

Another Grand Opening!



On Tuesday, September 3rd, the new eastern span of the Bay Bridge finally opened to the public, after 11 years of construction and over \$6 billion in construction costs. This was a moment that happens perhaps only once in a lifetime. In huge projects like this, there is only one opening day. The second day doesn't count. My wife and I determined to be part of the opening day crowd.

As a member of the steering committee of TRAC (Trails for Richmond Action Committee), I have been particularly interested in the progress of the San Francisco Bay Trail, so for this reason we decided to be among the first pedestrians on the bridge bike path and walkway, which is also part of the Bay Trail.

While the new bridge opened to auto traffic at 5 a.m., the foot/bike path was not scheduled to open until

noon. We were coming home from Santa Cruz that day, and did not arrive at the trail head until 4:30 p.m. The trail head, as it happens, is just across the street (Shellmound Street) from the IKEA store in Emeryville. So that is where we parked our car.



From the trail entrance to the foot of the bridge is a little over 2 miles, but the walk is level and the path is wide, mostly paved,

and nicely landscaped. It is noisy, of course, as one passes underneath elevated roadways. At the time that we began our walk, we were surprised to find that the pathway was quite un-crowded. We had expected to be in a mass of jostling humanity. But everyone we passed, coming and going, was happy and friendly. We all seemed to recognize that this was a special day. Walking at a brisk pace, about 3 miles per hour, we reached the foot of the new bridge by about 5:15, and began our ascent.

The walkway is on the eastern side of the bridge, between the cars on the new bridge and the old bridge. So walking along the path is literally walking between the present and the past. While the old bridge is scheduled to be demolished, this will take a few years, so this view will remain for some time. The path will eventually take one to Treasure Island, but for the present, the trail ends just before the tunnel on Yerba Buena Island. At this point, the old and new bridges intersect, and continuation of the trail will have to wait on demolition of this section of the old bridge. The trail should hook up with the island by the summer of 2015, we are told.

We had originally planned to walk only a short way on the bridge, but as we proceeded, new goals kept beckoning us to move just a little further. So at last we found ourselves at the end of the line, by the new suspension section of the bridge. It was 6 p.m., and

we had walked over 4 miles. And of course we had the same distance to walk to get back to our car. Most people, of course, rode bicycles. This is an easy bike ride, but a fairly strenuous walk. By this time, the crowd was getting much thicker, probably as people hurried to the new bridge after getting off work. It was an increasingly festive and colorful group, which included joggers, tandem bikes, recumbent bikes, bikes with sound and strobe systems, bikes with dogs and children, unicycles, and even at least one penny-farthing. Everyone was smiling.



For all the controversy over the new bridge, it really is beautiful. It is open and airy, and the suspension section is especially attractive. The contrast with the old bridge is striking. The old structure appears almost stodgy by comparison. Solid and workmanlike, it has been doing its job in an un-flashy way for 77 years. But the eastern span, like the Golden Gate to the west, has always been the pretty part. Now, the western span seems to be more integrated into the overall bridge theme.

Footsore and tired, we arrived at the IKEA store about 7:30 p.m., having taken 3 hours for our bay bridge round trip. After a quick dinner of meatballs



and mashed potatoes at the IKEA restaurant, we headed home, happy to be among the relatively few who will be able to say, "I was there on opening day."

Bulletin Editor, Donald Bastin, with wife, Clementina Diaz

The Golden Gate International Exposition 1939-1940



The opening of the new Bay Bridge serves as a timely lead-in to our December membership meeting, during which our speaker will discuss the 1939 World's Fair on the newly created Treasure Island.

Date: Saturday, December 14, 2013.

Place: Veterans Memorial Hall, Martinez; Time: 1 P.M.

Elena Paras Noble of Concord is the daughter of the late George Paras, a Bay Area photographer from the 1930s to the mid-1970s. She possesses her father's collection of pictures of the Golden Gate International Exposition held in 1939-40 at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay.

She will show many of her father's pictures taken before the Exposition opened and during its run. In the late 1930s he was a freelancer who sold pictures to the Oakland Tribune as well as other news outlets. Noble will describe not only the exhibition buildings but also the more formal culture of the time. People 'dressed up' to go to the Fair, she observes, even as Sally Rand was a hit for 'dressing down'.

The photos, some black and white and some in color, show the art deco magnificence of the Exposition. Born after the Exposition, Noble says "this was all history by the time I was born. Mostly he just shared the slides with any poor soul who stopped by our house. I know the family saw the show many times."

Her father was assigned to the Army Signal Corps when the United States entered WW II. Serving in the South Pacific, he photographed the Allies taking

over Japan in 1945. When the war ended, he opened Lad and Lassie Baby Portrait Studios in Oakland, Hayward and Walnut Creek. He retired in 1976.

Elena resides in Concord and taught in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District for 22 years. She is a member of Pleasant Hill-Martinez American Association of University Women and N. California Regional Field Manager for \$tart \$mart classes through the Wage Project which helps prepare young women to attain equal pay for equal work, a program supported by AAUW.

Information provided by Harriett Burt

Own a Piece of the Fair!

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties shared a building on the island, showcasing the wonders and products of the east bay. Among the items that was either sold or given away by Contra Costa County was this



“medallion” (actually an ash tray) made out of hammered copper. The History Center has a very limited supply of these souvenirs, which will be given away to any member who joins at the \$150 level, or

donates that amount. If you renew at that amount, please note that you want the TI “Medallion.”

Treasure Island is a jewel in San Francisco Bay, awaiting its future as the city of San Francisco plans its development. Right now it is suspended between its past and its future, and this is a perfect time to visit.



Pictured is CCCHS President John Burgh's 1946 Studebaker Champion Coupe, parked in front of a dancing form on Treasure Island (not part of the fair). In a future Bulletin, look for John's story of his cross-country travel adventure in his vintage automobile.

The Lafayette Historical Society

Mary McCosker, President

In 1967 some members of the board of the Lafayette Library Association (now the Friends of the Lafayette Library) were asked to store the Lafayette Design Project records and reports. An historic committee was then appointed to function as part of the library board. Fourteen members were selected who were descendants of pioneers and others interested in Lafayette history. The group formally organized as a 501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization in 1973.

The purpose and objectives of this committee were to collect and preserve materials about the history of Lafayette such as pictures, newspaper clippings, letters, diaries, maps, documents, and other records to be filed in the library and available for public use. In addition there was interest in preserving and restoring historic buildings and landmarks in Lafayette. The committee functioned without a general membership and with no dues. The City Council donated \$200 per year to the committee. The Design Project donated an additional \$100 for the purchase of a steel filing cabinet for materials that were being collected. The old Lafayette Library allowed space for the cabinet in the small reference room which was open to restricted use by the public.

When it was determined that a more secure space was needed for the collection, Bill Eames offered space above his pharmacy on Mt. Diablo Blvd. The materials remained there and in member's garages and closets



until the new Lafayette Library & Learning Center opened in November

of 2009. The Historical Society is now housed in an office/museum on the lower level of the Library complex.

"Old Betsy" is the pride of the Lafayette Historical Society. She is a Model TT (Ford truck) fire truck and is proudly displayed in the Lafayette Library's garage. Old Betsy served as Lafayette's first motorized fire engine in the 1920s and 1930s. Now she makes appearances in local parades and annually at the Lafayette Art & Wine Festival.



Lafayette still has many of its original buildings standing, though they are being used in different ways than originally intended: Town Hall (1914), the Pioneer Store (1850), Wayside Inn (1894), the Second Schoolhouse (1871), the Lafayette United Methodist Church (formerly the Third Schoolhouse - 1893) and Elam and Margaret Allen Plaza Park (1864).

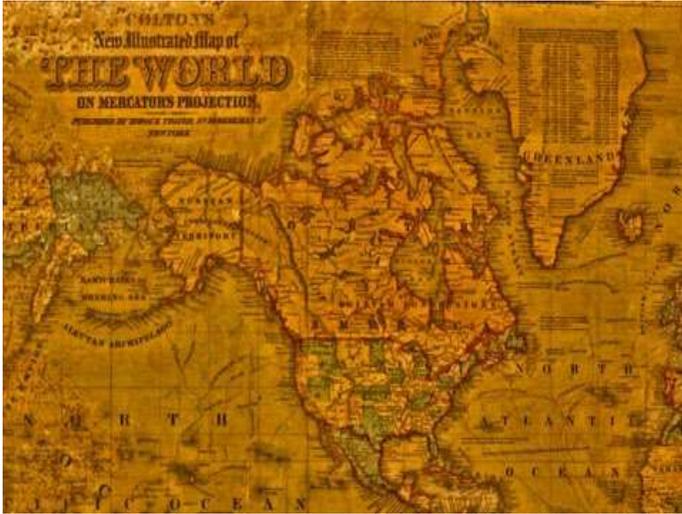
The Historical Society Board currently numbers ten people with eighteen volunteers. The Society provides programs for the community and supports the Third Grade Social Studies curriculum for the Lafayette School District with three in-class lessons and tours of the downtown and Lafayette Cemetery. The History Room is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 10-2 pm. Contact us at Lafayette.history@comcast.net or at 925-284-1848 and visit our website at LafayetteHistory.org.



From Left: Amy Conley, photo-archivist; Patrick Kikkert, archivist; Mary McCosker, board president; Jeanne Kikkert, archivist; Michael Troutman, webmaster; Judie Peterson, history room coordinator.

When Benicia Was the Center of the World – On an 1860 Wall Map, That Is

Harriett Burt



During a recent “binge housecleaning” attack, I happened to look at a 3’ x 4’ framed and mounted map of the world I’ve had leaning up against a wall in my guest room for a number of years because I couldn’t find any suitable wall space for it. It suddenly occurred to me that it would be perfect on display at the Contra Costa County History Center because it shows the world as it was 10 years after the establishment of Contra Costa County—nothing like a little international historical perspective in a building holding the records of a microcosm of it.

The original 1860 Mercator projection of “Colton’s Map of the World” was published in New York. It was purchased by a friend of mine during the 1960s decoupage craze. The map was tattered on the edges and mildewed in the South and Central Pacific but clearly legible for the most part. She mounted it on plywood and covered it with layers of clear lacquer. A dedicated map freak and history teacher, I bought it from her for the then princely price of \$50. Roy Jeans, who then owned a frame shop fittingly named “Framed on Court Street”, enclosed it in a plain brown wood frame. I don’t recall ever taking it to my junior high history class but visitors to my home were entranced by it when it hung on my then living room wall.

As is common with Mercator projections, North and South America are shown in the center of the map. California had been a state for a decade with only five cities labeled: Colusa, Sacramento City, Benicia, Monterey and San Diego. Benicia alone appears in boldface denoting it in error as the state capital. The Sacramento City fathers had maneuvered that honor for themselves by 1860.

Looking at history when it was “current events” is an energizing activity. A large section of Africa is frankly labeled “Unexplored Regions”. Now we know Stanley was about to pack his bags to go find Livingston. North Africa is labeled Barbary. What we now know as India is shown as Hindustan which is south of “Thibet” which is south of Chinese Tartary (now western China including Szechuan). Alaska is accurately labeled Russian territory with a large swath of “unexplored region” across the middle of it. There are no countries in Europe named Germany, Poland, Italy or Norway but you can find Prussia and Tuscany.

The Civil War was just months from its first battle in the United States so the Kansas and Nebraska territories shown on the map would have been familiar news stories to contemporary viewers. Oregon had just earned statehood but Nevada was still a territory.

One could go on and on exclaiming “oh, look!” I’ve owned the map for 40 years but it was just today that I spotted the notation on Greenland that says “beyond Lat.68 the cold of winter is intolerable to a European”, but the thermostat in the History Center will save viewers from such extremes of cold. And while according to a chart on the map, New York is about 15,000 nautical miles from San Francisco if traveling around South America, there are many, many shorter, quicker and easier ways to make the journey these days. But not nearly so many maps that are as much fun to look at!

New Membership Benefit! Get 10% off purchase of books and other items in our gift shop. Get that unique gift in time for Christmas!

Book Signing By Traci Parent



Traci Parent is the retired Supervising Naturalist at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. She is a board member and past president of the Contra Costa County Historical Society. She is the author of the study

Rose Hill-A Comprehensive History of a Pioneer Cemetery in the Mount Diablo Coal Field, for which she has received prestigious awards. She co-authored the book *Images of America--Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve*. On Saturday, **September 28**, she will be discussing both books and signing copies for purchasers of these excellent works.

Place/Time: Railroad Book Depot, 650 Railroad Ave, Pittsburg, CA, **1-3 pm**. 925-4272334

Want to Join Our Board?
Elections are coming up. Contact the
Nominating Committee:
VP1@COCOHISTORY.ORG

Quilters!-Call For Entries: 2014 WWII Home Front Quilts Challenge

This quilt-making challenge focuses on the years 1941-1945. The WWII Home Front theme was chosen to celebrate one of our newest National Parks, the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park, located in Richmond, California. Quilts inspired by any aspect of civilian wartime life across the USA are welcomed.

- Open to anyone in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii
- Format: Small quilts, measuring 80 inches around the perimeter, square or rectangular in shape. Traditional, contemporary, innovative techniques are encouraged.
- Entries accepted 12/1/13-1/15/14. Quilts selected by the jurors must arrive by 3/1/2014.
- Challenge guidelines:
<http://www.wwihomefrontquilts.com/2014-call-for-entries>.

Up to 80 quilts will be exhibited online beginning March 2014, and at *Voices in Cloth* on March 22 & 23, 2014. The major Bay Area quilt event will be held at the Craneway Pavilion, adjacent to the Rosie park visitor center, on the waterfront. This project is a collaboration of San Francisco Bay Area quilt enthusiasts, arts organizations, museums and historical associations, the Rosie the Riveter Trust, and National Park Service staff and volunteers.

Remembering President John F. Kennedy

October 1 - November 24, 2013

This exhibit displays newspapers and magazines which feature Kennedy and his family, along with a video sharing his many memorable speeches.

Museum of the SRV 205 Railroad Ave. Danville, CA
925-837-3750 museumsrv.org
Hours: Tu-Fri 1-4, Sat 10-1 Sun 12-3

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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

Consider CCCHS in your estate planning. It is simple, and any gift is tax deductible.



From the Executive Director:

We've done it! We've surpassed last year's summer giving goal. Thanks to all of those who have been so generous. A list of those who donated can be found in the next issue of the *Bulletin*. As you know, we are doing everything in our power to assure that we remain within our means through the end of the year. Part of this has included applying for several grants. Another part is finding members who are able to make matching gifts, especially those who have worked for Chevron, which has a great program for its current employees and retirees, entitled Humankind Grants. We are also creating a procedure that would make it easier for those who would like to contribute to the Society through a will or trust.

In the archives, the big news is that the California Preservation Program has selected us for an assessment of the archives. This is good news both because the written assessment will provide needed information about preservation and protection of our various materials (for instance, glass negatives) *and* because it will provide prioritizing information that is vital in preparing grants. On September 12, Barclay Ogden of the Bancroft Library will visit the history center to conduct the assessment. Updates will be forthcoming on Facebook and on our website.

This summer, in addition to grant applications, I have given more attention to e-mailing and to Facebook. Particularly in the last few months, I have posted once or twice per week to keep people up to date on what is happening at the History Center. Please like us on Facebook and join the conversation!

With the advent of fall, I am looking forward to facing the challenges of the future of the Society. It is good to know that many members of the Society have demonstrated by their donations and by their Facebook and personal interactions that they are excited about our future, as well. I look forward to seeing you soon at the History Center!

Priscilla



From The President:

History isn't all in The Past. This fall we have all seen the opening of the new Bay Bridge. Whatever your views on the tortured birth of the bridge, it makes for a way more spectacular trip to Treasure Island. A focus of this issue of the *Bulletin* is the storied background of the man-made island. Enhancing commerce by filling in the bay was considered a noble thing to do, through the middle of the 20th century. But over the next 60 years the population of the Bay Area increased over 500%, while a new appreciation of the natural environment arose, leading to more balance in resource development on "spaceship earth." Treasure Island could be considered a microcosm of the conflict inherent in development pressures as community needs and values change over time.

I think it is somehow fitting that one of the very best places to view the spectacular new bridge is from the old Treasure Island seaplane ramps, which served the huge Pan American clippers that inaugurated air travel to the Orient. As San Francisco's first "airport," Treasure Island quickly morphed into a bustling Navy base during World War II and the decades after. The Navy left, and its many buildings have been repurposed in a host of creative and productive ways. It is now one of the most delightful neighborhoods in the Bay Area, with unique amenities for all to enjoy. So as you revel in your first trips over the new bridge, I hope you will remember to take the Treasure Island exit and spend a few minutes in the breathtaking and history-rich setting that awaits you there!

To reinforce the celebration of Treasure Island's importance in Contra Costa life, your Board of Directors has decided to award a copper medallion, struck to commemorate the 1939 Fair, to anyone who sends a donation of \$150 or more to the Society. All proceeds will be used to continue preservation of Contra Costa County heritage via our wonderful archive. Thanks to all of you our priceless archive continues to grow. Every day!

John

