

Museum News Upcoming Exhibits and Walking Tours

2014 Exhibits

August 23 - November 8: Indian Life

November 18 - January 3: Christmas Memories

2014 Walking Tours:

Fridays at 6:15 (third Friday of each month)

Meet at the Village Theatre

Led by Town Council Member Karen Stepper

September 19 and October 17

Saturdays at 10am (second Saturday of each month)

Meet at the Museum

September 13 and October 11

Reservations are required for the tours.

Please contact the museum at 837-3750 within 2 days of the tour to reserve your spot.

A \$4 donation/person is requested.

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].

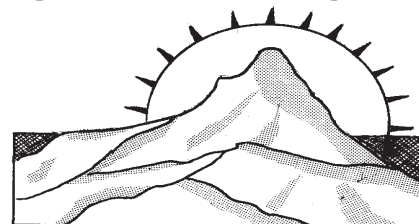
Hours: 1-4 pm Tuesday-Friday, 10 am.-1 pm. Saturday, Noon - 3 pm Sunday.

The information above was taken from the Museum's informative website, www.museumsv.org

Need a Ride To The Society Meeting On September 18th? Contact Bill Lloyd: 837-9382.



SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



September 2014

ALAMO · BLACKHAWK · DANVILLE · DIABLO · SAN RAMON

Photographs Of The "Pageant Of The Pacific" Staged In 1939 and 1940 Were Shown At Our May Meeting

Elena Paras Noble brought the world of the 1939 Golden Gate Exposition, Pageant of the Pacific to life through photographs taken by her father, George Paras. George Paras was a free lance photographer in the Bay Area in 1939. During WWII, George was in the aerial corps and photographed areas and events in the Pacific. As is common, he never talked about his war experience or the many pictures he brought home. After the war, he opened photographic studios in Oakland, Walnut Creek, and Hayward. Due to health issues, he closed his studios and worked for Brooks Camera in Walnut Creek until he retired.

Elena, a retired fourth grade teacher in the Mount Diablo School District, found over 100 color slides her father had taken of the Pageant. Even though the slides were stored in glass, they were starting to fade. Elena and her friend Gayle had a weekend of serious work. They learned to use Photo Shop, shot over 100 slides, and put them on a disk.

George Paras' pictures told the story of the Golden Gate International Exposition staged in 1939 and 1940. The Fair was to celebrate the connections of San Francisco to the East Bay and to Marin County. The concept of linking Oakland and San Francisco by bridges and a tunnel through Yorba Buena Island (known as Goat Island), was stated in an edict by Emperor Norton dated 17 September 1872! Construction on the Bay Bridge and tunnel began in 1933 and was completed in 1936. Construction of the Golden Gate Bridge began in 1933 and was completed in 1937.

The creation of the island, buildings, and the fair itself created jobs. Many people were out of work due to the Great Depression. President Roosevelt initiated the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to put people to work on United States government funded projects. The goal was to provide work on a government funded project for at least one member of an out of work family. The average worker was paid \$52 a month with some variation depending on the location. Even these jobs were not easy to get.

(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,
SEPTEMBER 18TH
THE LIFE OF JOHN MUIR**

The Life Of John Muir And The John Muir Historic Site Will Be Discussed At Our September 18th Dinner Meeting

When you hear his name, John Muir –you immediately think of his love of the trees and the mountains of the Sierras, Yosemite, and his groundbreaking advocacy of conservation. But here in Contra Costa County he has another claim to fame. In the 1880's John Muir was our leading fruit rancher. He controlled a huge fruit orchard and his business acumen vigorously pressed the leaders of City of Martinez to significantly change the way they did business. Those changes benefited the San Ramon Valley as well.

On September 18, 2014 we resume our tour of historic people and places in the Contra Costa County region. Lead Ranger, Jim MacDonald from the John Muir Historic Site in Martinez will walk us through the life of John Muir. We have a chance to fill in the blanks about this momentous man who lived in our midst. It will be a great learning experience. Make sure you reserve your seat for that night.

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.

Photographs Of The "Pageant Of The Pacific" (Continued)

There were several construction projects in the west, even though the west was not the hardest hit area. People from Oklahoma's dust bowl area were coming to California in search of a new life.

Clipper ships, amphibian airplanes, were landing in San Francisco Bay. The people of San Francisco decided that an airport was needed close to the downtown area. Where better than a man-made island off Yorba Buena Island in San Francisco Bay!

A proposal to receive WPA subsidizing for the project was submitted. The Army Corps of Engineers, the US Navy, the Golden Gate Association, and the WPA became involved in building the island on the shoals next to Yorba Buena Island.

This WPA project provided many jobs. Jobs included construction workers, artists, seamstresses, gardeners, designers, etc. The food business ramped up. Everything was generating economic activity.

On the day the dredging started, the worst storm ever hit San Francisco. That didn't stop the dignitaries. They were splendidly dressed, complete with top hats, as they were rowed to the appointed site. However, the celebration was stopped after the initial ground breaking.

Tons of rocks were brought from Marin County to cover the shoals. As work progressed mammoth bones and human bones were found. Dredging the shoals and adding rock and dirt resulted in an island three miles long and one mile wide, an area of 208 acres.

Plans proceeded for a fair. The theme was to be "Pageant of the Pacific." San Francisco Mayor Rossi dedicated the site. Among others in a picture were Germans in uniform with swastikas and Japanese with a rising sun flag. This event signaled the start of building on the island.

The completed island was covered with bricks that contained salt. The brick surface had to be covered with dirt. It took about four months to put dirt down before planting could begin. Some 40,000 large trees and 400 smaller shrubs and plants were planted. Several thousand flowers were planted. Some 1,200 gardeners were employed in this activity. About 50 cubic yards of gold infested mud representing tailings from the gold fields of the Sierra Nevada Mountains were used to top off the island.

Succulents were featured in the plantings. Many people took snippets of them home. Those snippets were probably the start of many succulents in bay area yards today.

The official name of the fair was The Golden Gate Exposition, Pageant of the Pacific. A shorter name was needed.

The Wizard of Oz and the pirate scene were popular. Robert Louis Stevenson had lived in the area. His popular Treasure Island was published in 1883. Gold was in the surface dirt. The name Treasure Island was adopted.

A ballerina was hired to promote the fair. She toured the United States handing out California oranges and other California products. She dressed as a pirate.

The colors and surfaces of the buildings were controlled.

The Fine Arts Building remains on Treasure Island today. It is behind the Administration Building. Artists from around the world showed their work. Diego Rivera worked on his mural while people watched and artists asked him questions. His work was not yet well known.

The Mines and Minerals Building displayed mining equipment and schematics. Latest products were displayed in the Home and Garden Building.

The U.S. Federal Building featured three columns each representing a branch of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The two primary routes used by California pioneers were depicted. A list of accomplishments made to this WPA project was included. The list included projects done by women as well as men. This was perhaps the first time women were recognized publicly for such a project.

Twelve states had displays. The State of Illinois display featured a statue of Abraham Lincoln.

A statue of a girl with a rainbow stood in front of a California mural. The mural featured settlements of early Californians, forty-niners, and current people. The painting was done by artists hired for the project.

The City of San Francisco's "Rising from the Ashes" showed the city's progress since the 1906 earthquake and fire.

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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..

Members' Corner

Several members brought home made deserts to the summer social. A thank you to Dee Thompson, Kathy Halverson, Patty Dobbin, and Karen Stepper.

R E C O R D

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

OFFICERS

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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
 This contribution to the Society REMEMBERS (), HONORS (),
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This Donation for:
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Dinner Reservations

\$20.00 per person

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

NAMES: _____

Thursday, September 18, 7 p.m.

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

President's Corner — Karen Stepper

PIONEER STORIES--LIVE AND ON THE WEB

It was wonderful to hear such varied stories from our "pioneer" families. Winkie brings such humor and helps us appreciate the Camacho photos in the museum display in the Veterans Building--which includes her family, of course! Phil gave us some great school stories and unseen photos from San Ramon. And Chuck (and his adorable assistant) provided a panoply of photographs covering the Wilcox family--who tragically lost so many of their progeny within a five year period due to consumption (TB). Thank you for the personalized wealth of history from your three historical families--the Camachos, the Henrys, and the Fereiras!

We were also grateful to have Beverly Lane and Jim Lane at the picnic. Beverly recently received the Waddingham/Doctor Award from the Conference of California Historical Societies for her work as top historian and supporter of the San Ramon Valley Historical Society.--Congratulations!

Beverly published six local history pamphlets for museum exhibits in the early nineties. She has just updated the pamphlets and has offered them to our society to make them available to the public. Thanks to our historian Lee Halverson and website master Steve Mick, we will be posting them over the next few months and hope these will draw even more readers to our website--srvhistoricalociety.org.

Karen Stepper, President

INSIDER FUTURE VIEW OF TREASURE ISLAND

Not only will the Treasure Island tour cover the 1939 World's Fair and the remaining structures to the local winery, we hope the Blue Angels flight team will be practicing overhead. NOW we will begin our tour with a new piece of history in the making. Uri Eliahu, President of ENGE0, will explain the challenges and vision his company has to design, construct, and replace the aging island infrastructure with the underpinnings for high rise buildings. This is indeed an awesome engineering feat on a manmade island. Call Karen at 925-998-8865 to reserve one of the ten spots remaining.

"The Good Old Days" (Continued)

Phil Henry

The horses were tied to a pole under an awning at the back of the school. The school had one teacher/principal, one full time teacher, and one part time teacher. In the afternoons, students in grades 4 to 8 were assembled into one classroom. The focus was on preparing the eighth graders for high school. This resulted in a type of recess for the others. Phil liked this at the time, but it was difficult when he got to high school.

Phil mentioned Rose Peters Emery's book, *Footprints in the Soil*. Phil noted similarities in her book to his experiences in the 1950's.

Christmas plays, pageants, and graduation activities were held in the San Ramon Community Hall. The hall was close to the old school and had a kitchen. While the old school was in use, students went to the hall for lunch. Some lunches were prepared by the mother's club.

The three room school was farther from the hall. Each student had to bring his/her lunch. A dairy delivered milk to the school. Milk deliveries stopped when Phil was in the fifth grade. The refrigerator was not cleaned for a couple of months - a real mess.

The school would occasionally have an event at the Little Hills Ranch on Bollinger Canyon. At that time the ranch was pretty new and pretty remote. A long dirt road and multiple gates to open and close were obstacles to overcome.

Phil enjoyed the experience. It was very different from having only one class in a room. The sense of community in the three room school was overwhelming.

Photographs Of The "Pageant Of The Pacific" (Continued)

The League of Nations exhibit included maps and lectures. France occupied three pavilions. Several European countries withdrew due to the impending war.

The Norwegian exhibit featured native wood and included a hot tub, toboggan, and other snow equipment. The Philippine building had a copper roof and a giant 5 ton brass door. Philippine woods were featured.

Columbia featured coffee. Brazil offered coffee and a doughnut for 10 cents.

All Pacific Rim countries were invited to take part.

Several companies joined in displaying their accomplishments.

Fountains were featured throughout the grounds. One of the statues was 80 feet tall. It changed color from red, to blue, to purple, or such, in the evening.

The fountain Pacifica was one of the first structures seen after entering the grounds. It was 100 feet tall and 48 feet wide and included a grand staircase. It was the fountain of western waters. It was surrounded by sculptures of a modern woman, an Alaskan woman, an Indian woman, an Inca group and a Polynesian group, a North American boy, and a Mexican boy. All were fishing. The fountain was one of the last structures to be razed. It was standing in 1972.

The center feature of the fair was the Tower of the Sun. It was shaped like a rocket ship. Four statues surrounded the tower representing agriculture, art, science, and industry. It was probably the most photographed feature of the fair.

There were elephant towers. Elephant trains carried people about the grounds.

Balloons and flags made the promenade colorful.

The China Clipper terminal remained after the fair closed.

On February 18/19, a cellular signal was sent from Bombay, India to San Francisco Bay. The island lights were turned on. Bells rang. Bells of Treasure Island, a song written for the event was sung. The forty bell Carillon at Grace Cathedral was played.

Admission tickets were 50 cents each. The guide book was 25 cents

The first phase of the exposition closed in the fall of 1939. The fair reopened on May 25, 1940 and ran until September 29, 1940.

People repeatedly flocked to the fair from the Bay Area, California, and across the United States. It was a social as well as educational event. As was the style, ladies wore dresses, coats, and hats. Men wore suits and ties and hats. It was an unforgettable experience. Many still have treasured souvenirs. Some artifacts of the fair remain on the island..

As people entered the fair, vendors took their picture in hopes of selling the finished photo as the fairgoers left.

Former President Herbert Hoover had been trained as a mining engineer. He enjoyed dressing in his mining outfit and showing people how to find the gold in the top dirt.

Miss America of 1940, Frances Marie Burke of Philadelphia, PA attended from time to time.

Fairgoers were entertained by, among others, Bing Crosby, Esther Williams, big bands, a cigarette smoking robot, dancers from Hawaii, and maybe Sally Rand's Nude Ranch dancers who were clad in belts, hats, and boots.

After the fair closed in 1940, the United States Navy took over the island. In 1996 the City of San Francisco took over. Some of the buildings have been used for housing or commercial ventures. A planning commission has worked to further develop the island. More housing and commercial development is proposed. This activity was to begin in 2014; however, it is being held up awaiting removal of radioactive material from USN days.

Chuck Fereira, Winkie Camacho, And Phil Henry Brought Back “The Good Old Days” At Our Summer Picnic

Chuck Fereira descends from several early Valley families. He chose to tell about the Wilcox side of his family. His main sources of information were a family Bible and Ancestry.Com. Chuck is an educator and administrator in the San Ramon Valley.

Isaac Wilcox was born in 1831 in Shelby County, Kentucky, a son of George Wilcox and Melinda. The family moved to Guadalupe County, Texas in 1855 where he met Anna. They were married in 1859. Isaac served in the Confederate Calvary from 1862 to 1865. Family lore says that he suffered a leg wound during the Civil War period. The family's western migration took them from Texas to Kansas and Missouri before reaching Danville, California where Isaac died. He and many of his family members are buried in the Alamo Cemetery.

Ben Wilcox was the first child of Isaac and Anna Wilcox. Ben was born in 1860 in Texas and died in 1935 in Danville, California. He married Addie Burke.

Isaac Wilcox, Junior, the second son of Isaac and Anna, was born in 1862 in Texas. He died in 1889 in Alamo.

A third son, Henry, was also born in Texas. Henry married Mary Lawrence of Danville, California. He later worked as a grip man for the Western Railroad Cable Car Company in San Francisco. His death and burial information is unknown.

In January of 1865, George and Melinda, Isaac and Anna and the three little boys moved to Kansas where their fourth son, John, was born in 1867.

By 1870 the family had moved to Missouri where Melinda, their first daughter, was born. Melinda married Albert Collins of Danville, California in 1891. She died in 1894.

Their second daughter, Mary, was born in Missouri in 1872 and died in Danville in 1894.

By April 1874 when Luanne “Lulu”, their third daughter, was born, the Wilcox family was living in Danville, California. She died in 1900.

Their last child, Nelly, was born in 1876 and died in 1896 in Danville.

From around 1872 to 1886, Isaac Senior, Ben, Isaac Junior, and Henry farmed in Green Valley, in the area of Los Cerros, Diablo Road and Stone Valley Road. Later they farmed and lived in Hayward. When Isaac Junior died in 1889, Isaac Senior, Anna and daughters Mary, Luanne, and Nellie returned to Danville. Henry and John gave up farming and pursued other occupations. The 1900 Census lists Isaac's occupation as a mail carrier. He died in 1903.

Chuck questioned the cause of the early deaths. At the Museum (MSRV), Beverly Lane showed Chuck a Hayward Review article dated August 6, 1897. This article attributes the deaths of Melinda, Nellie, and Lulu to consumption (tuberculosis). Chuck suspects that this was the cause of Mary's death as well.

Chuck's direct line descends from Ben Wilcox who married Addie Burke. Addie was born in 1866 and died in Danville in 1935. She was a daughter of Martha Burke and step daughter of William Shuey. Chuck just learned of the connection from a census record.

William Shuey died shortly after his marriage to Martha. Martha inherited two parcels of property from William's father, Henry Shuey. One parcel was at Hartz Avenue and School Street. The other parcel was a farm between Danville and San Ramon. The two parcels transferred to Addie upon Martha's death in 1902.

Ben and Addie farmed in Green Valley and later in San Ramon. In 1902, Addie had a house built on the farm in San Ramon. Chuck verified the approximate date of the move to San Ramon by Addie's piano.

Addie's piano had been given to the Museum of the San Ramon Valley (MSRV) some time earlier. The Museum (MSRV) was kind enough to deed the piano back to the family. The piano was tuned after it was moved to the Fereira house. A complete record of previous tunings was discovered inside the piano.

Ben and Addie had four children. Roy the oldest; Alden a 1915 graduate from San Ramon High School; Laura married Joseph Fereira; and Dorothy the youngest. Chuck is a descendant of Laura Wilcox and Joseph Fereira.

Winkie Camacho moved to Alamo from Oakland with her family in 1945. They were part of the early wave of people who came over the hill to the valley's small communities. These communities later became suburbs. In Alamo, Winkie was a teen aged girl with a horse. She had attended one year of high school in Oakland. The student body at San Ramon High School numbered 125. There were 25 students in her 1948 San Ramon High School graduating class. Winkie does not view herself as an old timer, but she has lived in the San Ramon Valley for seventy years.

Winkie told about the old Danville Library where she spent after school hours. It was one small room in one corner of the old Legion Hall. In 1956, Winkie started working for Contra Costa County in the Danville library as a substitute library assistant. She got very little work as the regular librarian was seldom off duty. Later she worked full time in the main office. It was a wonderful place to work.

She chose to ride the second bus after school. The first bus would have been more direct, but the second bus went out Tassajara before returning to Alamo. Her good friend Helen Bettencourt lived at the end of the line. Winkie rode out with Helen and then back to town.

Her friend Hattie had a horse. Together they enjoyed riding their horses from Alamo to Danville. They had a wonderful time.

Winkie referred to several books on the history of San Ramon Valley written by local residents.

She cited Rose Peters Emery's book *Footprints in the Soil* a story of Portuguese immigrants from the Azores. The book was published when Rose was 97 years of age.

Winkie told a couple of the stories from Rose's book of life in the Valley. Only one family had an indoor toilet until the man of another family went out of town on a short trip. His wife called in a plumber and the second toilet in town was installed.

Rose's father was always expanding his land holdings, and he always paid cash. People didn't borrow like they do now.

Among other Valley authors Winkie mentioned were: Ross Smith, Virgie Jones, Bill Hockin, Beverly Lane, and Ralph Cozine.

Winkie had recently read a description of Diablo Lake in earlier times, when the water was crystal clear and over 20 feet deep at the deepest point. There was a beautiful Monterey sand beach. A raft was in the middle of the lake with a 30 foot slide and two regulation diving boards. There were floodlights for night swimming parties. The lady's bath house, remodeled in 1931, was a log cabin style building with 120 changing rooms. The men's bath house was about the same. Both bath houses were equipped with flush toilets and showers. It wasn't like that in the late 1940's!

Winkie was asked about her husband's family. The Camachos moved from Puerto Rico to Hawaii where they worked in the sugar cane industry. From Hawaii the growing family moved to San Ramon. Of the fourteen children born into Pete's family, twelve grew to adulthood. The youngest five or seven children attended San Ramon High School. Six of the children served in WWII.

Phil Henry began his talk by showing a picture of a 1950 San Ramon road sign: Population 100, Elevation 490 feet. The elevation has not changed! San Ramon in the early 1950's was a cluster of a few stores, a general store and a Post Office. If your address was San Ramon, you collected your mail at the post office.

Phil came to San Ramon in 1953. He was in the fifth grade. The old San Ramon two room school had closed after over 80 years. Phil went to the new three room school where the enrollment was 30 to 70 students in grades 1-8.

The school in San Ramon was different than Phil's Hayward School. There were no fences in San Ramon. Most of the children walked to school, some rode horses.

(Continued Page 6)