

## Triple Play in Richmond, May 26



*After 12 years in the planning, the Rosie The Riveter WW II National Home Front Historical Park opened its new **Visitor Center** to the public. On hand to help celebrate this long-anticipated event was Congressman George Miller III, County Supervisor John Gioia, dignitaries from the city of Richmond, park superintendent Tom Leatherman, and a large and enthusiastic crowd.*

The new NPS visitor center is located in an historic building that was once part of the Ford assembly plant, which is located at the foot of Harbour Way. The building is also in the heart of the park, with the Rosie Memorial and the Marina (old Kaiser Shipyard 2) to the east, and Kaiser Shipyard 3, and the SS Red Oak Victory to the west. An excellent way to visit the new center is by foot or bicycle, following Richmond's beautiful Bay Trail. If you get on the trail anywhere in the marina, and walk west, you can't miss the NPS Visitor Center, which is open 7 days a week. Stop in, enjoy the



displays, pick up a souvenir, and then walk across the way for lunch at the Boilerhouse Restaurant.

Later that same day, there was another dedication, also on Richmond's Bay Trail. This was the official



opening of the trail section at Shipyard 3 along Canal Blvd. Pictured here, from

left are (among others): Supervisor John Gioia, State Assembly member Nancy Skinner, Richmond City Councilmember Tom Butt, Mayor Gayle McLoughlin,

Councilmember Nat Bates, Councilmember Corky Booze, EBRPD Board member Whitney Dotson, and Laura Thompson, from ABAG.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, at 2:30 pm,



visitors were invited to walk the 2 miles to the Red Oak Victory, or walk up a spur trail to

an overlook of the shipyard and the bay.

These two dedicatory events opened the doors to great new visitor experiences along Contra Costa's western shoreline.

But even while speakers were



preparing the crowd to enter the new Visitor Center, another door was closing on a chapter of local history as the battleship USS Iowa was slowly towed out of its berth in the Port of Richmond, on its way to San Pedro to become a museum ship. Sadly, this World War II veteran was unable to find a home in the Bay Area. But our loss is San Pedro's gain, and we look forward to its opening to the public later this year.

All in all, a big day for Richmond and for historical preservation in Contra Costa County. If you want to



learn more about the Rosie The Riveter/ WW II National Home Front Historical Park, visit their website at: **NPS.GOV/RORI.**

To learn more about the Bay



Trail in Richmond, visit the Trails for Richmond Action Committee (TRAC), at:

**POINTRICHMOND.COM/BAYTRAIL/.**

## Full House for Talk by Stuart Swiedler

On Saturday, March 17, the Veterans Hall in Martinez



held a capacity crowd as local historian Stuart Swiedler presented a detailed and fascinating history of the Sacramento

Northern Railroad and the Oakland Antioch and Eastern Railway. The emphasis of Mr. Swiedler's talk was on the growth of Contra Costa County and the electric railway's impact on that growth.

Swiedler captivated his audience with lively dialogue, wry humor, and an extensive collection of rare photographs, some of which had not been seen before. After the talk, Swiedler was peppered with questions, all of which he answered with a knowledge born of years of concentrated study.



The pleasant afternoon was concluded with a raffle, which promises to be made a regular part of future presentations. (*Treasurer Steve James with young assistant*)

## Train Exhibit Extended to July 12

Interest in our "Before BART" exhibit has been so positive that the current exhibit will be on display through Thursday, July 12. In fact, the exhibit has



been expanded to include a 1.5" scale model of a Sacramento Northern freight express car, on loan from Eric Moe (pictured here).

Eric was one of the many volunteers who participated in our special **National Train Day** celebration at the History Center on Saturday, May 12. We had a good crowd of around 60 visitors, most of whom were fascinated by Eric's enthusiastic description of his model (including board member,



John Mercurio, pictured here). The model "interurban" car is fully functioning, and has 24 Volt, DC motors on each of the four wheels. Everything on this scale model is accurate, including the bell.

In addition to Mr. Moe's model car, visitors were invited to have fun with a "rail yard switching game."



The object of the game is to place all the correct cars in their appropriate loading spots within a

limited time. Kids loved it, and generally did much better than the adults.

So if you haven't yet visited our latest exhibit, you still have time.

And if you have come by in the past, do so again,



as the display is now even better. (Photo-John Burgh)

## Visit to Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society, May 19

*John Burgh*

A good time was had by all at the Model Railroad Club in Walnut Creek. A total of 14 Society members came and enjoyed watching the many trains in action and learning a bit about how nearly 20 Club members must work behind the scenes to successfully operate this vast layout (one of the largest in the Western U.S.) They all watched night fall on the towns served by the Diablo Valley Lines, and witnessed a storm move in with thunder and lightning. Being forewarned, they were good sports about getting rained on.....this layout emphasizes reality!



*Harriett Burt (left) and Mary-Ellen Jones in front of the operating model of the Sacramento Northern RR ferry slip at Mallard in Bay Point. Much information*

*about this historic location is included in the current "Before BART" exhibit at the History Center.*

Learn more at: **WCMRS.ORG**

## Gold Fever! Is Coming

On July 21 the California Gold Rush is coming to the History Center. Called Gold Fever! this exhibit will bring information about that fateful day in January when John Marshall found some "shiny mettle" and American California began. We will have histories of the Gold Rush, reproductions of long toms and pans and Jennie Wimmer's lye pot with a bit of "gold" in it. And we will tell the stories of County pioneers who came for the gold and stayed for the land. A diary from J.F. Baldwin whose brother Robert became a prominent Danville Grange leader will be shown. Stories about the importance of Martinez as a site from which gold prospectors departed will be featured.



*(Latest in our series on local historical societies)*

With no museum to call home, The Pinole Historical Society has become a “museum without walls,” bringing the history of Contra Costa’s first-named city to schools, service organizations, and the Pinole community at large.

The Pinole Historical Society was incorporated in 1974, with current board members Dr. Joe Mariotti and George Vincent as charter members. The society strives to meet its mission of promoting awareness and appreciation of history through preservation and education, and chronicling the city's heritage for current and future generations.

As a "museum without walls," PHS volunteers are inventive in bringing history to the community. We accomplish this in several ways:

- PHS volunteers introduce Pinole history to fourth-graders in five elementary schools with a one-hour program about the history and experiences of children in early Pinole schools at the turn of the 20th century.
- The PHS conducts a yearly history-essay contest in Pinole schools. Participants write essays of up to 250 words and receive certificates. Grand-prize winners receive \$50 savings bonds and other prizes. The children have written some wonderful essays.
- Membership programs are held quarterly, such as the one last September that honored our living "Rosies," women who worked at the Kaiser Shipyards at Rosie the Riveters during World War II. National Park Service Ranger presented a short program on the historical significance of the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Park, in Richmond. As a bonus, we met three "Rosies" who spoke about their experiences during that time.
- The annual PHS-sponsored Veterans Day Memorial and Flag Retirement Ceremony, now in its fifth year, features the Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts, Pinole Valley High School Marching Band, St. Joseph School

Choir, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2798, Pinole Police Explorers Color Guard, Pinole youth commissioners, and elected officials. In addition to speeches, attendees share in the solemn ceremony of the retirement of worn flags by the Boy Scouts. The event draws some 500 people to Fernandez Park, many of them children.

- Yearly Old Town Pinole walking tours, televised on Pinole Community TV and archived on the city's website, give people a sense of what the community was like 50 and 100 years ago.



*George Vincent conducting Walking Tour, Oct 1, 2011. Photo-Jeff Rubin*

- A partnership with the Pinole Library has resulted in two permanent history display cases and historic Pinole photos dotting the library's walls.
- The publication of *Images of America: Pinole* in 2009 created a permanent record of the city's history from its pre-settlement days to the present. The PHS has sold more than 800 books. More than 1,900 have been sold, including those sold at retail outlets such as Costco, Walgreens, etc.
- PHS outreach activities include PowerPoint presentations from our now-vast collection of photos to the Pinole Senior Center, Pinole Rotary, AARP, Pinole Library, St. Joseph Church Seniors, Sons in Retirement, Bay Park Retirement Home, and the Pinole City Council.

*To learn more about the Pinole Historical Society, visit their website at: **PinoleHistoricalSociety.org**. There you can read the current or past newsletters, and get up-to-date information on current events.*

## THEY SAW THE ELEPHANT



You too can see the elephant at the June membership meeting of the Contra Costa County Historical Society. **Bob Chandler**, retired historian at Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco will tell us all about the origin of this colorful expression and other great aspects of the history-making **California Gold Rush**. He knows all about it and will bring artifacts to sweeten his stories.

Bob's talk will certainly provide added incentive to visit the Museum of The San Ramon Valley ([museumsrv.org](http://museumsrv.org)) to see the Gold Fever! Exhibit which runs through July 14. CCCHS will host a county-focused version of the exhibit at the History Center, which opens July 21 and will be on display until November 21.

The meeting will be held on **Saturday, June 30, 2012** from 12:30 to 3:00 pm. It will be in Martinez at the Veterans Memorial Hall located at 930 Ward Street, corner of Court Street.

Admission is \$10.00 payable at the door. Guests are always welcome. Refreshments will be served.

Questions? 925.254.2295 or 925.387.5385

## Thanks To Our Volunteers

Once again, the San Ramon Valley Museum was host to our annual volunteer recognition event, on Sunday, April 15. Each volunteer was presented with a red rose, as a token of appreciation, by our executive director, Priscilla Couden.



Thanks to our wonderful volunteers! Without them we simply could not do what we do. Through May of this year, volunteer hours totaled 2,294. At the generally accepted rate of \$21.73/hr, the dollar value of those hours would be \$49,848.62!

**Center Volunteers:** Jennifer Apkarian, Jeff Apkarian, Andrea Blachman, John Burgh, Harriett Burt, Beau Cazet, Mark Downey, Kaori Evans, Betsy Glen, Lisa Gorrell, Peder Hash, Mark Hertlein, Larry Kolano, Betty Maffei, Dean McLeod, Bill Mero, Kathleen Mero, Margie Newton, Daniel O'Connell, Leila Rock (intern), Becky Rolfs, Scott Saftler, Mary Ann Savignano, Marvin Shepherd, Janet Stapleton, Susan Swindell, Avice Taylor, Leland Taylor

**Volunteers on medical leave:** Carole Barker, Mike Elliott, and Dick Sobey. **New Volunteers:** Harlan Bailey, Martha Muhs. **Retired volunteers:** Mark Barbero, Diane Donahoe (after 11 years), Bill Johnson, Tatiana Sedova, Earl Turner.

**Board member volunteers in the HC:** Andrea Blachman, John Burgh, Harriett Burt, Scott Saftler.  
**Exhibit volunteers:** John Burgh, Beverly Lane, John Mercurio, Bill Swindell, Jan & Jim Trolan.  
**Consultant helpers:** Melissa Lawton, Kris Carlock.

*Remember that 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*

**CCCHS Honored with  
 Assembly Resolution** *Harriett Burt*



Carmen Angulo, right, senior staff representative for Assembly member Susan Bonilla (Concord) presents an assembly resolution to Contra Costa County Historical Society board member Harriett Burt, left, of Martinez. The resolution sponsored by Bonilla and assembly members Joan Buchanan of San Ramon and Nancy Skinner of Berkeley, honors the Contra Costa County Historical Society for the exhibit and activities commemorating the 100th anniversary of the successful campaign granting women the right to vote in October, 1911. Angulo made the presentation at the second evening of the current Suffrage Film Fest, a series of films on the 72 year struggle to achieve womens suffrage in the United States. The third film in the series, "Iron-Jawed Angels" was shown April 2 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Martinez Veterans Memorial Hall, 930 Ward Street, Martinez.  
*Photo by Mary-Ellen Jones*

**In Memoriam**

**Stanley K. Hansen**

Stan Hansen was a member of the Concord and Contra Costa County Historical Societies. He was a supporter of local historical restorations including the WW I Soldiers Memorial Monument in Pleasant Hill and the Galindo Home and Museum in Concord. In March, 2002, the CC Board of Supervisors recognized Stanley Hansen for *"his outstanding and unselfish lifetime of service for the betterment of the people in Contra Costa County"* and declared March 25 (his birthday) as *"Stanley K. Hansen Day in Contra Costa County."*

**CCCHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

New     Renew     Gift

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Benefactor \$1000               Student \$15

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## From the Executive Director:



The last few months have been incredibly full. In our *History Center 2015* project, which aims to make available in digital form much of the History Center's

archives, we have passed some milestones. The Veale "posse" is now on track to be finished with the Herculean task of recording the details of each document in the 100 boxes of donated materials by the middle of next year. We have begun the task of entering an index to the *West County Times* archive directly into the database, and many of our maps have now been photographed so that they can be looked at without damaging the maps.

I hope you enjoy our *Bulletin* in color! We have also added some color to our lobby bookstore area. I hope you will come in to experience our new face!

Our "Before BART" exhibit continues to be very popular. On just two Saturdays in May when we were open, it brought in more than 100 people, and many people continue to come in every day. It has been extended to July 12, and soon thereafter will be replaced by another great exhibit regarding the role of the Gold Rush in the County's development.

Many, many thanks for the caring and support you have shown for our venerable organization. Without your backing, none of the above would have been possible.

*Priscilla Couden*

## President's message:

It has been a lively spring for the Historical Society and the History Center. Visitors have enjoyed seeing the moving model of an electric train and learning about the 50-year history of electric railroads in the County.



Several programs and activities have accompanied the exhibit. Stuart Swiedler spoke at the Society's spring program and John Mercurio presented the history of the Sacramento Northern to the Martinez Kiwanis. Society members visited the Walnut Creek Model Railroad building at Larkey Park in Walnut Creek and saw a model of the SN ferry "Ramon" on display. And, in celebration of the Golden Spike of 1869, John Burgh coordinated a History Center open house on May 12.

A new booklet with the same name as the exhibit is currently at the printer. It tells the history of the County's electricians and includes many photographs from the exhibit, all in a very readable form.

Many thanks to the committee which put this exhibit together: John Burgh, Beverly Lane, John Mercurio, Bill Swindell, and Jerry Warren. And thank you to CCCHS and Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society volunteers who helped with the installation. Images came from Bob Campbell, Stuart Swiedler, Donald Bastin, Concord Historical Society, Museum of the San Ramon Valley and the CCCHS (thank you Bill Mero and Lee Tayler). And, of course, we appreciate our underwriter, the Chevron Federal Credit Union.

I hope you have noticed some changes in the Society's branding as we have begun to use a dark California-poppy orange on our logo and brochure. This color newsletter shows how we are working on modernization in our presentations. The Center's lobby is reflecting these changes too. Thank you Priscilla and Kris!

In a more serious vein, we are negotiating for continued County support of the History Center and, hopefully, a lease will be signed by the time this newsletter comes to you.

*Beverly Lane*



Visit our website by scanning this image with your smartphone, or visit: [cocohistory.org](http://cocohistory.org)

