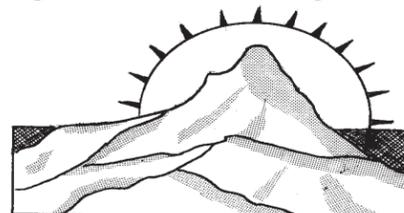


# SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## RECORD

March 2015

ALAMO · BLACKHAWK · DANVILLE · DIABLO · SAN RAMON



**Dave Rogers, Jerry Warren, Mary McCosker, Mary Solen, Karen Stepper. Dave is the Lead Operator, Caldecott Tunnels, Unit 04-793, Caltrans.**

### The Interesting History Of The Caldecott Tunnel Discussed At Our January Meeting

Mary Solon and Mary McCosker, authors of the new publication *Building the Caldecott Tunnel*, told the history of the five tunnels and their effect on the growth of Contra Costa County at our January 15th dinner meeting. The book was published by Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina in 2014. Both authors are members of the Lafayette Historical Society.

The native people developed pathways while hunting, gathering, and trading with other Miwok tribes of the East Bay and the coast in present-day Marin County. The trails followed streams and creek beds.

Early settlers followed these trails as they explored. Dirt roads were developed. As early as 1850, Contra Costa County was divided into road districts. Travel between communities became easier. Contra Costa County farmers took their produce to the Oakland Produce Market by horse and wagon by way of Fish Ranch Road.

In 1859, the Alta Telegraph Company constructed a telegraph line between Oakland and Martinez. The existing neighboring road became known as Telegraph Road. The section running from downtown Oakland to the Peralta Estate in Temescal was first known as Peralta Road.

Telegraph Avenue ran to Claremont Avenue then over the hills, following the approximate path of present-day Fish Ranch Road. The road was often impassible during winter months when the creek overflowed its banks.

In the late 1880s the stage line dirt road over the Berkeley Hills went up Claremont Avenue and wound through Claremont Canyon to Contra Costa County. After the long climb, the downgrade to the east ended at the Oakland Trout Company, where there was a small saloon, a large stable, and a stage stop.

The property became known as the Fish Ranch and the road as Fish Ranch Road. The Summit House was the stopping place at the top of Fish Ranch Road. Here horses were changed. Travelers might have a meal or spend the night.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

**Need a Ride To The Society Meeting On March 20th? Contact Bill Lloyd. Visit — [SRVHistoricalSociety.org](http://SRVHistoricalSociety.org)**

*Over 44 Years Looking Back!*



First Class Mail



SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 521 • DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94526

**NEXT MEETING  
THURSDAY,  
MARCH 19TH  
"THE WIT AND WISDOM  
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN"**

### Abraham Lincoln A True American Hero — Learn More About Him At Our March 19th Dinner Meeting

The "Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln" will be shared by Arnold Kunst at the March 19th membership meeting. Recall that Lincoln endured repeated family tragedies, incomparable carnage on Civil War battlefields, endless political sniping, and his own personal issue of depression. How did he cope with all that? He turned to humor, dipping into a deep well of stories to disarm his foes, to lighten conversations, to make subtle points, and to just plain entertain folks. Couple that with his amazing command of the English language and is it any wonder that he has become an iconic American hero? We look forward to having members of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley share the evening. Come and enjoy.

The meeting will be held at the San Ramon Golf Club, 9430 Fircrest Lane in San Ramon. We gather at 6:30 pm. Dinner is served at 7:00 pm. The presentation follows. We hope to see you!

# History Of The Caldecott Tunnel (Continued)

Interest grew in building a tunnel between Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in 1860. A route could not be agreed upon. The project was deemed too costly and abandoned.

The idea of a tunnel was revived in the 1890s. Money was to come from the two counties and private citizens. The route was to start at the end of Broadway. The tunnel was to be about 500 feet long and exit on the southern side of the San Pablo Creek watershed with a road leading into Lafayette. A franchise was granted to a group of developers who in turn passed it on to another group. The proposal stalled until the turn of the century.

In May 1897, a barbecue was held at the William Buckley house located on Tunnel Road. It was attended by representatives of both counties. Subscriptions were sold to fund the tunnel. (The house was razed in 1935 to make room for the East Portal of the Broadway Low Level Tunnel.)

The cost of tunnel construction was to be equally shared by the two counties. The survey showed three-fifths of the work would be located on the Contra Costa side. Alameda County refused to pay for work not in its district. The Merchant Exchange of Oakland raised the needed \$15,000, and the project resumed.

Local families set up construction camps at the Buckley Ranch for the tunnel workers. Workers climbed the steep hills to the construction site, where they excavated with picks and shovels. Horses pulled carts on rails to haul out the dirt. Contra Costa County hired day laborers. Alameda County hired a contractor to oversee the work.

The tunnel was located above the current Caldecott Tunnel. The approaches (Old Tunnel Road to the west and Fish Ranch Road to the east) involved steep roads with hairpin turns and dangerous cliffs. The entrance was 320 feet below the summit. The tunnel was 1,040 feet long, 17 feet wide, and built with timber supports. It could barely accommodate two-way traffic.

The route was difficult and dangerous for four-and six-horse teams. Hay wagons carrying as much as two tons of hay were sometimes too tall or wide for two-way traffic. Drivers lighted torches or lanterns to alert oncoming drivers.

The tunnel was known as the Broadway Tunnel, for the road that accessed it, or the Kennedy Tunnel, for the old toll road and farm near the west portal.

The bore was completed, although unpaved, un-lit, and prone to mudslides. It was formally turned over to the Supervisors of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in November 1903. Dignitaries from both counties attended opening ceremonies. A large audience attended literary exercises in Idora Park.

Electricity was brought to the tunnel in 1914. Light poles were added at the enterances. Workers changed light bulbs while standing atop hay wagons as they moved through the tunnel.

Frank Enos purchased property near the east portal of the tunnel from Henry Buckley in 1918. The land included facilities for food and fuel. When the Shell Oil Company came to routinely paint the gas pumps "Shell Oil yellow", Enos convinced the Company to also paint the building. The building became known as Canary Cottage. He also made a deal with the power company. He would care for the lights in the tunnel in exchange for lights at Canary Cottage. The walls of the tunnel were initially white washed for improved visibility.

In February 1929 three and four foot icicles developed from seepage from the roof of the Kennedy Tunnel - an amazing sight.

A \$300 surplus from funds that had been raised by subscription had been in a trust for 30 years. It had grown to \$900. It could be spent only on the tunnel project. A triangular plot of ground in front of the Oakland portal was purchased and a flagpole was erected.

By the early 1930's, more than 4,000 vehicles traveled through the narrow tunnel each day. It offered a faster and safer route between the two counties and easier access to San Francisco.

The Kennedy Tunnel marker, located near Tunnel Road close to the west portal above the current Caldecott Tunnel is all that remains. The tunnel was replaced by the new Lower Level tunnel and closed to traffic in 1937. It was used to store munitions during WWII. The Kennedy Tunnel collapsed in 1948 and was filled in to provide for public safety.

The Kennedy tunnel had improved access between Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, but the steep approaches and narrow width made travel difficult..

(Continued on Page 3)

# The Sales Table — Nancy Ramsey

(Nancy Ramsey)

Packets of cards depicting Mount Diablo, Front Street, Southern Pacific Depot, Tassajara School, "Grand Dames" of San Ramon, Alamo Grammar School 1876, and a collection of assorted historical scenes are available. Each packet contains 8 cards and 8 envelopes. Member price - \$3.50 per packet. Historic scene postcards are \$0.20 each.

Do stop by the Sales Table.

Need a Ride  
To The Society Meeting  
On March 20th?  
Contact Bill Lloyd.

Visit — [SRVHistoricalSociety.org](http://SRVHistoricalSociety.org)

**R E C O R D**

Published by  
San Ramon Valley Historical Society  
Founded 1970  
P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

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### Member's Memorial Gift

NAMES HONORED BY MEMORIAL AND COMMEMORATIVE GIFTS, AND NAMES OF DONORS, ARE ENTERED IN A BOOK OF MEMORY AND WILL BE PLACED IN OUR MUSEUM. For tax purposes, we are a non-profit organization. You may make your donation to the Society or to the Museum — Please check box, below.

Make check to: San Ramon Valley Historical Society Memorial Fund.  
 Mail to: SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526  
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## Dinner Reservations

\$20.00 per person

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO S.R.V.H.S. (Deadline March 17, 2014)  
 Mail to: S.R.V.H.S., P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Thursday, March 19, 7 p.m.

San Ramon Royal Vista Golf Clubhouse  
 9430 Fircrest Lane  
 (North off Alcosta Blvd., San Ramon)

## History Of The Caldecott Tunnel (Continued)

The first phase of the tunneling operation consisted of placing three small shafts, called drifts, into the rock.

Workers dug a smaller tunnel known as a heading. Once this top heading had moved some distance into the rock, workers began digging immediately below the floor of the top heading - a bench. An advantage of using this method was that engineers could use the heading tunnel to gauge the stability of the rock before moving forward with the project.

Miners digging the new bore holed through on January 9, 1963, nearly 12 hours ahead of schedule. Two charges of dynamite blasted out nine inches of sandstone inside the pilot drift along side the main bore of the tunnel. Ronald Payne, one of the miners who had bored 3,300 feet from the opposite side of the tunnel, could barely reach through to shake the hands of the men opposite him.

Ventilation was needed to provide fresh air to remove the explosive gases (methane), other noxious gases, and blast fumes. An exterior ventilating plant used forced draft through pipes with booster fans at intervals to accomplish this.

Small cross tunnels, called adits, connect the tunnels at three locations. The adits were used for safety during construction and are used for tunnel maintenance and emergency operation now. The three adits connect the third bore to the second bore,

More than 100,000 tons of concrete were poured into the third bore. It took about nine months to pour the arched roof, sides, roadway, and ceiling of the 3,300 foot bore. Contractors leased special concrete holding equipment and guns to pour the arched roof and tunnel walls. The guns pumped a high pressure blast of air behind a 2.5 ton batch of concrete. This pushed the mixture up through pipes leading to the arched top.

After the tunnel construction was complete, the walls and ceiling of the third bore were tiled with five acres of "sea foam" green tiles. The previous two bores had not been tiled due to costs.

On August 18, 1960, the Low Level Tunnel was renamed the Caldecott Tunnel, honoring Thomas E. Caldecott, who played a major role in the planning and implementation of the Broadway Low Level Tunnel. His family was present at the dedication. His widow, Eveline Caldecott, cut the opening tape.

The worst accident in the history of the tunnels occurred just after midnight on April 7, 1982 in the third bore. A woman driving westbound lost control of her car and struck the wall. Traffic slowed when she got out of her car to inspect the damage. However, a high speeding tanker truck, carrying gasoline, struck the car. A bus following the truck hit the car and the tanker. The lone bus driver was ejected from his vehicle and killed. The empty bus continued on and crashed near the tunnel exit.

The tanker truck began leaking gasoline and was unable to move. The driver was able to escape the tunnel. Small fires started around the leaks. Gasoline continued to run into the drainage system. The downgrade caused the smoke to flow uphill toward oncoming vehicles. About 20 vehicles were able to get out of the bore, but four vehicles were left behind the burning tanker.

Two people died in the initial crash, five were killed by smoke and fire, and two suffered from smoke inhalation. The fire raged for over a half hour, burning about 8,700 gallons of gasoline. The temperature in the tunnel was estimated to reach over 1,800 °F. The tiles and grout in the tunnel were damaged by the intense heat. The tunnel was closed for repairs for several months.

In 1998, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in cooperation with other local agencies, decided to study what could be done to alleviate the traffic congestion that had increased on Highway 24 since the opening of the third bore. Options were investigated in terms of cost and traffic-mitigating potential. The commission decided that adding a fourth bore would help existing and future reverse-commute and weekend traffic congestion at the tunnel.

State and local officials participated in the ground-breaking ceremonies for the fourth bore project on January 20, 2010.

A German-built Wirth road header - Ti was shipped from Europe to the Port of Oakland via the Panama Canal. Ti was able to excavate faster and more safely than many miners working by hand.

*(Continued on Page 9*

## History Of The Caldecott Tunnel (Continued)

In 1926, Alameda County, Contra Costa County, and the City of Oakland formed a joint commission to study the feasibility of a tunnel at a lower elevation. By 1929, the two counties had organized the Joint Highway District No. 13.

In November 1931, the directors of Joint Highway District 13 submitted plans for the Temescal Creek Route to the boards of supervisors of the two counties and to the state director of public works. The route of the tunnel and approaching highways were designed with direct approaches, easy grades, and fewer curves.

On the recommendation of Charles Derluth Jr., a civil and consulting engineer at UC Berkeley, the proposed tunnel would consist of twin horseshoe -shaped bores. Each would provide two lanes, meet requirements for ventilation equipment, and which provide an arch that would best fit the lines of stress.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new Low-Level Tunnel were held on June 17, 1934. A crowd estimated at 6,500 saw Governor Frank F. Merriam, assisted by Earl Lee Kelley, state director of public works, and Alameda County Supervisor Thomas E. Caldecott, Chairman of Joint Highway District No. 13, turn the first earth with a silver spade to formally launch work on the project. The name of President Franklin D. Roosevelt was listed on the program as guest of honor. He did not attend.

The Low-Level Tunnel project was one of the first major projects of the Public Works Administration (PWA) of President Roosevelt's New Deal. The project provided employment for many out of work men during the Depression, including carpenters, miners, laborers, teamsters, and surveyors.

After repeatedly being turned down for a job on the tunnel and being told Irish miners were preferred, miner Jim Silva, went to the Oakland City Hall and legally changed his name to Sullivan. He was hired. Edgar Baugh was a foreman on the Low-Level Tunnel construction.

Six Companies of California began construction in late 1934. The job was advertised again when, with 68 percent of the work completed, the company fell behind schedule. The George Pollock Company won the bid to complete the tunnel lining, pave the road, build the ceiling, install ventilation and electrical systems, and finish the detail work on the portal buildings.

The first phase of construction involved clearing the hillside and grading on the Oakland side. The lower location meant a shorter climb but a greater distance for tunneling.

The main part of the project was to be two parallel, concrete-lined tunnels, each about 3,000 feet long, one for eastbound travel and the other for westbound. Each had a 22-foot roadway with two traffic lanes and a three-foot sidewalk. Both ends had four-lane approaches.

Jumbos (work bridges) were used in the tunnel construction. They were run on tracks in both tunnel bores. Scaffolding was used to support the excavation. Wood timbers, metal ribs, and laggings were used to prepare for the installation of steel forms around which the concrete lining of the tunnel was pumped and sprayed to reinforce the excavation- some up to seven feet thick. Construction cars on tracks delivered the concrete from the mixing plant. to the inside of the tunnel. A pipe pushed fresh air into the tunnel.

On August 28, 1935, the north bore of the tunnel caved in 250 feet from the western portal, killing three men. A week earlier, Six Companies, Inc., had laid off 600 men for fear of a cave-in. The contractor had notified the directors of Joint Highway District No. 13 that he thought the tunnel design faulty because of the unknown type and instability of the ground being tunneled.

Rescue crews drove tunnels from both sides in the north bore in an effort to reach the three men trapped in the cave-in. Emergency repairs were being made to the timbering 250 feet from the west portal of the north tunnel shaft when a boulder tore from the roof and plunged through the scaffolding. The three victims were buried beneath tons of earth and rock.

The hole (sink) on the hillside caused by the downgrade tunnel cave-in was 100 feet in circumference and 15 feet deep. It indicated a complete collapse of the bore.

It was estimated that over 120,000 barrels of concrete, 2,500 tons of reinforcing steel and 1,000 tons of steel structural frames were used. In addition, more than 700,000 square yards of eight-inch oiled macadam pavement was used to complete the job.

*(Continued on Page 4*

## History Of The Caldecott Tunnel (Continued)

Light transition structures, consisting of overhead louvers that prevent sunlight from falling on the roadway, were constructed at the approaches. The structures allow time for the human eye to adjust to the transition between artificial lighting in the tunnels and the direct sunlight outside.

The tunnel formally opened and was turned over to the California Division of Highways on November 13, 1937. Its completion coincided with the opening of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. These made for a more direct and convenient commute by car between Contra Costa County and Oakland and San Francisco.

Thousands of people lined the hill at the west portal to witness the dedication ceremony on December 5, 1937. For two hours, more than 10,000 motorists backed up to Broadway and College Avenues to drive through the new bore.

Alameda County Supervisor Thomas Caldecott and California Governor Frank Merriam were among the dignitaries who attended the tunnel dedication after breakfast at the Claremont Hotel. As Merriam finished the first part of his speech at the western portal, he touched a switch that set off a charge to break through a barricade concealing the mouth of the tunnel. Artificial chunks of granite fell away, revealing the entrance to the tunnel.

A wreath was laid at the tunnel entrance on behalf of the miners' union for the men killed constructing the tunnel. A moment of silence was observed while a bugler played "Taps".

Following speeches at the east portal, more than 4,000 motorists proceeded west through the tunnel in the first hour it was open.

Nancy Borgeson was the first baby to ride through the tunnel. In 1903, her grandmother Gertrude McNeil was the first woman to drive through the Kennedy Tunnel.

Henry Meyers was the architect for Joint Highway District No. 13. Meyers had worked with George Posey on the Posey Tube, where he had first used Art Deco ornamentation. Meyers designed the portal buildings and approaches. His decorative detailing on the Broadway Low Level tunnel is shown in the reinforced concrete medallions as well as other parts of the tunnel. The same four medallions appear on the faces of the two tunnel portals.

With the opening of the tunnel, East Bay residents purchased property in Contra Costa County. Oakland realtor Fred Wood reported that he sold seven home sites in his Moraga Woodlands development in one day. In 1938, half-acre to five-acre lots were available at a beginning price of \$1,000.

In the post war era of the 1950's, the state made improvements to Highway 75 (later Highway 24) at the approach to the tunnel. The road changed from a two-lane road to a four lane freeway. As the population of the cities east of the tunnel increased, so did the number of cars using the tunnel.

Construction on the third bore began in November, 1961 about 150 feet north of the second bore of the original tunnel; this bore was designed to be larger than the two preceding tunnels. The state made sure there was ample land available should a fourth bore need to be constructed in the future.

The third bore was completed in October 1964. The new tunnel had a 28-foot roadway with a four-foot sidewalk to the right of traffic and a 2.5 foot curb on the left. It had a 17 feet of vertical clearance.

The third bore cost nearly \$25million, more than twice the cost of the original two bores. The middle bore was then used to accommodate commute-direction traffic in mornings and evenings. Pop-up barriers were added when the center bore's direction was changed.

By 1958, the State of California had approved an eight-lane freeway from the Eastshore freeway to the Broadway Low Lever Tunnel. The Grove-Shafter Freeway was to be six miles in length and help accommodate traffic loads - estimated to be over 54,000 vehicles per day by the 1960's.

Noticeable changes between the two initial bores and the proposed 1959 third bore were a wider roadway, additional edge and sidewalk space, increased height of bore as well as ceiling height, and an improved ventilation system. These changes were to accommodate vehicle size, increased traffic, and to improve safety.

Before work could start, more than 400,000 cubic yards of material needed to be moved. The excavated material at the east end went into the detour prior to driving into the tunnel.

The power plant that supplied electricity for the construction of the third bore was located near the western portal. Electricity supplied by PGE ran compressors to furnish air to pneumatic drills, shovels, concrete mixers, and saws and charged batteries for cars that hauled equipment.

*(Continued on Page 6*

## In Memoriam



**Lois Ann Gompertz**

June 11, 1918 - February 24, 2015

Resident of Danville



Lois Ann Gompertz, the eldest of four children of Louie and Anita Kamp, peacefully passed away on February 24 at the age of 96. She will be reunited with her beloved husband of 66 years, Malcolm A. Gompertz who preceded her in death in 2005 at the age of 91 and her son, Thomas A. Gompertz, who died at the age of 27 serving on special assignment for the State Department in Viet Nam. Lois is survived by her son, Michael Gompertz and his fiancée, Virginia Lukkes of Alamo, daughter, Ann Pons and son-in-law, Gene of Pleasanton and her sister, Shirley Geraths and sister-in-law, Regina Kamp. Lois was also a loving grandmother to three grandchildren, Matthew Simmons (Cyndi), Max and Alexandra Gompertz and two great grandchildren, Cole and Carly Simmons, along with numerous nieces and nephews all who still live in the area.

As the fourth generation of the Livermore/Pleasanton/Danville Kamp family, Lois spent most of her life on the family farm that is on Old Blackhawk Road. She graduated from San Ramon Valley High School and Heald College. Lois' grandparents and parents were all local farmers and businessmen in the area. Like them, Lois' motto in life – "Just get going, get it done; there's nothing you can't do – and look at the positive!" characterizes the spirit by which she lived her life, raised her family and shared with all those that she cared about – and which today is passed on to all her family for their lives as well. Her many close friends from golf, tennis, bridge, church and her travels were all very important to Lois. She loved her family and friends...but most of all, her 67 year marriage to her sweetheart and husband, Malcolm. May God now take her to him and her son.

Family and friends are invited to a Celebration of Lois's 96 wonderful years. This will take place on Sunday, March 15 at 11:00 am at Crow Canyon Country Club. Memorial contributions are preferred to Hospice of the East Bay, 3470 Buskirk Ave., Pleasant Hill, CA 94523.

Contra Costa Times, March 1, 2015.

## Museum News

**January 24 - March 14, 2015, Wedding Gowns Through the Ages.**

The Freight Room features selected bridal gowns. The Baggage Room has become a photo gallery of brides. The Waiting Room showcases wedding accessories worn by brides and their guests. Included in the exhibit are wedding mementos, favorite gifts, and interactive displays for adults and children.

**March 19 - May 1, 2015: Abraham Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War, an American Association Traveling Exhibit.**

— Several Special Events Enrich The Exhibit —

**March 17, 2015** - Opening address by Justice George Nicholson: "Lincoln's Living Legacy: Solitude, Service, and Sacrifice" at 7 p.m. in the San Ramon Valley High School Performing Arts Center, 501 Danville Blvd., Danville (south end of campus next to Love Lane parking lot).

**March 30, 2015** – Address by UC Davis Professor Vikram Amar: "President Lincoln and the Scope of Executive Power" at 7 pm in the Danville Community Center, 420 Front St. Danville. Co-sponsor: Danville Library.

**April 14, 2015** – "A Noble Oak Has Fallen" – a commemoration of the life and legacy of Lincoln on the 150th anniversary of his assassination at 7 pm in the Danville Library, 400 Front St., Danville. Civil War music, Civil War re-enactors, a dramatic performance of "Our American Cousin", the ringing words of Lincoln, and poetry celebrating his life.

The National Constitution Center and the American Library Association Public Programs Office organized the exhibit with the help of a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): great ideas brought to life. The traveling exhibition is based on an exhibition of the same name developed by the National Constitution Center.

The Museum of the San Ramon Valley is located on the southwest corner of Prospect and Railroad Avenues [P.O. Box 39, Danville, CA, 94526, (925) 837-3750]. Hours: 1-4 pm Tuesday-Friday, 10 am.-1 pm. Saturday.

**A trained docent is on duty during Museum hours.** Docents provide tours of the exhibits. Reserved tours are available by special arrangement. Large groups are encouraged to call ahead.

**For Town of Danville tours, please call Eve/Donna at the museum at (925) 837-3750**

The information above was taken from the Museum's informative website, [www.museumsvr.org](http://www.museumsvr.org).

