



*From left: John Viano, Beverly Lane, Harriett Burt, Scott Saftler, Lisa Gorrell, Tara Weber, Katarina Spears, Priscilla Couden, Kathleen Mero, John Burgh (kneeling), Janet Stapleton (behind John), Bill Mero, Steve James, Clayton Bailey (kneeling).*

## MAP Assessment Completed . . . . Priscilla Couden

On August 27-28, Katarina Spears, from the Library of Virginia Foundation, came to the History Center as a peer reviewer for the Museum Assessment Program. After an in-depth Self Study in which board members, volunteers, and community members had participated, Kat came in person to interview individuals and tour the facility. She will be writing a report regarding the daily operations of the History

Center that will give the Board and Executive Director prioritized suggestions on improvements to our operations. Since the number of volunteers who work at the History Center has doubled in the past few years, the History Center is becoming quite a different place, with more professional interfaces with our clients and visitors. This assessment report was funded by a grant from the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services and administered by the American Alliance of Museums in Washington, D.C.

The value of the grant is more than \$3,000! We enjoyed our visit with Kat, which included a reception at which John Viano of Viano Vineyards in Martinez both donated and poured the wine. Thanks to John!

More information will be coming once the report arrives.



## Contra Costa County and the East Bay Regional Park District Celebrate a Silver Anniversary 1964-2014

*By Ned MacKay and Beverly Lane*



This year -- June 2 to be precise -- marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a major milestone in East Bay Regional Park District's history: annexation of Contra Costa County.

When the District was first established by public vote back in 1934, it included seven cities in Alameda County. At the time, the Contra Costa County board of Supervisors declined to support the election in its jurisdiction. The county was predominately rural and farmers opposed being taxed for parks.

Although Contra Costa saw extensive residential and commercial development after World War II, parks for these new residents were not a county priority. The Board did appoint a County Parks Commission in the early sixties and put a park bond issue on the ballot in 1962 which failed to get a required 2/3 vote.

However, tempo for parks picked up substantially in 1962 with the appointment of William Penn Mott, Jr. as Park District general manager. A visionary with boundless energy, Mott made the welcoming of

Contra Costa into the Park District one of his major goals.

Several groups and leading citizens enlisted in the cause. The Contra Costa Park and Recreation Council, headed by Al Burton was one. Others were Robert Kahn, a member of the County Grand Jury, Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, and his wife Kay who later founded Save the Bay, and Mayor Leonard Grote of Pleasant Hill. Assemblyman John Knox of Richmond urged support.

To organize the campaign for voter approval, Mott appointed his public affairs manager, Dick Trudeau. Hulet Hornbeck, active with the Park Council and later the District's Land Acquisition manager, was chairman of the campaign's Central Contra Costa Committee. George Cardinet, dean of the local equestrian community, was finance chair for the campaign. Sally Germain headed the Danville committee.

It was not an easy sale. The county's agricultural interests were still skeptical. Opposition at the eastern end of the county was so strong that the Liberty Union High School District was left out of the boundary. That area didn't annex to the Park District until 1981.

As the June 2 election neared, Mott and Trudeau embarked on marathon speaking tours, enjoining anyone who would listen to support annexation. "Not a single picnic table in Contra Costa County" became a campaign slogan. "Citizens for Regional Parks Now!" distributed a campaign brochure urging a yes vote, "before the wilderness beauty is destroyed and land cost becomes prohibitively high."

Final results fortunately did not require a 2/3 vote. Measure B on the June 2 ballot carried the day with 54 percent in favor, 46 percent opposed. Mott credited the grass roots support for the victory. "The citizens groups who got behind us made the difference," he said. "In fact, I don't think we could have done it without them."

The first two new regional parks to be opened were Kennedy Grove in El Sobrante and Briones near Martinez.



*Briones family descendent, John Briones, age 94, with State Senator George Miller, Jr., at the opening ceremonies of the Briones and Kennedy Grove parks, Kennedy Grove, October 22, 1967.*

Las Trampas Regional Wilderness purchases began in 1966. And part of Richmond's Brooks Island was bought in 1968. State Park bonds, approved in 1964, were an important source of funds for these parks.

In 2014, the EBRPD manages nearly 115,000 acres of regional parks. Contra Costa County's expansive park system includes two visitor centers, the Contra Loma reservoir and lagoon, several regional trails, Black Diamond Mines Preserve, shoreline parks and large open spaces which now amount to 57,450 acres.

### **New Exhibit at HC** *Editor*

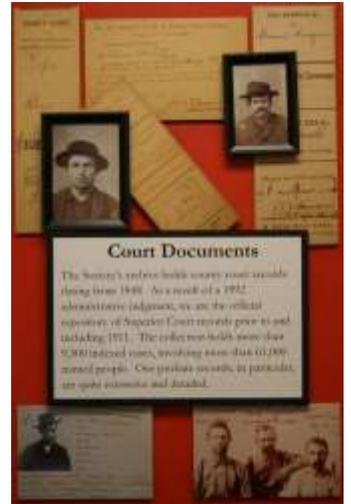
"We are an archive, not a museum." That is the mantra we repeat, to our visitors and among ourselves, reminding us that we are unique among the county's historical societies. As an archive, we have a lot of paper (much of it brown and crumbly) and very

few artifacts (things). Without borrowed items, our exhibits are necessarily limited. Our challenge, then, is: **how to create an exhibit that speaks to what we are, instead of what we are not?**

That's what we have tried to do with our latest display. Many of our visitors have little or no idea as to what we are and what we have to offer. Therefore, we chose to create an exhibit which answers those questions.

Consisting of nine separate panels, each panel summarizes, with text and images, the main points of one of

our major collections. From newspapers to photographs to naturalization and court documents, the casual visitor can get an idea of the diversity of our collections in a pleasantly informative way. If interested in further information, volunteers are available and digital information is just a computer click away.



Our new display will be permanent, a background to transient, or changing displays that will continue to tell the little and big stories of our county's history. If you have not come by the History Center lately, do so soon, and try out our walk-through summary of our large and fascinating collection.

*Thanks to board member Donald Bastin and his wife, Clementina Diaz, for imagining and assembling this new exhibit.*

*The following is the 12<sup>th</sup> article in our series on the historical societies of Contra Costa County*



El Cerrito Historical Society

## THE EL CERRITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN HISTORY

*Rich Bartke, President*



*The town was originally called Rust, after Wm. Rust, whose blacksmith shop is shown here, c. 1910.*

El Cerrito, home of Nobel Prize winners (1951 to 2013), world renowned musicians (Creedence Clearwater Revival), a score of big league athletes, a Miss USA and President of the University of California (Clark Kerr). How did it start?

The history of the city is simple. The lands were the subject of an 1823 Mexican land grant to the Castro family, a son of whom created a family home in the adobe there in 1839. For the next 55 years, not much happened, because land titles were tied up in the legal system. The Gold Rush, the Civil War, and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century building boom which affected most of the Bay Area had very little effect on El Cerrito. Then things changed.

In 1894 the Court issued its decree, so land titles could be secured. When the residents voted in 1917 to incorporate, El Cerrito became Contra Costa's second largest city, a distinction it held until the Post-WWII boom in Central County. Early industries included farming, quarries, pioneer aviation, and the TEPCO chinaware factory.

This city became famous for its vice industry, where booze flowed freely, gambling dens proliferated, and a dog track existed, despite state laws prohibiting such

things. In 1948 the residents threw the rascals out, and the city has enjoyed a pleasant reputation ever since.

The Historical Society was founded 40 years ago, in May 1974. Like other such societies its mission is to preserve and interpret the history of this community. In that regard it has met with City officials to save the homes in town which exceed 100 years, other historic buildings and sites, and our 42 creeks. We now



occupy the tower room in City Hall donated by former Society President Sundar Shadi where we store artifacts, photos and documents; our archivist is Director Barbara Hill.

Currently Director Tom Panas has started work on a historic

resources survey which we hope will lead to a historic preservation ordinance. Others have completed a walking/driving tour brochure, and a listing of the community's "noteworthy" residents (currently over 80). We hope to acquire a scale model of the Castro adobe. We purchased and had installed 4 "Lincoln Highway" signs on San Pablo Avenue. Last year Tom Panas was successful in getting the former Chung Mei Boys Home listed as eligible for the National Register.

We have excelled in the presentation of tours and programs under the direction of Vice President Dave Weinstein. He has led us on tours of the Boy Scouts' Camp Herms, Sunset View Cemetery, Mira Vista Golf & Country Club, the U.C. President's House and many others.

The Society has about 145 members and a Board of six which meets monthly. The Society publishes its research papers as "The Forge", and its news items to all members as "Sparks From the Anvil". The newsletters of neighboring societies are distributed to our own mailing list. Dues are \$25 a year for a household. Joanne Rubio is our Secretary, and Debbie Weeks is our website master. Website address: [www.elcerritohistoricalsociety.org](http://www.elcerritohistoricalsociety.org).

## Board Holds Meeting at Rosie the Riveter



### Park Visitor Center

In April, the CCCHS board held its monthly

board meeting at the East Contra Costa County Historical Society's museum, in Brentwood. This August, we held our meeting at the Rosie the Riveter Visitor Center in Richmond. Future meetings will be held at other county historical society sites, as part of our on-going effort to broaden our awareness of the work that historical groups in our county are doing. It also gives the volunteers in these groups a chance to become more aware of the CCCHS, which is the only such group to concern itself with the history of the entire county.

### THANKS!!!

To all who donated to our Summer Appeal. To date we have received over \$3,000.00.

Watch for the End of Year Annual Appeal which will begin shortly. If the timing feels tight, it is, because the Summer Appeal which was planned for June 15 did not get into the mail until August 15. We hope those of you who have already given will continue to help us get the word out, so that our Annual Appeal will be a great success.

### New – Sustaining Memberships

We are also instituting sustaining memberships, whereby one would make a donation of \$15 to \$100 or more per month in order to help with the ongoing operational expenses of the History Center. Please consider a sustaining membership when your dues renewal date arrives.

## Your Chance to Serve

The Contra Costa County Historical Society currently has three open seats on its (normally) 14-member board.



Board members meet monthly, usually at the History Center in Martinez. In addition to the monthly meeting, members are expected to actively participate in one or more of

our sub-committees, which are involved with fund-raising, policy-making, events coordination, and other activities necessary to maintain a vital operation and to promote the mission of our society. If you love history, especially local history, and have the time and inclination to help further the success of our unique and important historical archive, please let us know as soon as possible. Contact us on-line at:

[director@cocohistory.org](mailto:director@cocohistory.org). *You'll be glad you did.*

### Betty's Book is Due...

**Amelia's Nortonville**, the book Betty Maffei has been working on for many years, has been published! It is in transit as we go to press and will be available as of September 18. You may order by phone to 925-229-1042 and we do take credit cards. The cost will be \$29.95 + tax or \$32.50. Remember that members have a 10% discount on books purchased on-site in the bookstore at the History Center. An informal welcome for the book will be held when the History Center is open on September 20 for our normal third Saturday. Betty will be there.

On October 25, a celebration is planned at St. Stephen Catholic Church, 1101 Keaveny Court in Walnut Creek. Betty will be there with artifacts from Nortonville and will be happy to sign books. Look for an invitation by e-mail or postcard. If you don't receive one, please let us know. Reservations close October 15.

**You are invited!**  
**Contra Costa Historical Society Picnic and History tour**



**Hap Magee Ranch Park**  
**1025 La Gonda Way, Danville**  
**Saturday, September 27**  
**11:30 am to 1:30 pm**

**\$10 each, children under 12 free**  
**RSVP: CCCHS 925-229-1042**

**Order a box lunch by Sept. 22 for an additional \$10**  
**or bring your own**

*This historic park was once a summer camp for San Francisco orphans, then belonged to the Magee family from 1946-1987. Today it is a charming, well-loved Danville-Alamo park.*

<http://www.danville.ca.gov/Things-To-Do/Parks/Community-Parks/Hap-Magee-Ranch/>



*As an added focus on the other historical societies in the County, we are adding this Historic Events column as a permanent feature of the Bulletin*

## Historic Events!

### Coming Attractions from your Local Historical Societies and National Park Sites:

**Bay Point:** Annual Luncheon, September 21, Ambrose Rec Ctr. Port Chicago Luncheon, October 22, Pittsburg Elks Club. For details, visit the society at: [www.baypointhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.baypointhistoricalsociety.com).

**Concord:** September 21, Tour of the historic Galindo Home. Details at: [www.concordhistorical.org](http://www.concordhistorical.org)

**Contra Costa County HS:** September 20: Informal welcome for Betty Maffei's new book on Nortonville. A more formal celebration is planned on October 25 at St. Stephen Catholic Church in Walnut Creek. Visit the website at: [www.cocohistory.org](http://www.cocohistory.org).

**Moraga:** Pear Festival, September 27, Moraga Commons. 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Banquet and Speaker, October 18, St. Mary's Soda Center. For more details, visit the society at: [www.moragahistory.org](http://www.moragahistory.org).

**Richmond:** Current exhibit: "Fire in the City!" A history of Richmond's fire department. Through Oct. 2. Details: [www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org](http://www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org).

**San Ramon Valley:** Current exhibit: "Where were you 5,000 years ago? The first people of the San Ramon Valley". Through November 9. Elegant Flea Market at the Museum. October 25. Visit website for details: [www.museumsvr.org](http://www.museumsvr.org).

**Walnut Creek/Shadelands:** "Ranching in the Valley", Shadelands Ranch, September 21; Walnut Creek Centennial Family Picnic, October 18, Shadelands; Holiday Faire/Victorian Teas, November 29-December 14, Shadelands;

### National Park Sites:

**Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site:** Tour Tao House. Details: [www.nps.gov/euon/](http://www.nps.gov/euon/)

**John Muir National Historic Site:** Summer Camp

Fire programs: September 27, October 25; Mount Wanda Full Moon Walk: October 8; Visit John Muir's home in Martinez. Details: [www.nps.gov/jomu/](http://www.nps.gov/jomu/)

**Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial:** Currently closed through October 4. Details: [www.nps.gov/poch/](http://www.nps.gov/poch/)

**Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park:** "A Victory for Health!" Outdoor fitness and fun. Rosie Memorial, October 11. Movies at the Visitor Center and on board the SS Red Oak Victory. Details: [www.nps.gov/roni/](http://www.nps.gov/roni/)

*For more details about these and other county historical societies, visit our website at: [www.cocohistory.org](http://www.cocohistory.org), and click on the website links*

## 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 \$30 \_\_\_ Couple \$50 \_\_\_ Sponsor \$75

\_\_\_ Patron \$150 \_\_\_ Sustaining \$?

\_\_\_ Benefactor \$1000 \_\_\_ Student \$15

*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.**

