



# 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:

## MEMORIES OF MILLBRAE

BY TOM DAWDY



In 1998, Millbrae celebrated its 50th Anniversary in grand style. A group of volunteer Millbrae residents worked for a year planning events for the occasion, ranging from a parade, birthday party, car shows and an "Anniversary Gala". I was given a couple of projects to chair, including the production of an historical slide show, which I called *Memories of Millbrae*. Fast forward 20 years to 2018, and our city is about to undergo two landmark development projects. These projects east of El Camino Real were recently approved by our City Council. One project, known as the **Serra Station Development**, will be built just east of El Camino and north of Millbrae Avenue. The second project, called the **Gateway at Millbrae Station**, will be constructed between the BART parking garage and Millbrae Avenue. It is not the purpose of the Millbrae Historical Society to take a stand for or against any project, but it is our mission to research and record the history of these lands that will soon be redeveloped and bring Millbrae well into the 21st century.

So what occupied these sites in the past? In the 1920's, Millbrae's industries were primarily agriculture, flower and vegetable growing, and of course the **Millbrae Dairy**. But during this period, the **West Coast Porcelain Works** was built on Millbrae Avenue just west of where the Chevron Station stands today. After the opening of the factory, Millbrae's population increased from 16 families to over 300 families. After a decade,

(continued on Page 4)

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

The **Carriage House Grand Opening and Dedication** is scheduled for **Saturday, August 4th** from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. The City of Millbrae has given us authority to close the parking lot in front of the Carriage House. Come and join the fun! See amazing old photos and memorabilia from Millbrae, San Francisco and the Peninsula that has never been

seen by the public. Also see a great Millbrae Fire Department exhibit, including an operational **1936 American La France Fire Engine**, Millbrae's second fire apparatus. A **1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine** and other classic vehicles will also be on display. Please see the Grand Opening flyer enclosed in this newsletter for more information on this special community event.



The Carriage House project took three years to complete and was fully funded by the Millbrae Historical Society for the enjoyment of the Millbrae community as an educational resource for generations to come. (continued on Page 2)

**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 )

Pictured below is the historic surrey now housed in the Carriage House. It was on display at the South San Francisco **Wells Fargo Bank** branch for many years.



as junior high school students who were interested in preserving the rich history of railroading in Millbrae and the Peninsula.



Thank you to our Board of Directors and Society members for their continued support and dedication to the Millbrae Historical Society. A big “thank you” to the City of Millbrae Community Development Department (**Sam Fielding, Tonya Ward, and Tanya Benedik**) for their assistance, patience, and advice related to the successful completion of the Carriage House. Also, thanks to Central County Fire Battalion Chief **Kevin Mernick** for his efforts and coordination in relocating the 1936 American La France to the Carriage House.

How long has it been since you visited the **Millbrae Train Museum**? Well, if it has been a while, I suggest you take time out and pay a visit. The old place is really improved and looks the way it looked when it was a Southern Pacific Railroad station. Vern and his crew have really done a fantastic job moving things around to show off the historical significance of the station and railroading on the Peninsula. Thank you Vern and your crew for an incredible transformation job!

On Wednesday, May 23rd, I was honored to attend the annual **Mills High School Awards Night** along with Train Museum Director **Vern Bruce**, and Historian and Carriage House Curator **Tom Dawdy**. We presented each of our three longtime Train Museum Junior Docents a one-time scholarship payment of \$500 and a certificate of appreciation for their service and dedication to the Train Museum. Receiving the honor, from left to right are graduating seniors **Joseph Bonavia** and **Jason Brady**, along with Vern Bruce, John Muniz and Tom Dawdy (third honoree **Jorge Quezada** not shown). These three young men first came to the Millbrae Train Museum over four years ago

The 33rd Annual **Millbrae Historical Society 4th of July Picnic** is just around the corner. Please see the flyer in this newsletter and get your reservations in the mail. Hope to see you there!

Don't forget about the Annual **Millbrae Historical Society Rummage Sale** in front of the Museum on **Saturday, August 11th**. Come on down and check out the large selection of gently-used merchandise and “Make me an offer I can't refuse”.

Best wishes,  
**John Muniz**  
Millbrae Historical Society President

**M I L L B R A E N O W A N D T H E N**



Elder Avenue looking north from Millbrae Avenue

← 1960 snow storm

Current day 2018 →



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

Greetings Trustees, members and friends,

The topic of various "generations" came up to me recently. This got me curious, and I did some research. I found the following information used in demographics and by market researchers to describe subcomponents of society:

**The Depression Era** - Born: 1912-1921; Current Population: 11 million

Depression era individuals tend to be conservative, compulsive savers, maintain low debt, feel a responsibility to leave a legacy to their children, are patriotic, oriented toward work before pleasure, respect for authority, have a sense of moral obligation.

**World War II** - Born: 1922-1927; Current Population: 11 million

People in this cohort shared in a common goal of defeating the Axis powers. There was an accepted sense of "deferment" among this group, contrasted with the emphasis on "me" in more recent cohorts.

**Post-War Cohort** - Born: 1928-1945; Current Population: 41 million

This generation had significant opportunities in jobs and education as the War ended and a post-war economic boom struck America. However, the growth in Cold War tensions led to levels of discomfort and uncertainty throughout the generation. Members of this group value security, comfort, and familiar, known activities and environments.

**Boomers I or The Baby Boomers** - Born: 1946-1954; Current Population: 33 million

The first Boomer segment is bounded by the Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War. Boomers I were in or protested the War.

**Boomers II or Generation Jones** - Born: 1955-1965; Current Population: 49 million

This first post-Watergate generation lost much of its trust in government and optimistic views. Boomers II had AIDS as part of their rites of passage. The youngest members of the Boomer II generation in fact did not have the benefits of the Boomer I class as many of the best jobs, opportunities, housing etc. were taken by the larger and earlier group.

**Generation X** - Born: 1966-1976; Current Population: 41 million

Gen X is often characterized by high levels of skepticism, "what's in it for me" attitudes and a reputation for some of the worst music to ever gain popularity. Gen Xers are arguably the best educated generation with 29% obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher.

**Generation Y** - Born: 1977-1994; Current Population: 71 million

Gen Y kids are known as incredibly sophisticated, technology wise, im-



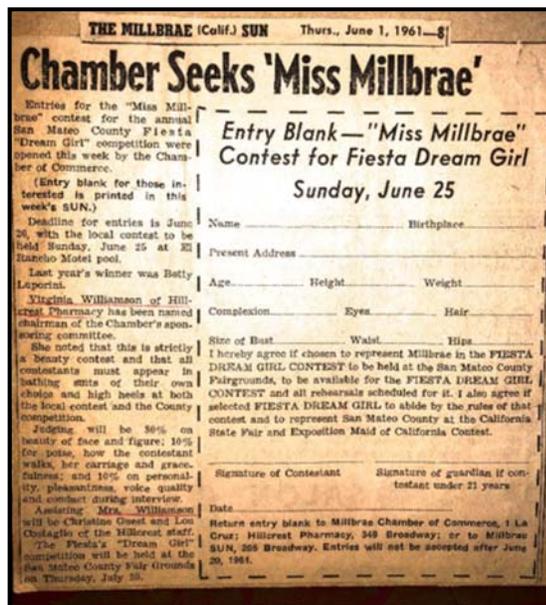
mune to most traditional marketing and sales pitches. Gen Y members are much more racially and ethnically diverse and they are much more segmented as an audience aided by the rapid expansion in media.

**Generation Z** - Born: 1995-2012; Current Population: 23 million

Gen Z kids will grow up with a highly sophisticated media and computer environment and will be more diverse, internet savvy and expert than their Gen Y forerunners. More to come on Gen Z...stay tuned.

**Paul Larson**  
1st Vice President

**BLAST FROM THE PAST**



Oh, how things have changed! Note the article from the *Millbrae Sun*, dated June 1, 1961. The Millbrae Chamber of Commerce is seeking applicants for the "Miss Millbrae" contest. Check out the qualifications. Go ahead, complete the form and send it to the Chamber and see what happens!

**John Muniz**

## MEMORIES OF MILLBRAE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the facility became the **Royal Container Company**. Royal Container produced boxes and packaging for many companies in the Bay Area. The company was described at the time as an "American Business Success Story". In the 1960's, it became part of the **Georgia Pacific Group**, and in 1967 the factory moved to South San Francisco and the site was cleared for redevelopment.

After Georgia Pacific left, car dealership **Ralph Williams Chrysler-Plymouth** was constructed about where the BART Garage stands now. The dealership wanted to construct a 100-foot revolving sign with time and temperature on their 10- acre site. The Planning Commission disapproved the request, citing that the existing 60-foot-high electrical towers were already considered a hazard to aircraft at SFO. The dealership moved to San Bruno and opened as **Bayshore Chrysler-Plymouth** and produced a controversial TV commercial in 1968 that much later went viral on YouTube (look it up - it is funny but vulgar language). Later **Hertz Car Sales** took over the property for many years. Just west (right along the railroad tracks) was **Millbrae Materials**, which mostly supplied concrete trucks and as I remember changed names several times over the years.

Right across the railroad tracks (to the west) was another Millbrae landmark for many years - "**The Power House**". The 13,200 volts of electricity entering the house was stepped down to 550 volts to run the **#40 Line** of street cars that traveled between San Francisco and San Mateo. In January 1949, the last street car ran through Millbrae, and the Power Station was demolished in October 1956. Just north of the Power House was the **Dunphy Mansion**. **William Dunphy** originally built the mansion for himself and his family in 1883. Dunphy also built a hunting lodge at the top of Millbrae Avenue. The building had

several owners over the years with somewhat of a wild history. When gambling was outlawed in San Francisco in the early 1900's, the mansion hosted boxing matches, gambling, and anything you wanted during the Prohibition years. It was a very popular place for bootlegging. In 1934, **Dominic Muzzi** bought the mansion and property from the **McCormick Family**, whose son and daughter-in-law, movie actress **Colleen Moore**, had lived in the mansion. Dominic opened the **Millbrae Serra Sanitarium** the next year and for several years added additions to the family-run business. The mansion was deemed obsolete and torn down October 1966.

This area of Millbrae also had several very popular night spots. On Saturday nights many people traveled from San Francisco on the street car for a night out in Millbrae. In 1948, records show that 100 gambling licenses were issued in Millbrae. One of these places was the **Millbrae Tavern**, owned by **William and Rose Warren**. When El Camino Real was expanded from 4 to

6 lanes and modernized in the early 1950's, the couple built a new place a couple blocks south at 100 El Camino Real, and called it **Rose & Bill's**. Rose and Bill's opened in 1954 and was one of the most popular places to hang out in Millbrae for years. The popular night spot had a sad ending in 1974 while Rose was very ill and suffering a lot. Bill shot her with his double-barrel shotgun and then called the Millbrae Police and told them "I just killed my wife".



I'm sure that I only scratched the surface of the stories in this area of Millbrae, that will soon look a lot different. I almost forgot one business, my Dad's. **Dawdy Shell** was located on the northeast corner of the old El Camino Real. It was there from 1947-1953, until he moved to downtown Millbrae at 500 Broadway. Most people ask me nowadays "Was there a gas station across from the Post Office? I never knew that".

# The Millbrae Historical Society

Proudly Presents

## The 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fourth of July Picnic



**BBQ Sirloin  
Hamburgers with all  
the trimmings,  
Italian Salad,  
Chili Beans  
Ice Cream  
Soda - Water  
Raffle Prizes**



1936 American La France

Where can I find this fantastic 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration?

On Wednesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Dave Chetcuti Room at Civic Center Plaza: 450 Poplar Avenue between the Millbrae Library and the Millbrae Museum - 11:00 AM until 3:00 PM. \$15.00 adults, \$5.00 for kids under 12 years old. Lions will cook, Leo's will serve



Lunch starts at High Noon



1931 Southern Pacific Fire

Please join us for an Independence Day tradition - Everyone is welcome

Please use this handy coupon to RSVP or call (650) 697-3319 (deadline for reservations is Sunday, 7/1/18)

Number attending MHS BBQ \_\_\_\_\_ Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

RSVP's Only. Sorry, No Walk-Ins

Checks Payable to:  
Millbrae Historical Society  
P.O. Box 511  
Millbrae, CA 94030

# Millbrae Historical Society



## Carriage House Grand Opening



Our "Mission" is to provide continuing and contemporary leadership for broad-based community understanding and appreciation of historical values, (societal, cultural, technological, educational, etc.) that relate to current and future community improvements and interests.

**Saturday, August 4th, 2018,**

**10:00 am to 03:00 pm**

**In the rear of the Millbrae**

**Museum in front of the**

**Carriage House**

Come and join the fun, see amazing old photos, memorabilia from Millbrae, San Francisco and the Peninsula, which has never been seen by the public. Also, a great Old Millbrae Fire Department exhibit, including a 1936 operational, American La France Fire Engine, Millbrae's second fire apparatus. A 1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine and other classic vehicles.

**Millbrae Historical Society**

**Serving Millbrae since 1970**

**"The Past is our key to the future"**



**CURATOR'S REPORT**  
DOROTHY SEMKE

On April 15th, almost all our docents from the Museum and Train Museum gathered at the **Terrace Cafe** for a beautiful brunch. We thank them for all their hard work in keeping the history of Millbrae alive!

August 11th is fast approaching! This is the date of our annual **Rummage (Yard) Sale**, which is one of our fundraisers. Please try to come and check us out between 10 am and 3 pm. If you would like to donate something (not clothing or electrical items), please come between 12 and 4 pm any Saturday for drop-off.

With the fast-approaching opening of the **Carriage House**, we are seeing a few changes within the Museum itself. We have a 100-year-old doll on display donated by **Margaret Stirling**. Thank you Margaret and also to **Val Dambrosio** for her recent donation of a beautiful cut-glass pitcher, 1940-era Amish doll, 1920-era kitchen utensils, and early 1900s baby bonnet. A thank you also goes to an unknown person who left a 1960 Taylor Middle School yearbook on our porch. We have placed it in the Dining Room along with the school information.



Recently we had a visit from **Janet Millard**, granddaughter of **Jeanette and Sylvester Millard** who owned the Museum building when it was in its original location on Ludeman Lane and Broadway. Sylvester retired from the **Spring Valley Water Company** as an Engineer and Surveyor and moved shortly after 1945.

Welcome to new members **Beatriz Johnston, Thomas Day, Maureen Davis, and Randy Sahae**.

**TRAIN MUSEUM NEWS**  
ELIZABETH FURBER, EDITOR  
VERN BRUCE, REPORTER

After extensive cleaning up of the inside of our Train Museum, we have sold numerous items not related to our purposes. So far, we have received over \$1000 from those sales! We thank **Charley Hegarty** and **Peter Sheerin** for coordinating and marketing these sales.

While doing all of that, we have completed the frame and wheel assembly of the 1895 horse-drawn carriage, as well as an almost complete

re-organization of the inside of the building.

We also congratulate our three high-school volunteers for their awards of the Millbrae Historical Society's college scholarships. **Joseph Bonavia, Jason Brady** and **Jorge Quezada** each received \$500 for the extensive time and efforts they have provided to us over the last five to six years.



Once again we thank our docents and other volunteers for doing such a great job with all the things we do to keep our history of the area's railroading alive: **Joseph Bonavia; Jason Brady; Vern Bruce; Ralph Domenici; Charley Hegarty; Richard Kennedy; Jay King; Gino & Gerry Micheli; Jorge Quezada; and Peter Sheerin**.

Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



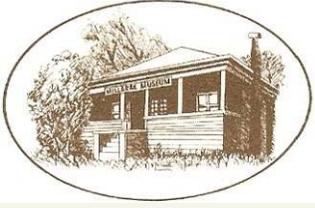
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**MILLBRAE  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

Post Office Box 511  
Millbrae, CA 94030

Phone: 650-692-5786

**MHS OFFICERS – 2018-19**

**John Muniz, President**

**Paul Larson, 1st Vice-President**

**Joe Teresi, 2nd Vice-President**

**Gaetane Andrews, Secretary**

**Vern Bruce, Treasurer**

**Mary Vella Treseler, Parliamentarian**

**Dorothy Semke, Curator**

**Tom Dawdy, Historian & Carriage House Curator**

**Ray Gier, Museum Facilitator**

**Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor**

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

**Wednesday, 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.

**Saturday, August 4:** Carriage House Grand Opening and Dedication, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm,  
Millbrae Museum Carriage House, 420 Poplar Avenue.

Come celebrate the opening of the community's newest historical resource!!

**Saturday, August 11:** Annual Millbrae Historical Society Yard Sale, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm  
Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue.

**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