailto:dominique.vogelpohl@dcd.cccounty.us)

Accomplishments in 2018

The Advisory Committee and staff worked diligently in 2018 and accomplished the following in calendar year 2018:

- Flagging in the County computer system ("Accela") all historical resources listed in the County's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) located within unincorporated County.
- Researched boundaries for the Valona Historic District located within Crockett.
- Research conducted of comparable city and county historical policies and ordinances to act as examples for HLAC contribution to the County General Plan Update



*TOWN OF VALONA*

*Site of Historical Significance.*

*A small town that once occupied the eastern portion of the township of Crockett. Valona was originally laid out by Dr. John Strentzel in 1882, shortly after Thomas Edwards laid out the Town of Crockett. It occupied four square blocks and has easy access to Port Street and the tracks. Dr. Strentzel owned the hill and land on the east side of Crockett Ranch. Valona was a separate town with several stores and a school, although it had no post office or rail stop. Valona was slowly incorporated into the Crockett township.*

Goals for 2019

The proposed work plan and objectives for this year :

- Contribute to the updating of the General Plan: <https://envisioncontracosta2040.org/> Citizen historians and the general public can add their

names to the email contact list and check the calendar for upcoming public meetings.

- Develop concepts for new policies to include in the Open Space Element of the GP.
- Update the County Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) to include each resource's correct address, Assessor Parcel Number, whether it is located within unincorporated County or a City jurisdiction, when it was added to the HRI by the Board of Supervisors, and the status of the building/structure.
- Establishing revised application forms for nomination to the HRI and proposal of development to already established historical resources on the HRI, and California and National Register.

#### Important websites:

For more information on Historical Landmarks and the Advisory Committee and its upcoming agenda:

<https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/4318/Historical-Landmarks-Advisory-Committee>

Here you will find links to additional resources:

- The Contra Costa Historic Landmarks list
- HLAC Application
- Guidelines for acceptance to the HRI
- The Mills Act

## **Contra Costa County History Center Hosts Deer Valley High School Juniors**

Students learn about primary sources *Priscilla Couden*



*One busload of students with ED Priscilla Couden*

On Wednesday, March 13, 88 juniors from Joan Setka's English classes at Deer Valley High School in

Antioch visited the Contra Costa County History Center in Martinez. Together with visits to the Alhambra Cemetery and the John Muir house, each student was collecting information about a specific Contra Costa pioneer for a class assignment of an oral and written report on that pioneer. Charity Brown, for instance, was gathering information about pioneer Louisiana Strentzel; Brooke Wilson, about Hardy McClellan; Angela Lucido, about John Muir's brother-in-law John Reid; Osagyefo Temple, about Simon Blum; and Kegan Downie, about Joseph R. Walker.

"People have the misconception that Contra Costa County was really insignificant," says Joan Setka. "The records at the Contra Costa County History Center and the Alhambra Cemetery show a lot about settlement patterns and the developing culture of the West. What I love about this project is reading accounts of what life was like more than 150 years ago. Contra Costa County was always a diverse place, and this project makes history real to my students. In order for them to construct their monologue they need to think about what life was like for that person. This is a challenging project but it is usually the assignment that students enjoy the most."

The information to be gathered at the History Center came in two forms. First, each student received a packet that had been compiled by volunteers of the



History Center from lists that were made from the History Center's database, available on the History Center's Public Access Computer Terminals (PACT).

*Board president John Greitzer with students Michelle Barajas and Aaliyah Page in the Court Records Room.*

Then, a tour of some of the History Center's archives, during which History Center volunteers Scott Saftler at the PACT, Jim Vail in the library, John Greitzer in the old lawyers' court cases, Peggy Holmes in the assessment maps, and Janet Stapleton in photographs each explained how the information on the PACT lists referred to actual primary source documents that would be used in the school projects. Each student's packet contained some of the information gleaned from these sources. Following the tour of the History Center Archives, students moved on to the John Muir House and the Alhambra Cemetery for further information to incorporate into their projects.

The idea for the projects came from their Deer Valley teacher, Joan Setka, who was inspired by Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, a series of poems that narrate the epitaphs of the residents of Spoon River, a fictional small town named after the real Spoon River that ran near Masters' home in Illinois. The Deer Valley students will create a narrative about the lives of each of the pioneers assigned to them and will deliver their monologues in class at the beginning of April.

History Center volunteer Kaori Evans coordinated the logistics of the field trip, including timing the arrivals and departures of three large groups of students at the History Center and two busses that moved among the locales being visited, as well as the logistics of moving five groups of six students each through five stations. It was an exhausting but exhilarating job for her. She reports, "I am so delighted to volunteer for this event every year (this is the third year they have come). I am confident that introducing the rich history along with the pioneers who greatly contributed to the development of Contra Costa County gives the students a rare experience. This year was even more special because one of the students saw his grandfather's immigration record. His amazement was so precious! It is such a privilege for me to be part of it."

Steve James, the Treasurer of the Contra Costa County Historical Society and a volunteer at the

History Center as well, was the time keeper, in charge of an important aspect of moving so many people through the Center in the time allotted. Many other of the Center's volunteers participated as well in welcoming the students to the Center. "It was a great experience for all—students, volunteers, and staff. We always enjoy having students come to the History Center. It is a joy to watch them as they become

aware of the primary sources they are introduced to," said Priscilla Couden, Executive Director of the Contra Costa County Historical Society. "We are already looking forward to this event in 2020."



*Kaori Evans, and Joan Setka*

*Steve James, Tammy Ely-Kofford, Priscilla Couden,*

Some of the students' reactions: "I found it both interesting and important that they have so many records from the past." Serlissa

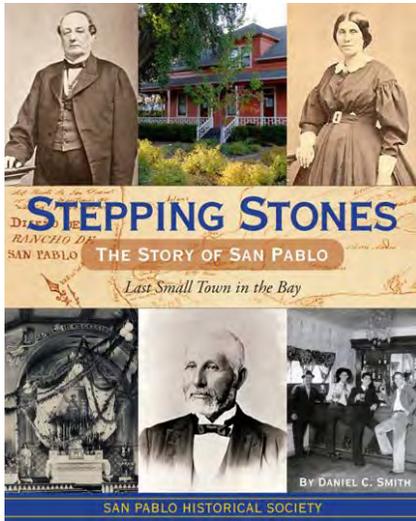
"The most important thing I learned was how there were a lot of hand-written documents such as court cases and taxes. These handwritten documents were like this because the typewriter had not yet been invented." Angelina

"There was a lot of history from where I live." Anthony G.

And the most fun of all: "I saw my grandfather's naturalization records." Anthony B.

What an experience it was when Anthony found his name on the PACT and volunteers brought out the actual naturalization records from when his grandfather became a citizen of the United States!

## The Story of San Pablo, Last Small Town in the Bay



The CCCHS Author in the Archives Speaker Series returns to the historic Campbell Theater on May 11, 2019. Veteran Bay Area journalist and former Benicia Councilman **Dan Smith** presents an illustrated talk

of his book *Stepping Stones*, the Story of San Pablo, Last Small Town in the Bay. Dan traces San Pablo's evolution from a Huchuin Indian village to Mexican rancho to a town that resisted the push to incorporate as a city until 1949, all the way to its being named an All-American City in 1975 and 2014 by the National Urban League.

Tales of millionaires and murderers, pioneers and philanthropists, all come together in this fascinating historical account of San Pablo, last small town of the Bay. Dan's presentation will also include rare vintage photographs from the collection of the San Pablo Historical Society.

A book signing follows immediately.

**WHEN:** Saturday, May 11, 2019, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Campbell Theater  
636 Ward Street, Martinez  
3 blocks from the History Center

**DETAILS:** Admission and parking are free. Theater bar open before talk and during intermission. RSVP is requested. Email: [mkting@cocohistory.org](mailto:mkting@cocohistory.org) or Call: (925) 229-1042. Tours of the County archives will be available from noon – 2pm.

*A \$10 donation is suggested at the door. All proceeds benefit the preservation work of the CoCo County archives.*



**The Sixties at Fifty**  
*Turbulence and Transformation*  
*The San Ramon Valley in the 1960s*  
Now thru June 2, 2019

*Featuring the new I-680 freeway, the dazzling moon landing, musical innovations, and the valley's transformation from orchards to suburbia.*

*Underwritten by the Lesher Foundation*

More info, Saturday, evening programs: [www.museumsvr.org](http://www.museumsvr.org)

Tues-Fri: 1-4 pm; Sat: 10am-1pm; Sun: noon-3pm

**Museum of the San Ramon Valley**  
205 Railroad Ave, Danville (925) 837-3750



### 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.org](mailto:info@cocohistory.org) to renew.*

***Consider CCCHS in your estate planning. Your gift is tax deductible. You can also elect to make your donations to our Endowment Fund.***

## From the Executive Director



Dear Friends,  
Spring is here! Time seems to be flying by. Our really wonderful Annual Meeting in January seems just the other day, and we are planning for our next Author in the Archives already! Meantime, great changes are in the offing at the Center as we contemplate some furniture moves that will enhance the space we have for our archives, our volunteers, and our visitors. I want to thank each and every one of you who has updated a membership or sent in a donation. These donations make such enhancements possible. Recently, we have had an increased number of visitors and are handling many more inquiries. The fantastic volunteers we have now could certainly use *your* help in reception, research, or data entry. Please consider volunteering one-half or one day a week to make an even more profound impact on the History Center's reach.

I want to say having almost 90 students come through the Center in the space of four hours was both a challenge and a joy. I'd love to see *you* soon at an event or in the History Center as a volunteer or visitor.

Yours, *Priscilla*

## From the President

We are only three months into 2019 and it already has turned out to be an extremely busy year for the Contra Costa County Historical Society and for me, as this year's board president. I will have a tall order taking over the president's role from John Mercurio, who filled this role so capably for the previous two years. I can't say enough about John's commitment to local history, to the Historical Society, and to spreading the word about the wonderful archives that we maintain. I will do my best to continue his fine work.



We have big needs, and big plans, for this year. The most critical need is more space. We are bursting at the seams in our building on Escobar Street in Martinez, so we are looking hard for additional space to store our growing collection of archives. We are receiving more and more material to archive from organizations as diverse as the Contra Costa Water District, the publishers of the old *Contra Costa Times* and *West County Times*, the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District, the County Department of Conservation and Development, and several of the area's smaller local historical societies.

I am grateful to have the assistance of Chief Assistant County Administrator Eric Angstadt in our search for more storage space. Eric has been supportive of us and our mission, and he will hopefully be able to find some available space in one of the County's buildings. We are on the lookout as well, and we hope to find suitable space very soon.

Another project will reconfigure the work area in the front of our building. We have a growing staff of volunteers who come by weekly to do all sorts of work for us, but we are constrained by the limited number of workstations and desks in our administrative area. We will look at ways to use our space more efficiently, perhaps with new computer workstation furniture to replace the enormous 1960s-style teachers' desks that occupy our work area now. That could enable us to fit in several more workstations.

We also will be revamping our public outreach materials, most notably a redesign of our website. This is always a difficult task, and it will require a lot of work from our board member and technology guru Scott Saftler, with contributions from others along the way.

They say there's no rest for the weary. While I'm not weary yet, check back with me at year's end.

*John Greitzer*

