

**Museum News** Upcoming Exhibits and Walking Tours

2014 Exhibits

August 23 - November 8: Indian Life

November 18 - January 3: Christmas Memories

Walking Tours:

Town of Danville Tours

To schedule a tour, please contact Eve/Donna at the museum at 837-3750.

General

When the Museum is open, a trained docent is always on duty and can provide exhibit tours for visitors who drop in. Reserved tours are available during open or closed hours by appointment. Large groups are encouraged to call ahead to assure that a docent is available specifically for your group.

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, Noon - 3 pm Sunday.

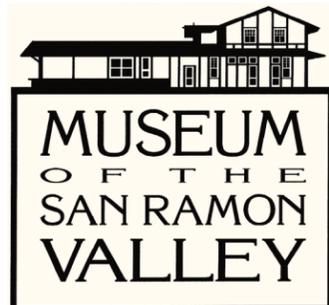
The information above was taken from the Museum's informative website, [www.museumsvr.org](http://www.museumsvr.org).

On September 10, 2014, the Museum of the San Ramon Valley presented a program honoring the Tassajara One Room School. Jan Berckefeldt, President of the Museum Board of Directors, presided.

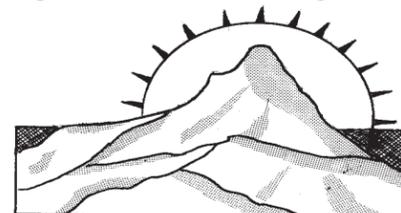
Betty Casey introduced ten former students who were present for the festivities: Elaine Bettencourt Dodson, Arnold Caldeira, Katsumi Hikido, Betty Mattos Casey, Kristine Neilsen Clausen, Janet Reinstein Rego, Laura Reinstein Larsen, Claudia Rasmussen Juhl, Gordon Rasmussen, Nancy Rasmussen Ramsey.

Remarks were made by Jennifer Quallick (Field assistant for Contra Costa County Supervisor Mary Piepho), Contra Costa Supervisor Candice Anderson, San Ramon Historical Society President Karen Stepper, Danville Mayor Robert Storer, and San Ramon Mayor Bill Clarkson. The new National Register of Historic Places Plaque was unveiled.

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



**SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



November 2014

ALAMO · BLACKHAWK · DANVILLE · DIABLO · SAN RAMON

**Great Stories Of John Muir's Early Years, Yosemite, His Great Writing Discussed At Our September Meeting**

Jim MacDonald has been with the National Park Service for 22 years. He is the Lead Ranger for the John Muir Historic Site in Martinez and the Port Chicago National Historic site. He spoke to the group on the life of John Muir.

John Muir was born on April 21, 1838, in Dunbar, Scotland. He died on December 24, 1914 in Los Angeles. His parents were Daniel Muir and Ann Gilrye. Daniel was a merchant. John was the third of eight children: Margaret, Sarah, John, David, Daniel, Ann and Mary (twins), and Joanna.

While growing up, John and his family lived across the street from his grandfather. John's grandfather enjoyed hiking and the out-of-doors. He often took John with him and nurtured his growing love of the out-of-doors.

John's father was extremely strict with his children. He required the children to memorize the New Testament of the Bible. If any child were ignorant of some part, he received a thrashing. John was gifted with a photographic memory, a great help!

Daniel was a successful merchant. He became radical for the time. He felt the government was too autocratic.

One evening while the children were doing their homework at their grandparents, Daniel entered and announced the children were to put their homework away. He, John, and Sarah were sailing from Glasgow for America in the morning. Ann and the rest of the children would come later. His wife had nothing to say about the decision.

Daniel, John, and Sarah arrived in New York, visited friends near Buffalo, and learned that land was available in northern Wisconsin. They settled on a farm near Portage, Wisconsin.

John and Sarah cleared fields, planted crops, and worked on the farm from sun up to sun down. There was no time for school. John was about 12 years old. The children got Sunday afternoons off. John discovered the Native Americans living in the area.

When John's mother and the other children joined the family John received help and encouragement from his mother. Ann allowed him to stay up late at night to read and study. John was mechanically minded and excelled in math. He began creating things.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

*Over 44 Years Looking Back!*

**First Class Mail**



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

**NEXT MEETING  
THURSDAY,  
NOVEMBER 20TH  
HISTORICAL MARTINEZ**

**Many Interesting, Historic Facts About Our County Seat, Martinez: The Topic Our November 20th Dinner Meeting**

We continue our tour of historic places in November with a stop at Martinez. As our county seat and in 1891 as the terminus of the Southern Pacific San Ramon Valley Branch Line Railroad, Martinez has long been important to people living in the San Ramon Valley. With its face to the Sacramento River which flowed out into San Francisco Bay, Martinez was a natural port. Valley ranchers used to ship their crops to markets even as far away as Liverpool, England.

Andrea Blachman, President of the Martinez Historical Society, shares her deep understanding of Martinez with us on Thursday, November 20, 2014. She has important stories to tell that you do not want to miss.

The meeting will be held at the San Ramon Golf Club, 9430 Fircrest Lane, San Ramon. We will gather at 6:30 pm, eat at 7:00 pm, and enjoy our speaker. We hope to see you there.

### Great Stories Of John Muir (Continued)

A neighbor mentioned the upcoming state fair in Madison, Wisconsin and encouraged John to take his inventions.

John was 20 years old when his first train ride took him to Madison. He set up a booth. People loved his inventions. He made the front page of the newspaper. This experience led John to attend the University of Wisconsin.

At age 22, John enrolled in the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He paid his own way for several years. As a freshman, John studied chemistry with Ezra Carr and his wife, Jeanne.

They took John under their wing. Jeanne taught him botany, and Ezra taught him geology. They spent time together in the field identifying plants. The Carrs were extremely important through out John's life.

In 1863, to avoid the draft, John's brother Daniel went to Canada where he worked in a saw mill. John left the university and joined him. John improved the efficiency of the machines. His free time was spent exploring the woods and swamps around Lake Huron.

John was not a hiker. He liked to saunter and take time to observe his surroundings. A hiker moved too fast.

In March, 1866, John settled in Indianapolis to work as a sawyer in a wagon wheel factory. While at work, an object flew off the machine and hit one of his eyes. After about two months his sight gradually returned.

John had decided what he wanted to do with his life and no one was going to stop him. He was going to explore and study plants. He went to Wisconsin to inform his parents. He found his father very ill.

Soon after the Civil War, in September 1867, John walked from Indianapolis to Florida, about 1,000 miles. It was a dangerous time. Most people chased him off their property. Former slaves took him in. He slept in graveyards.

John arrived at Cedar Keys and found work at Hodgson's saw mill. Three days later he suffered another malaria attack.

One day in January, 1868, he spotted the Island Belle at the dock. The ship was bound for Cuba. He boarded and sailed to Havana. While in Cuba he spent hours studying shells and flowers and visiting the botanical gardens. He was interested in seeing the Amazon, but another malaria attack deterred him.

When John saw a flyer encouraging people to go to San Francisco, he sailed to New York and boarded a ship to San Francisco. He got off the boat and walked to Yosemite Valley.

In Yosemite, John worked as a sheep herder. He felt the sheep were ruining the mountains by eating the grasses.

John found work in a saw mill. The mill sawed trees that had already fallen. He found this acceptable.

His next job was in a hotel.

In 1864, Yosemite had become a California State Park. Lumbering and sheep herding continued. Park supervision was poor.

John spent about four years in Yosemite. He continued writing to Jeanne Carr. Ezra was now a professor at UC Berkeley. Jeanne edited some of his letters and submitted them to a monthly magazine where they were published. John received payment and notoriety.

Soon people were going to Yosemite. Landscape artist William Keats visited and painted many pictures. Politicians and others wanted to meet John Muir and visit Yosemite. Ralph Waldo Emerson invited him to teach at Harvard. John did not want to leave Yosemite.

John often traveled to the Bay area where he stayed with John and Mary Swett. John Muir did not have a permanent home.

John's friends pressured him to return to society. Soon after he returned to the Oakland area in 1878, Jeanne Carr introduced John to Louisa Strentzel, daughter of a prominent physician and horticulturist. After he returned from a trip to Alaska, John and Louisa were married on April 14, 1880. John was about 42 and Louisa was 34. For the next 10 years, John spent his time managing the Strentzel 2,600 acre fruit orchard in Martinez.

(Continued on Page 3)

### The Sales Table — 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..

### Correction

In the September 2014 newsletter, George Paras's name is misspelled on page 1, paragraph 1 and on page 10 paragraph 3. The newsletter shown on www.SRVhistoricalsociety.org has been corrected. We apologize for this error.



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

OFFICERS  
Karen Stepper *President*  
Jerry Warren *Vice President*  
Kathy Halverson *Secretary*  
Frances Lloyd *Treasurer*

DIRECTORS  
Lee Halverson  
Steve Larmore  
Bill Lloyd  
Jean Mello  
Judith Sandkhule

### 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  
This contribution to the Society REMEMBERS ( ), HONORS ( ),  
EXPRESSES APPRECIATION ( ), OTHER ( ). Please check one. This Donation for:  
 SRVHS  MSRV

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DONOR(S): Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE NOTIFY: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Dinner Reservations

**Thursday,  
November 20, 7 p.m.**

\$20.00 per person

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

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO S.R.V.H.S. (Deadline November 19, 2014)  
Mail to: S.R.V.H.S., P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

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

\_\_\_\_\_

## Great Stories Of John Muir (Continued)

Muir was the first one down to the waterfront when ships arrived to buy fruit. He used the best boxes for packaging.

The ranch was successful. The Muir's were well off. Dr. Strentzel died on October 31, 1890. The Muir family moved into the big house. They were never comfortable in this house, especially John. John took over the second floor, where he worked on his writing.

Louisa lived with the family. She died in 1897. Louisa inherited all the property.

Louisa decided that John should stop managing the ranch. They had sufficient money. She wanted John to return to exploring, writing, and sharing his adventures.

John went back east, contacted Daniel, and offered him a job managing the ranch. Daniel accepted and moved into the ranch house.

John Muir needed to write. But he hated it. He was easily distracted. He worked upstairs isolated from the house activities. He wrote over 300 magazine articles and 21 books. When he was really distracted, he would go to his San Francisco studio apartment.

Teddy Roosevelt played a very important role in John Muir's life and the life of Yosemite. Teddy knew of John and had read many of his writings. Teddy invited John to meet him in Yosemite and go camping with him. John told Louisa that he did not think he should. Louisa said he must. Teddy was the President of the United States.

John and TR camped for three nights in 1903. TR left all of his security behind. They made their beds on branches. They sat around the campfire and talked. John made sure TR saw the giant sequoias.

At that time Yosemite was a State Park run by California. John showed TR how the park was being destroyed. John encouraged TR to make Yosemite a National Park so that it would receive better protection. Yosemite became a National Park in 1906. Buffalo Soldiers from the San Francisco Presidio were the first park rangers in Yosemite. Logging and sheep grazing were stopped.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 was passed during Teddy Roosevelt's term. The federal legislation gave the President power to declare qualifying places as National Monuments without the further approval of Congress. This act was used to save the Grand Canyon, found Mt. Rainer National Park, the Petrified Forest National Park, and Sequoia National Park.

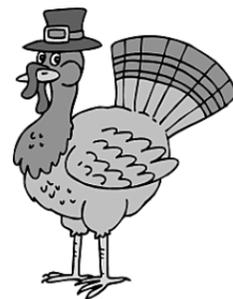
Teddy Roosevelt also became involved in National Parks projects - Devil's Post Pile, Muir Woods National Monument. John had not been to this area when Roosevelt chose to name Muir Woods for him. TR was the National Park Service. John Muir is remembered as the father of the National Park Service.

Louisa died in 1905. John was heartbroken. He stayed in the house about a year then traveled around the world. He traveled to Chile to see a tree native to the Andes.

By 1914, Wanda Muir had married Tom Hanna. They and their five children lived in the Martinez Adobe. Tom managed the ranch. Due to respiratory problems Helen Muir Funk had moved to Daggett in the Southern California desert. John was visiting Helen for the Christmas holidays when he contracted pneumonia. Helen and her husband put John on the train to send him back to Martinez. John died in Los Angeles on Christmas Eve, 1914. John was 76.

After John's death, the Muir daughters and their families were no longer interested in ranching. They sold off parcels of land. The 17 room house was boarded up and put for auction. A Martinez couple bought the house and hoped to restore it. Over time the house became too much for them. The John Muir Association was formed. The Association lobbied Congress to establish the John Muir National Historic Site. The National Historic Site was approved by Congress in 1964. The house was opened to the public in 1968.

*Happy Thanksgiving*



## Great Stories Of John Muir (Continued)

Jim told a bit about the Strentzel family: Dr. John Strentzel was born in Poland on November 29, 1813. In 1830, there was an uprising against the Russians in Poland. John Strentzel and his brother Henry fled to Hungary. John earned his medical degree then studied horticulture. The brothers decided to go to the United States. They arrived in New Orleans and soon moved on to Texas. They built a cabin within a colony. The colony went bankrupt. The brothers moved to the area now Dallas where John met Louisiana Erwin. They were married in 1849. John and Louisiana joined a wagon train bound for California. John served as the doctor on the journey.

The diary of this trip tells of their experiences. They ran out of water. They were attacked. They crossed the desert. Cattle died. People died.

The wagon train made it to San Diego. The town was full of people and wagon trains. John and Henry went north and founded a hotel and store at Le Grande. It was a successful venture. But John's love of horticulture won. They sold the hotel and store and started farming along the Merced River. Illness and flooding forced them to move again. They went to Benicia, scouted the area, and settled in the Alhambra Valley. In 1853 they bought 20 acres of land. They eventually owned 2,600 acres.

John and Louisiana's first daughter died when she was five months old. Their son, Charles, died when 9 years old. Their third child, Louisa, survived to adulthood.

John Strentzel organized a grange to the benefit of the ranchers in the area. Ranchers were able to cut out the middle man. John Strentzel started the Martinez library. He had a positive influence on the community.

Dr. Strentzel purchased land from his neighbor and built a 17 room Victorian house on the knoll that adjoined the Strentzel ranch and ranch house. The cistern in the attic is still there. It stored rain water or was filled with water pumped by windmills. It had indoor plumbing and toilets. Each room had a fireplace. John and Louisiana and a Chinese cook lived in the house.

In 1880, Dr Strentzel retired from farming. John Muir took over and managed the Strentzel ranch.

Jim returned to the story of John Muir.

John and Louisa Muir had two daughters, Wanda, born March 21, 1881 and Helen, born January 23, 1886. The Muir family lived in the near by ranch house.

Muir decided that they needed to limit the number of different crops grown on the ranch. Bartlett pears, cherries, apricots peaches, and some end of season berries did very well. John concentrated on these crops

He worked hard on the ranch. From time to time Louisa would accuse him of getting low altitude sickness. She would send him to the Sierra's or the Mt. Shasta area. He felt stronger when he returned.

Muir was a good business man. When the railroad asked for a right-of-way through the property, he agreed, but wanted - and got - free passage for each member of the family for their lifetime.

John Muir headed the Grange for many years.

When railroad construction stopped, Chinese workers came to the valleys to work on ranches. Pay was typically \$1 to \$1.50 a day.

*(Continued on Page 6)*



**Karen Stepper,  
Jim MacDonald,  
and Jerry Warren**

## We Learned Much Information About treasure Island Before Our Group's Tour On October 10th

Uri Eliahu, President, of ENEGO, spoke to SRVHS tour group prior to its trip to Treasure Island on October 10, 2014.

Treasure Island is a man made island built on fill. It is connected to Yorba Buena Island by a short causeway. The 1930 technology was lacking, particularly in the area of seismic vulnerabilities. Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island sit between the two largest faults on the North American continent.

ENEGO is currently in the final phase of the first design for Treasure Island. Work on the design began in 2003. Thus far no dirt has been turned.

Of the hundreds of buildings on the island only three, the horseshoe shaped administration building and two large hangers, are considered historic and will be preserved. A Job Corps training facility occupies the center portion of the island. It will remain and be operational during construction activity. The existing school will remain.

Treasure Island is about 400 plus acres. The proposed footprint for development of Treasure Island is about 75 acres and L shaped. A 100 plus yard wide park will be on the perimeter of the island. The remaining area will be open space. It is intended to be a walk able community

Ferry service will be available to San Francisco from a new ferry terminal. Buses will run to the east bay and San Francisco.

The housing development is very ambitious. Over 8,000 dwelling units will accommodate a population of about 20,000 people. At one time Treasure Island had over 40,000 residents. Plans include multi storied buildings.

A major hotel, destination retail, and the reuse of the hangers and the horseshoe building are planned. There will be residential living above the ground floor retail facilities - a very urban type of development.

The tallest of the buildings will be near the ferry terminal. There will be 20 to 30 story buildings in other neighborhoods.

Streets will be laid out on the diagonal. This minimizes wind exposure and maximizes solar exposure. Solar equipment will be on the building skins or configured unlike today's solar panels.

The Loma Prieta earthquake lateral force was about .12 g (acceleration of gravity) 120 kilometers away from the island. Current design on the island is for .65g. The road is public and is the responsibility of the City of San Francisco. If an earthquake of .65g happened today on the island, the road would disappear. It would spread out into the Bay. Ferries and boats would be a method of evacuation.

Yerba Buena Island is also part of this development project. Most existing housing units will be replaced with new ones. The south side of the island will remain open space. The Coast Guard station and historic buildings including the admiral's house will remain. A new off ramp from the Bay Bridge is under construction.

The support structure for the new Bay Bridge was designed by ENEGO .

Before Treasure Island was created, there was a natural sand shoal. Sand had blown in from the Marin Headlands through the Golden Gate and had deposited against Yerba Buena Island. At low tide, the deposit was visible, but was submerged at high tide.

To build Treasure Island, rocks were placed on the floor of the Bay. A parameter dyke was installed. About 27 million cubic yards of sand and water mixture were pumped from the Bay floor and dumped over the rocks behind the dyke. This dyke, sand, and rock process was repeated until the desired island elevation was reached.

Later more rock was installed around the island to protect it from wave action. This information came from the original construction document dated March, 1936.

Treasure Island was built to be the new San Francisco International Airport but first it was the site of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition. The horseshoe shaped building was to be the new airport terminal. The control tower was atop the building.

In 1941 when the U.S.A. entered WWII, the Navy decided that Treasure Island was a better site for them than the site they had, the then much smaller San Francisco International Airport location. The Navy and the City of San Francisco conducted a land swap.

In 1987, the Army Corps of Engineers decided a particular point on the island did not meet current standards. Another layer of heavy rock including big boulders was added, and still exists.

ENEGO believes that this action saved Treasure Island from greater damage during the Loma Prieta earthquake. Without the additional layer, some of the island might well have flowed into the Bay. Treasure Island dropped about 6 inches during the Loma Prieta earthquake.

Treasure Island has about 50 feet of sand on the bay mud. Bay mud is compressible clay and a natural deposit found over much of the Bay. Underneath the bay mud is stiffer clay that is suitable for foundations.

On the part of Treasure Island where the bay mud is thin, the island has settled more than 3 feet over the years. Where the mud is thick (north end of the island away from Yerba Buena), 6.5-7 foot settlement has occurred. This area is prone to flood. The island will be re-leveled.

The horseshoe building is about 13 feet above sea level. A goal for the entire island is 12.1 feet above sea level.

Combining all the possible weather situations (storm surge, high tide, wave run up, and tsunami from the Aleutian Islands in Alaska), the highest Bay water condition that would occur in a 100 year cycle could get up to 9.1 feet above sea level. A three foot allowance above that is planned.

A 3 foot rise in sea level could occur in between 80 to 15,000 years. Funding and space to elevate the perimeter is included in the project.

Squeezing the water out of the bay mud so that it doesn't settle anymore is necessary. Supplying man-made fill that doesn't liquefy during an earthquake is necessary. A complex program for static and dynamic densification will be used to create a stable building platform that won't require special foundations. The strategy is to spend the money improving the ground so that building designs can be conventional. Buildings over 5-6 stories are going to have very deep foundations.

Who pays for what? Today the Federal Government owns Treasure Island. Before work is begun, the island will be annexed into San Francisco. The land will then go to the developer. An organization similar to a redevelopment agency, Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA), is the body for this activity.

Under the legislation that provides for decommissioning of military facilities, the Federal Government designates a local reuse authority. San Francisco was chosen. TIDA will manage this project. TIDA conducted a search and qualification based contest - not price based - to form a development consortium that would partner with San Francisco for this project. Such a consortium was chosen. San Francisco's wish list consisted mostly of 2,000 units of affordable housing (included in 8,000 housing units desired by the consortium). After all of the items in the project are identified, the developer and San Francisco will negotiate with the Navy for the acquisition of the land. The price is not set at the outset.



**View from the outside  
of the Control Tower**