



# 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

## STORY OF THE SPUR: FROM HIGHWAY TO TRAIL

BY JOE TERESI

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The Millbrae Spur Trail, comprised of separate segments between Richmond Drive and Hillcrest Boulevard and between South Ashton Avenue and Magnolia Avenue, is a heavily used greenbelt and bicycle/pedestrian trail enjoyed by Millbrae residents young and old. What is now a unifying community feature, however, was once destined to be a divisive, high-volume highway that would have cut

Millbrae into pieces. Dating back to the 1920's, local planners envisioned a highway route known as the Junipero Serra Highway that would have included the Millbrae Spur alignment between Crystal Springs Road in San Bruno and El Camino Real at Millbrae Avenue. The proposed highway would have been an extension of present-day Junipero Serra Boulevard. The Spur property was acquired by the California Division of Highways (the predecessor of Caltrans) and was kept clear of development in anticipation of future highway construction. Due in large part to local community opposition, however, the highway was never built. Eventually, the primary alignment of the Junipero Serra Highway was shifted to the west along Skyline Boulevard, between the western edge of Millbrae and San Andreas Lake. The route was

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

Here I am, sitting in the Millbrae Museum writing this article and reflecting on our incredible, colorful history. Back in the day, **Costanoan Indians** roamed the green hills of Millbrae, hunting deer and rabbits, gathering acorns and berries, and fishing on the tide flats of the Bay shore. Imagine how beautiful and peaceful it must have been; how

pristine and quiet, with the cool air and fog rustling through the trees and meadows of Millbrae. Consider what **Darius Ogden Mills** must have seen and experienced when he scouted the area in the 1870's looking for a suitable location to build his estate. I can only imagine how impressed old Darius must have been when he came upon our Millbrae area.



Of course the area was not known as Millbrae until Darius bought the land from the Sanchez family to build his west coast estate. The Scottish call

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

a hill or slope a "brae". Old Darius used his last name "Mills" to name the area where he finally built his estate "Mill-brae". So here we are today, one hundred and fifty years later, and Millbrae is still a beautiful place, the cool air and fog still rustle through the hills and valleys, and we go about our daily lives as the native inhabitants and old Darius did, lo those many years ago. At the Millbrae Historical Society, we volunteer our services to provide the public with a look at the past, so we can better appreciate what we have today.

Be sure to check out our new Millbrae Historical Society web site at [www.millbraehs.org](http://www.millbraehs.org). Our web site has been completely revamped by our Newsletter Editor **Joe Teresi**. Our new web site is truly a work of art — take a look! The Millbrae Historical Society is now also on Facebook™. Check out how MHS is slowly moving into the twenty-first century.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, the Millbrae Historical Society conducted our annual installation of officers and trustees. Again, I was honored to be elected President for my third term. **Dennis Sharp**, assistant curator of the SFO Museum, was our guest speaker. Dennis presented a slide show about the history of the airport, from its humble beginnings in the tide pools of the Bay, to the incredible international transportation hub it is today. By the way, our next MHS field trip is to the SFO Museum on **Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup>**. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to Joe Teresi by June 17. **Joe Teresi** and **Dorothy Semke** entertained us by putting on a *Concentration* game relevant to the history of Millbrae. Joe was dressed like Hugh Downs, and Dorothy was dressed like Vanna White — it was hilarious! Our installations are so much fun; please plan on attending next year's event.

The Millbrae History Society created its **Living History Award** to honor individuals whose contributions and achievements help to perpetuate the history of Millbrae. In the 41-year history of the Millbrae Historical Society, only eight *Living History Awards* have been issued. At this year's Officer Installation, the ninth *Living History Award* was presented to **Helen Habeeb**. Helen is a charter member of the Millbrae Historical Society (since 1970), and currently serves as a Museum docent and as a Society Trustee. She participated in the attempt to save the original 16 Mile House, and was instrumental in the effort to move and refurbish the San Francisco Water Department Manager's house to the Civic Center, where it serves as the Millbrae History Museum. Helen and her husband

**George** continue to devote time and energy in support of the Millbrae Museum. Please congratulate **Helen Habeeb** on this special honor!

I have instituted a new, fun, free summer program for MHS members called "Friday Night at the Movies". Once a month at our Museum, we will show a movie from the "Golden Age of Hollywood" (1935 - 1955). Our first presentation on May 20<sup>th</sup> was 1950 Best Picture *All About Eve* starting **Bette Davis**, **George Sanders**, **Celeste Holm**, and a young **Marylyn Monroe**. Our next presentation will be on **Friday, June 17<sup>th</sup>** at 7:00 pm at the Millbrae Museum. Bring your own popcorn and snacks and come early because the loges fill up fast. Our feature film from 1945 will star **Lana Turner** and **John Garfield**. Can you guess the title? We will also feature one classic *Bugs Bunny* cartoon and a Movietone newsreel of the day.

Our annual MHS **Fourth of July BBQ** will be on **Monday, July 4** in the Chetcuti Room. Socialize with friends and neighbors who have been attending this event for years. We will have raffle prizes and, if nothing else, I will entertain you. Please see the flyer in the newsletter and RSVP ASAP!

Assistant Curator **Dorothy Semke** will be hosting our annual Yard Sale on **Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>** in front of the Museum. If you would like to donate items for the sale, please call 692-5786 or drop your donations at the Museum on Saturdays between 12:00 noon and 4:00 pm. We do have some interesting merchandise for sale this year, so come on down and check it out!

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

Special thanks to  
Rudy Alva at  
Allied Security Alarms  
for providing alarm service at the Millbrae Historical Society Museum free of charge for many years. Thanks, Rudy!



## VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE PAUL LARSON

Greetings members, trustees and friends of the Millbrae Historical Society,

We have had such a wonderful time this year as trustees. It is exciting to hear all the fantastic things planned in the coming months for the MHS! I hope the word spreads to all members and other residents, so that everyone can join in at our activities. Just as an example, it was recently announced that we will have a special tour & luncheon at the **SFO Museum** at the Airport on **Friday, June 24th**, and a special luncheon for MHS Docents at **Fiddler's Green** on **Sunday, June 26th**. Everyone had a great time at our first "Friday Night at the Movies" at the Historical Museum on May 20th. The feature film was 1950 Best Picture **All About**

**Eve**, starring **Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, George Sanders**, and a young **Marilyn Monroe**. The next "Friday Night at the Movies" will take place at the Historical Museum on **June 17th** at 7:00 pm with a surprise 1945 movie featuring **Lana Turner** and **John Garfield**.

The annual **MHS 4th of July Picnic** is coming up at the David Chetcuti Community Room, offering delicious BBQ items prepared by the **Millbrae Lions Club**. I hope to see you there! If you would like to donate a raffle prize for the picnic, please let me know.

A special welcome goes out to another new MHS Lifetime Business Member: **Millbrae Lumber!** As a Lifetime Business Member, Millbrae Lumber will re-



ceive a special framed certificate along with a free business listing in the MHS Newsletter for a year.

Thanks to all who have devoted their time to making Millbrae a better place and participating in all the above-mentioned MHS events, along with upcoming MHS events during the year.

All my best to you and your family,  
from Millbrae Historical Society  
Vice President,  
**Paul Larson**

## MILLBRAE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES



**WHAT:** Come watch classic movies from the Golden Age of Hollywood.

**WHERE:** Millbrae Museum  
420 Poplar Avenue

**WHEN:** **Friday, June 17**  
and selected Fridays  
throughout the summer

Starting at **7:00 pm**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Call John Muniz at 455-3472 for future show times.

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




Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



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Come join us for a  
**Millbrae Historical Society**  
**Field Trip & Luncheon**

Friday, June 24  
 11:15 am to 3:00 pm

*SFO Museum*  
 San Francisco International Airport

Join your fellow Historical Society members for a fun group tour, luncheon, and get-together.



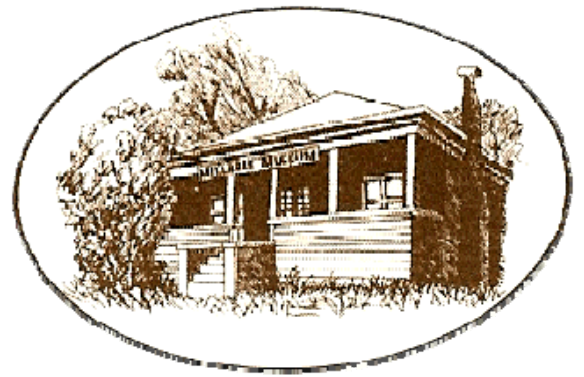
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| <u>Luncheon:</u><br>(pay for what you order) | <i>Firewood Grill</i><br>SFO International Terminal          |
| <u>Guided Tour:</u><br>(no charge)           | <i>SFO Museum</i><br>Dennis Sharp, Asst. Curator of Aviation |

Transportation provided; meet at Millbrae Museum at **11:15 am**  
 Please RSVP to Joe Teresi (583-5476) by Friday, June 17

# The Millbrae Historical Society

Proudly Presents

# An Old Fashioned Independence Day BBQ



Featuring

- Appetizer
  - BBQ Sirloin Hamburgers with all the trimmings
  - Green Salad
  - Chili Beans
  - Ice Cream & Cookies
- In Addition
- Entertainment
  - Raffle Prizes
  - Beer, Wine, Soda, Water



## Where can I find this wonderful event?

On Monday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 simply go to the 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. \$14.00 is the cost & \$5.00 for kids under 12 years old. The Millbrae Lions Club will be serving an expertly prepared lunch at High Noon.



**Please join us for this fine Independence Day tradition — Everyone is welcome**

Please use this handy coupon to RSVP or call (650) 697-3319 (deadline for reservations is Friday, June 24, 2011)

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

# Yard and Book Sale

Saturday, August 13, 2011  
10:00 am to 4:00 pm

At the  
**Millbrae Museum**



**420 Poplar Avenue**

Next to the Millbrae Library

The Museum is open Saturdays from 12-4  
for you to drop off your donated items.  
Proceeds benefit the Millbrae Historical Society.  
692-5786 or 697-7670

## CURATOR'S REPORT

ALMA MASSOLO

We are very pleased to announce that **Alma Massolo** is feeling much better and is working on Saturdays from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm at the Museum. So glad to have you back, Alma. . . .

A special thanks goes to **David and Mildred Rolandelli**, who recently donated two beautiful pieces of furniture that belonged to the **A. F. Green family** of #1 Lewis Avenue. One, a secretary desk that is exhibited in the Heritage Room, along with a beautiful painting of the 1800's era. The other chest adds elegance and history to the newly furnished washroom adjacent to the kitchen.

A lovely lighted bookcase with glass doors will enhance the living room and will display the 1800's vintage encyclopedia set donated by the Rolandelli family. A thank you to **Armando and Louise Pera** for the donation of this beautiful piece of furniture. . . .

The work in progress by **Jack Gardner** and **John Muniz** to

refurbish the fireplace wall in the living room will soon be completed. Thanks to Jack and John!

Thanks to **Tom Wooley**, two more display cases have better lighting. Tom works endlessly every Saturday putting our Museum in a better light for better viewing. Thank you, Tom. . . .

Another addition is an Arithma Adiator, a device made in Germany used for adding and subtracting. This was donated by **Marge Colapietro**. Thank you, Marge!

Just a reminder to visit the Millbrae Train Museum to view the anvil used by the last Millbrae blacksmith. This unique exhibit was donated by **Dorothy and Ray Breitenstein**.

Besides the *Images of America: Millbrae* history books, we have **Tom Dawdy's** 8x10 photographs of historical Millbrae for sale in the Museum. Books are \$21, and the photos \$10, sales tax included. They make great gifts!



We welcome and are very pleased to announce that **Clay Priola** and **Gaetane Andrews** have become Museum docents. Thank you for volunteering - docents are an important part of the Museum.

We are looking for a Jr. Docent to work in the Museum office. If you know of someone who would like to donate their time while getting school credit, please call the Museum at 692-5786 and leave a name and phone number where we can reach you. Must know how to operate a computer.

**Saturday, August 13th** is the date of our annual Yard Sale. If you have any articles to donate, please call 692-5786 to make arrangements for pick up.

— **Dorothy Semke**, Asst Curator

## STORY OF THE SPUR: HWY TO TRAIL

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incorporated into the Interstate Highway System and was constructed as Interstate 280 in the late 1960's. The integrity of a unified Millbrae community was preserved as a result of passionate outcries by local residents and government officials. Due to the efforts of Councilwoman Josephine Waugh and others, the City of Millbrae acquired the Spur property from the State Division of Highways in 1969. The majority of the Spur property was zoned as permanent open space in 1975. A portion of the

property was incorporated into Junipero Serra County Park in San Bruno. Rotary Park, Mosta Grove, Josephine Waugh Park, and the City/YMCA Skateboard Park have all been created on the Spur property.



The City of Millbrae has used state park & recreation grants to fund the construction of trail improvements and landscaping along much of the former highway right-of-way. Next time you are strolling or biking along the Spur Trail, pause to think about how different Millbrae would be with a major highway cutting an unsightly, noisy scar across our neighborhoods. In addition, take a moment to thank the generation of residents who made the extra effort to preserve the special place that we call home.

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—2011**

**John Muniz, President**  
**Paul Larson, Vice-President**  
**Alicia Espinoza, Secretary**  
**Vern Bruce, Treasurer**  
**Alma Massolo, Curator & Historian**

**Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor**

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

**Friday, June 24:** Millbrae Historical Society Field Trip & Luncheon

*SFO Museum*, San Francisco International Airport, 11:15 am to 3:00 pm

- Meet at Millbrae Museum; RSVP to Joe Teresi at 583-5476 by Friday, June 17

**Monday, 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 13:** Millbrae Historical Society Yard Sale, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm,  
Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue.

- Please consider donating items as you wrap up your Spring cleaning around the house!

**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