

Millbrae Life & Times

M I L L B R A E H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y N E W S L E T T E R

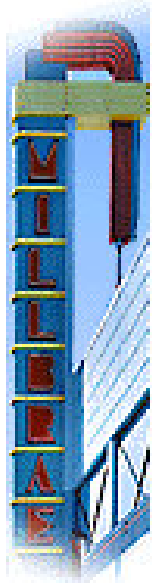
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HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT:

MILLBRAE – SMALL TOWN, BIG STUFF

BY TOM DAWDY



We all love our small town of Millbrae. Our city is only 3.6 square miles with a little over 21,000 residents, but Millbrae has always had a reputation for big things right from the beginning. In the mid-1860's **Darius Ogden Mills** and wife **Jane (Templeton Cunningham)** built their huge 44,000 sq.ft. country home on their 1,500-acre estate; they called it Millbrae. This was just the beginning of bigger things to come in Millbrae. The Mills family not only made a huge impact on the history of Millbrae, but they left their mark on both the east and west coasts. At the time of his death, D.O. Mills was known as one of America's wealthiest men. He died in Millbrae in 1910.

Mills Field was the Mills family's private airstrip. **Ogden Livingston Mills** (grandson of D.O. Mills) leased the 150 acres of cow pasture to San Francisco in 1927. The airport was initially named **Mills Field Municipal Airport**. In 1931 it became **San Francisco Municipal Airport**. In 1955, the airport was renamed San Francisco International Airport (SFO), which is now the 7th busiest airport in the U.S. and the 22nd busiest in the world! All this started in Millbrae on

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

Friends and fellow members,

A belated "Happy New Year" to all; hoping everyone had a wonderful, safe holiday season. I know first-hand that the Millbrae Historical Society's annual holiday party was another smashing success. On December 11, the date of the holiday party, it was pouring outside. I was concerned nobody would show up and eat the food - boy

was I wrong, the place was packed. For the third year in a row, **Paul Baxter** and his **Side Track** band played all the great standards from the past and we had dancing in the front room. A big "thank you" to all who attend year after year and make our holiday party a big, fun-filled event. Thank you to all the members who work so hard to decorate the interior of the museum (**Dorothy Semke** and her crew) and



the exterior (**Jack Gardner** and his crew). Also, thanks to everyone who brought goodies to supplement the great food from **Leonardo's Deli**.

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P R E S I D E N T ' S R E P O R T

(C O N T I N U E D F R O M P A G E 1)

In appreciation of the band's dedication to the Millbrae Historical Society by providing complimentary entertainment at our holiday party, they were presented with a plaque which read:

"In grateful appreciation of the entertainment services provided by the *Side Track* band (**Paul Baxter, Steve Kelly, Lou Carlos, and Jerry Tassan**), the Board of Directors of the Millbrae Historical Society is proud to present this commendation. Thank you for your support and the joy you bring to our annual Holiday Party. Presented on this day of December 11, 2014 by John Muniz, Millbrae Historical Society President."



If you are in need of a great band for any occasion, consider contacting Paul Baxter at (650) 678-8315.

To cap a wonderful evening of entertainment and holiday fun, I awarded one of our longtime members the prestigious **Living History Award**. In its qualifications for the award, the Millbrae Historical Society decreed that the recipient's contributions and achievements must be relevant to the goals and objectives of the Society.

In the 44-year history of the Millbrae Historical Society, only nine recipients have received this award: **Mildred Cavanaugh Wilson** (1980), **James Van Hoften** (1984), **John Brucato** (1993), **James "Jim" Wilson** (1994), **William W. "Bill" Baxter** (1996), **Allan R. "Bud" Mason** (1997), **Alma Massolo** (2004), **Mary Vella Treseler** (2008), and **Helen Habeeb** (2011).

Our honoree was raised and educated in Millbrae and has lived and experienced the vibrant, colorful history of the town. He has grown and prospered along with Millbrae and has devoted time, talents, and energies to the Millbrae Historical Society's efforts to educate, preserve, and enhance the history of our great community.

Our honoree operates a business in Millbrae, serves as Treasurer of the Millbrae Historical Society, and Director of the Millbrae Train Museum. Through his efforts, he has

turned his love of railroads into a museum, housed in the old Southern Pacific Railroad depot, that has served to preserve the rich history of railroading on the Peninsula.

I am proud to be your President and to be able to bestow this distinguished honor on one of our beloved members. I am proud to be a friend of this recipient who has taught his children the value of preserving and enhancing the history of our community. Ladies and gentleman, the Millbrae Historical Society's 2014 recipient of the Living History award is **Vernon Bruce**.

This year's **Millbrae Historical Society Installation** will be held on **Sunday, March 29th** in Library Room A from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Our Newsletter Editor **Joe Teresi** has a very interesting guest speaker lined up to present on a subject of great controversy in the history of our country. Mark your calendars and save the date. Any ideas as to who the next MHS President will be??? Take a guess.

Check out our new column in this issue of the newsletter—**Millbrae Now and Then**. This column will feature photos of historic landmarks in Millbrae - how they looked when the original photo was taken and how they look now. See how much Millbrae has changed and how it has stayed the same. I am sure that this feature will bring back many memories of the past history of Millbrae.

I must admit, the **MHS Newsletter** gets better and better as time goes on. Joe Teresi does a great job of assembling the articles and putting out a great newsletter. Kudos especially to the contributors who take the time to write the articles that keep you educated and informed. Thanks to all who contribute to our newsletter.

Thank you for all each of you do to maintain a great organization dedicated to educate, preserve, and enhance the great history of Millbrae. Thank you to our dedicated Board of Trustees who work tirelessly to keep the Millbrae Historical Museum and the Train Museum the crown jewels of Millbrae. Soon, spring will be upon us, and that will be a great time to take a stroll along the **Millbrae History Walk**. Pick up a Millbrae History Walk map at City Hall, the Library, or the Museum. Come on down and visit the Museum and the Train Museum. Climb aboard the 1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine and get your picture taken. Let's all get out and celebrate all the great offerings Millbrae has for folks of all ages.

Best Wishes,
John Muniz
Millbrae Historical Society President
2009 - Present

**VICE-PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE
PAUL LARSON**

Greetings MHS Trustees, Members, and Friends!

In our last MHS Newsletter I gave details on a few historical dates. Everyone seemed to like this, so below are a few historical tidbits from the month of March:

March 1, 1932 - The 20-month-old son of aviation pioneer **Charles A. Lindbergh** was kidnapped from his home in Hopewell, New Jersey. The Lindberghs then paid a \$50,000 ransom. However, on May 12, the boy's body was found in a wooded area a few miles from the house.

Birthday March 1 - American band leader **Glenn Miller** (1904-1944) was born in Carilinda, Iowa. His music gained enormous popularity during

the 1940's through recordings such as *Moonlight Serenade* and *String of Pearls*. On December 15, 1944, his plane disappeared over the English Channel while en route to Paris where he was scheduled to perform.

Birthday March 3 - Telephone inventor **Alexander Graham Bell** (1847-1922) was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. Bell and his father were involved in teaching deaf persons to speak. Bell developed an interest in the vibrating membrane as a method of electrically transmitting sounds. His very first sentence spoken on the newly invented telephone on March 10, 1876, was to his assistant, "Mister Watson, come here, I want you."



Birthday March 14 - Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was born in Ulm, Germany. His theory of relativity led to new ways of thinking about time, space, matter and energy. He received a Nobel Prize in 1921 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1933 where he was an outspoken critic of Nazi Germany. Believing the Nazis might develop an atomic bomb, he warned President Roosevelt and urged the development of the U.S. Atomic bomb.

My best wishes to you, your family and loved ones, from **Paul Larson** ~ MHS Vice President.



**MILLBRAE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS
FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES**



WHAT: Come watch classic movies from legendary director Cecil B. DeMille!

WHERE: Millbrae Museum
420 Poplar Avenue

Bring your own popcorn and a spouse or friend for a fun Friday night on the town!!

Title	Year	Star	Date and Time
<i>Union Pacific</i>	1939	Joel McCrea	04/17/2015 6:30 PM
<i>The Buccaneer</i>	1938	Fredric March	05/15/2015 6:30 PM
<i>Samson and Delilah</i>	1949	Victor Mature	06/19/2015 6:30 PM
<i>Unconquered</i>	1947	Gary Cooper	07/17/2015 6:30 PM

MILLBRAE - SMALL TOWN, BIG STUFF (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Royal Container Company Millbrae Pat Dellinger exhibits containers for packaging well known trade names

one of our dirt cow pastures. **Ogden L. Mills** was appointed to serve as Secretary of the Treasury under **President Herbert Hoover**. Ogden and his sister **Gladys Mills Phipps**, had a passion for race horses. They established and co-owned **Wheatley Stables** in 1926 and bred a prize-winning race horse named **Seabiscuit**. Unfortunately

they sold Seabiscuit at the age of three years old for \$8,000 - the trainer thought he was too lazy to become a winner. Ogden died in 1937 at the age of 53.

In 1919, the **West Coast Porcelain Works** opened in Millbrae. The facility became the **Royal Container Company** in 1930. Royal Container was a huge box factory that was

located on Millbrae Avenue until 1967. The facility was 350,000 square feet spread over 16 acres.

In October 1969, **U.S.E. Store** opened up in Millbrae on the corner of Broadway and Meadow Glen. The term "Big-Box Store" was not yet coined, but Millbrae had one! You could buy almost anything you wanted there - later it became **Value Giant**.

The **Millbrae BART Station** was open for business on June 22, 2003. This station is the largest intermodal terminal in the United States west of the Mississippi River.

Millbrae's new **Safeway** opened on El Camino Real in June 2013. The new store is a whopping 54,000 square feet - one of the largest Safeway stores around. It is 9,000 sq. ft. bigger than the new Safeway to our south in Burlingame.

Tai Wu Restaurant opened in Millbrae in March 2014. This enormous three-story restaurant is said to be the largest Chinese restaurant between San Francisco and San Jose. The restaurant's total seating is over 400, including private rooms and banquet facilities.

Until the "Next Big Thing" in Millbrae, "Who has it bigger than us?"

Tom Dawdy
MHS Historian

MHS 2015-16 OFFICER/TRUSTEE INSTALLATION

Please join us at this year's MHS Officer/Trustee Installation on **Sunday, March 29** at **1:00 pm** in the **Millbrae Library Community Room "A"**, featuring a presentation by Foster City Council member **Steve Okamoto** on the Japanese Internment during World War II, with a special emphasis on the role of the Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno.

The MHS Nominating Committee has placed the following names into nomination to serve as MHS Officers and Trustees for the year 2015-16:

President: John Muniz
Vice-President: Paul Larson
Secretary: Gaetane Andrews
Treasurer: Vern Bruce
Parliamentarian: Mary Vella Treseler

Trustees: Faye Dawdy, Alicia Espinoza, John Espinoza, Raymond Gier

CURATOR'S REPORT

ALMA MASSOLO
DOROTHY SEMKE

This report brings us into 2015 with wishes for everyone for a prosperous and healthy year ahead. We are enjoying the new look of our **Fran Baxter Room** thanks to **President John Muniz**. He has opened up the fireplace, re-did the floor in front of it and arranged the furniture to make the room more spacious. Thank you John for all you do!

Thank you to **Facilitator Jack Gardner**, who recently restored the wooden bench on our front porch. Looks like a new one!

We were very happy to see so many attending our **Christmas Party** last December 10. Thanks again to everyone who helped to make the evening a success. A special thanks goes out to the **Sidetrack** band. The evening wouldn't have been the same without them!

We have added a beautiful silver tea set & tray to the showcase in the

dining room. This belonged to **Mr. & Mrs. C. Larson** and was donated by their son Paul. You can also view the Couples wedding goblets in the showcase in the **Community Room**. Thank you Paul for the many items you have donated!

We were very excited when **Mr. & Mrs. Chen C. Ho** of San Bruno, neighbors of docent **Clay Priola**, visited us and presented our Museum with a beautiful over-200-year-old Peking glass necklace from the Ching Dynasty that belonged to the grandmother of Mr. Ho. It is a gorgeous piece of jewelry. Thank you so very much for this addition!

Some time back, we opened up the Museum to **Miriam Schalit**, Programming Manager of **San Bruno Cable**. San Bruno celebrated their 100th Anniversary last year. Ms. Schalit made a DVD about the history of their town, which included a chapter on **D.O. Mills**. She gath-



ered some of the information presented on the DVD from our Museum and mailed us a copy. We are very happy to receive this.

We are very relieved that **Alma Massolo** is feeling so much better now after returning home from a recent stay at the hospital. She wants to thank everyone who came to visit, called, or sent cards with their good wishes.

If you are interested in becoming a docent or donating items for our annual **Yard Sale** in August (no clothing or heavy furniture please) call the Museum at (650)692-5786.

Thank you,
Alma Massolo, Curator
Dorothy Semke, Assistant Curator

MILLBRAE NOW AND THEN

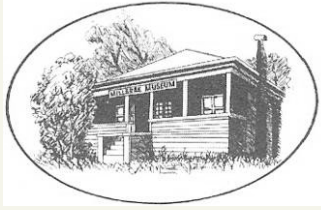
A PHOTOGRAPHIC RETROSPECTIVE

Millbrae Now and Then
A pictorial trip to the past



El Camino Real between La Cruz and Hillcrest Blvd. In 1946 Millbrae Lock was a Five & Dime Store

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT
WWW.MILLBRAEHS.ORG



**MILLBRAE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Post Office Box 511
Millbrae, CA 94030
Phone: 650-692-5786

MHS OFFICERS—2014-15

John Muniz, President
Paul Larson, Vice-President
Alicia Espinoza, Secretary
Vern Bruce, Treasurer
Alma Massolo, Curator
Dorothy Semke, Assistant Curator
Tom Dawdy, Historian

Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor

C A L E N D A R O F E V E N T S

Sunday, March 29: Millbrae Historical Society Installation of 2015 Officers and Board of Trustees, 1:00 pm, Millbrae Library Community Room "A", 1 Library Avenue.

- featuring a presentation on the Japanese Internment during World War II by Foster City Council member Steve Okamoto, light refreshments, and good company.

Saturday, July 4: Annual Fourth of July Barbeque and Family Picnic, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, David Chetcuti Community Room, 450 Poplar Avenue.

- Co-sponsored by the Millbrae Historical Society and the Millbrae Lions Club.

Third Fridays of the Month: *MHS Friday Night at the Movies*, 6:30 pm, Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. See schedule on Page 3.

- Bring your own popcorn and a spouse or friend for a fun Friday night on the town!!

Fourth Wednesdays of the Month: Millbrae Historical Society Board Meetings, 7:00 pm, Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. MHS members and guests are welcome to attend!

Millbrae Historical Society Museum Operating Hours

Millbrae Museum: Saturdays, 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm

Millbrae Train Museum: Saturdays, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm