

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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My grandmother bought a house on Chadbourne Avenue around 1950. It had once been owned by a blacksmith for the Millbrae Dairy. It was a small house built right near the sidewalk without the current regulations of being set back. It had a huge backyard on a corner lot.

It was a time with no cell phones, no computers, and to find out about the stock market you had to wait for the newspaper and it was already day-old news. We banked without computers and the bank would give us a passbook and hand stamp each deposit in the book. When we drove places, we made sure to bring a fold-out paper map that we could read the streets on to get directions.

Being Italian, we were ahead of our time with recycling. We would burn paper in the backyard before fire regulations, and we composted too. We bottled our own peaches and apricots to have during the winter when you could not get freshly-grown fruit. We all had vegetable gardens and fruit trees in our yards. We were ahead of our time in that respect also. We would fill our yard with manure, and our soil is still rich today. Now everyone in California grows vegetables. In the 50's it was the Italians that had vegetable gardens and fruit trees. We had chickens in the yard. If you drive by a house in Millbrae that still has a chestnut tree, walnut tree, fig tree, or loquat tree you can be sure it was at one time owned by an Italian.

(continued on Page 4)

P R E S I D E N T ' S R E P O R T
J O H N M U N I Z

Fellow members, check out Page 2 for a schematic of the proposed **Millbrae Historical Society Carriage House**. This is a preliminary rendition provided by Tuff Shed, who will be the construction contractor. The carriage house will be 750 square feet, 25 ft wide by 30 ft long. The garage door will face west toward the parking lot. The

carriage house will be built to mimic the adjacent Museum, with the same paint color, shingle siding, shutters, and a hip roof. We will use antique exterior lighting and period interior lighting. This project has been 31 years in the making, dating back to when the Museum building was moved from Broadway and Ludeman Lane to its current location. The location of the carriage

house will be at the rear of the museum, where the grass area and picnic table are located. The next phase of the project will be to present the building plans to the Millbrae Planning Commission, which should take place in April of this year. We hope to break ground in late spring or early summer. This project is totally funded by the Millbrae Historical Society through donations made over the years, with no taxpayer or City of Millbrae funding. After the project (continued on Page 2)

**HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT:
MY MEMORIES OF MILLBRAE—
THE WAY WE WERE**
BY FAYE DAWDY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



has been completed, we will be having a huge city-wide celebration and dedication ceremony!

What will the carriage house be used for? The name says it all - the building will store our fully refurbished Larkins Surrey and our 1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine, plus other valuable assets of historical importance to Millbrae.

Historical Society. The **Friday Night at the Movies** series runs through October and is held every third Friday of the month. Our 2016 season will start on **Friday, April 15 at 6:30 pm** at the Millbrae Museum. Admission is "FREE". Movies are shown on the wide screen, in full stereophonic sound, and in living color where applicable.

This year we will be exploring the greatest mystery and crime of the 20th century. As we now enter the fifty-third year after the Kennedy assassination, the Millbrae Historical Society will present several documentary films which explore the controversial mystery of who killed **President John F. Kennedy** on November 22, 1963. Our first film will be the very controversial 1991 **Oliver Stone** film **JFK**, starring **Kevin Costner**. On May 20th we will debut **The Last Word on the Assassination**, a three-hour documentary which will be shown in two parts, with Part Two wrapping up on **Friday, June 24th** (the fourth Friday in June). Line up these great movies on your calendars, get your popcorn ready, and come early - the loges fill up fast!

Looking forward to seeing our members and guests at our two museums and at many of our events planned for 2016. Come on down and visit with us at the **Millbrae Historical Museum**, open **Saturdays 12 noon - 4 pm**. Bring the kids to the **Millbrae Train Museum**, open **Saturdays 10 am - 2 pm**. Take pictures on our 1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine or dress in period costume and take vintage pictures in our 1941 **City of San Francisco** Pullman Car. Take advantage of the nice weather and take your friends and family on a walk or bike ride along the three-mile **Millbrae History Walk**.

Thank you to the Millbrae Historical Society Officers, Board of Trustees, and members for all you do to support our wonderful organization and projects!

John Muniz

Millbrae Historical Society President

2009 - Present

"The Past is our Key to the Future"

MHS 2016-17 OFFICER / TRUSTEE INSTALLATION

Please join us at this year's MHS Officer/Trustee Installation on **Sunday, March 20 at 1:00 pm** in the **Millbrae Library Community Room "A"**, featuring a presentation by **Raymond Abold** on Gold Prospecting in California.

The MHS Nominating Committee has placed the following names into nomination to serve as MHS Officers and Trustees for the year 2016-17:

President:	John Muniz
1st Vice-President:	Paul Larson
2nd Vice-President:	Joe Teresi
Secretary:	Gaetane Andrews
Treasurer:	Vern Bruce
Parliamentarian:	Mary Vella Treseler

Trustees: Gloria Borruso, Paul Larson, John Muniz, Joe Teresi

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

Greetings MHS Trustees, members, family and friends.

The below blurb about **Admiral Chester Nimitz** should be read with a grain of salt. Many of you may have received it via e-mail. I checked for its authenticity online and found it referenced in a number of places, but discovered the story has inaccuracies. Still, it does make for an entertaining story and provides some points about mistakes that the Japanese made at Pearl Harbor:

Sunday, December 7th, 1941- Admiral Chester Nimitz was attending a concert in Washington D.C. He was paged and told there was a phone call for him. When he answered the phone, it was **President Franklin Delano Roosevelt** on the phone. He told Admiral Nimitz that he (Nimitz) would now be the Commander of the Pacific Fleet.

After making plans organizing his staff, Admiral Nimitz flew to Hawaii to assume command of the Pacific Fleet. He landed at **Pearl Harbor** on Christmas Eve, 1941. There was such a spirit of despair, dejection and defeat--you would have thought the Japanese had already won the war. On Christmas Day, 1941, Adm. Nimitz was given a boat tour of the destruction wrought on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. Big sunken battleships and navy vessels cluttered the waters everywhere you looked.

As the tour boat returned to dock, the young helmsman of the boat asked, "Well Admiral, what do you think after seeing all this destruction?" Admiral Nimitz's reply shocked everyone within the sound of his voice. Admiral Nimitz said, "The Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could ever make, or God was taking care of America. Which do you think it was?"

Shocked and surprised, the young helmsman asked, "What do mean by saying the Japanese made the three biggest mistakes an attack force ever made?" Nimitz explained:

Mistake number one: The Japanese attacked on Sunday morning. Nine out of every ten crewmen of those ships were ashore on leave. If those same ships had been lured to sea and been sunk--we would have lost 38,000 men instead of 3,800.

Mistake number two: When the Japanese saw all those battleships lined in a row, they got so carried away sinking those battleships, they never once bombed our dry docks opposite those ships. If they had destroyed our dry docks, we would have had to tow every one of those ships to America to be repaired. As it is now, the ships are in shallow water and can be raised. One tug can pull them over to the dry docks,



and we can have them repaired and at sea by the time we could have towed them to America. And I already have crews ashore anxious to man those ships.

Mistake number three: Every drop of fuel in the Pacific theater of war is in above-ground storage tanks five miles away over that hill. One attack plane could have strafed those tanks and destroyed our fuel supply. That's why I say the Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could make or God was taking care of America.

Please remember that this story is just that, a story. The overall history is there, but these quotes were never found to be attributed to Admiral Nimitz. The point in reading this is to reflect on that Sunday in 1941 at Pearl Harbor, and for us all to remember the sacrifice made by those who served in the Armed Forces and in so many different capacities during World War II.

Here are wishes for health and happiness to you, your family, loved ones, and friends.

Paul Larson
MHS Vice President

Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



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MY MEMORIES OF MILLBRAE—THE WAY WE WERE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

In 1953 she bought the house we live in now on Poplar Avenue. Our meals were without ready-made packages and very little variety. We purchased meat, fish, chicken and ate fresh vegetables and lots of pasta, soups, and French bread. Millbrae was not blessed with any restaurants from other countries—there was one Chinese restaurant called the Jade Palace. So our cuisine was pretty basic.

My parents purchased a house on Bayview Avenue in the 50's. I went to Green Hills School. In 1960, an ice cream at grammar school cost 7 cents. Yellow school buses drove us to school. Girls only wore dresses to grammar school. I think the high schools started allowing slacks for girls around 1970. We had a few advantages compared to 2016 students as we were taught Spanish in grammar school and had a great school orchestra (those programs have now been cut from the Millbrae School District). The "Cubby" at Taylor School was the place to buy your school supplies. We did our reports hand-written or on a typewriter. Very hard to correct mistakes. We had to use the library for research, and even research was a bit limited with no internet, no computers.

We watched *Leave it to Beaver* and *Ozzie and Harriet* on television. We had party lines on the telephone and would fight our siblings for the one phone line per household. The Millbrae Theater was a very popular spot to go and enjoy a movie and visit with friends. I saw *West Side Story* there. We would get tickets from the grocery store and go to the matinee. Millbrae Bowl and Kings Bowl were where we got to go bowling. We also liked the drive-in movie theater just south of us. We would also go roller skating and ice skating before roller-blades were invented. We skateboarded but they were made differently; today Millbrae is blessed with a skate park.

Shaw's Ice Cream shop was the place to get an ice cream. Brick o' Gold was

the best place to buy penny candy. Joe Marichino owned the Capuchino Food Market on the corner and the laundromat on the same block. We shopped at Britts, and they had the Holland House for a quick bite to eat. La Mia Shop was where everyone would buy their school uniforms for St. Dunstan's. Cap/Mills football & basketball games were well-attended by students and the community. San Bruno had the Posey Parade, and Millbrae had a Lions Club Parade. Everyone came out to see them. St. Dunstan's Fall Festival was the highlight of the year.



Millbrae had lots of clubs with lots of active community members such as the St. Dunstan Women's Club, Mills Estate Women's Club, Millbrae Newcomers (where a member would knock on your door and welcome you with a basket when you purchased a house in Millbrae), and the Millbrae Soroptimists, many of which are not in existence today. We had a local newspaper—*The Millbrae Sun*. It would post every little event as simple as someone celebrating their birthday. The newspaper often posted free movie tickets in the newspaper, so we would run and cut them out and go to the show.



Every house had 2-4 children the same age. The parents all got married when the war was over, and the Baby Boomers were born. Many of the moms stayed home and the dads went off to work. The moms would always be home when we came home

after school, and we would go from one house to another. A house full of kids eating after-school snacks and playing in the front of the house. With only the television as a distraction and no other social media or video games, we had a lot of time to do a lot of baking, purchasing fabrics, sewing, knitting, crochet, stamp collecting, coin collecting, etc. We counted the days until we could get our driver's permit and driver's license.

The Millbrae Police were our friends and interacted with the community. We knew them all, and they also raised their families here in town. Miss Millbrae was a big deal held at the El Rancho Motel. Miss Millbrae also competed for Dream Girl in San Mateo County. That was also a popular event then associated with the County Fair.

The Millbrae Art and Wine Festival was a very big deal. Tom and I were co-chairs of the entire festival back in the 1980s. It was before they had show management, and so we would stay up most of the night and day for the whole weekend.

Like in all communities, modern inventions have changed the way we live. By the late 60's and 70's we were starting to see microwave ovens, video games, walkmans, and car phones. We went from 8-track tapes to cassette tapes to CD's in our cars. Computers came out, but they were very large and heavy like our old TV's.

It seems like so much is different, but actually as I watch my neighbor Gabe waiting out in front of his house every morning meeting three of his friends to walk to Spring Valley, it reminds me of my son John Franco meeting Hank and Kevin who lived up the alley, and many years ago Tom and his brother Jim walking with Billy, Dirk and Mike. Thankfully in Millbrae the schools are still good schools, and the students are lucky to have each other as members of the new Millbrae community and our future.

Generation after generation, everyone enjoys living in Millbrae!

CURATOR'S REPORT

ALMA MASSOLO
DOROTHY SEMKE

All of us at the Millbrae Historical Society want to wish Curator **Alma Massolo** much happiness in her recent move to the **Magnolia of Millbrae**. Even though she has made this move, you can usually find her on Saturdays at the Museum working hard.

Thank you to all our members and friends who made our **2015 Christmas Party** a huge success. A very special thanks to those who came out to decorate and un-decorate the Museum. The food was wonderful as always, the music was great as usual, and you couldn't find better company. Hope to see you all there next year!

We started the year out with a party on January 17th at the **Terrace Cafe** in Millbrae honoring our hard-working Museum and Train Museum docents. We had 18 in attendance who enjoyed a lovely lunch. Thank you so much for all your work. We are very happy to add **Gloria Borruoso**, **Cathy Quigg**, **Caroline Cannizzaro**, and **Alicia Espinoza** to our list of docents. If you are interested in becoming a docent, please give us a call at the Museum.

We are very happy to welcome new MHS members **Morgan Cannon**, **Linda & Cary Hedman**, **Samantha Lo**, **Joan Chipser**, **Rose Shubin**, **Marlene Fielder**, and **Gloria Borruoso**.

Thank you to **Caroline Mollhenny** who has added to our doll collection in the Heritage Room in the past for her recent donation of a copy of the September 14, 1965 **Saturday Evening Post**. Curator Alma Massolo donated a doll belonging to resident **Sue Rivas**. **Tina Bartunek** recently donated an old **Martinelli's** menu in excellent condition that can be viewed on the wall in the kitchen by an old **16 Mile House** menu donated by **June Lyerla**. So interesting checking out how little meals were back then. The Lyerla family is responsible for setting up the bathroom in the Museum. She recently was in town and donated two beautiful pictures of her parents which have been placed in the bathroom on the wall above the tub. The Lyerla family owned the 2nd oldest house in Millbrae - 196 Poplar Avenue. Thank you to **Dario Pieraccini** who has donated many items to the



Museum, including a 1920's standing ashtray which has been placed near the fireplace in the living room, a WWII ration book, and an old copy of the New World Webster Dictionary. Also we would like to thank **Marlene Fielder** for her donation of a Remington portable manual typewriter in memory of her father **Vernon F. Marro**.

We were pleased to open up the Museum for a private tour to former Millbrae resident **Jim Roberts**. He lived here from birth until 1960 when he graduated from Serra High School. While attending Chadbourne School and Taylor School, he resided with his parents at the "then" Train Station "now" Train Museum where his father was Station Master from 1937.

A special "hello" to **Jack & Ann Gardner**. Please hurry back to us – we miss you!

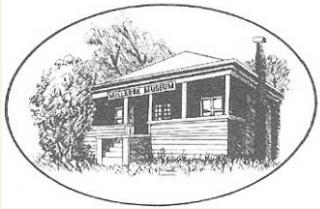
Alma Massolo, Curator
Dorothy Semke, Assistant Curator

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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 20: Millbrae Historical Society Installation of 2016 Officers and Board of Trustees, 1:00 pm, Millbrae Library Community Room “A”, 1 Library Avenue.

- featuring a presentation on Gold Prospecting in California by Raymond Abold.

Light refreshments will be served.

Friday, April 15: Season Premiere of *MHS Friday Night at the Movies*

Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. 6:30 – 9:30 pm.

- Bring a spouse or friend for a viewing of the 1991 Oliver Stone classic *JFK*, with Kevin Costner!

Fridays, May 20 & June 24: *MHS Friday Night at the Movies*

Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. 6:30 – 8:00 pm.

- Two-part viewing of *The Last Word on the Assassination*

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