



Our President Karen Stepper with our January speakers - Ross Smith and Burt Bogardus, and Jerry Warren, Vice President.

Need A Ride To The Society Meeting On March 21st?  
Contact Bill Lloyd: 837-9382.

*Over 42 Years Looking Back!*



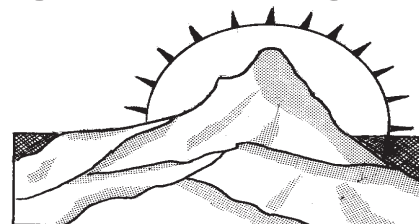
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SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 521 • DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94526

**NEXT MEETING  
THURSDAY,  
MARCH 21ST  
"The Coats Family And Early  
San Ramon History"**

# SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



March 2013

ALAMO · BLACKHAWK · DANVILLE · DIABLO · SAN RAMON

## **Burt Bogardus Presented More Enjoyable Information About The Mt. Diablo Beacon At January Meeting**

Burt Bogardus brought us a follow-up to his presentation on the Beacon atop Mount Diablo at the January 2009 meeting.

The Mount Diablo beacon was installed on the summit in 1928. The original 75 foot steel tower is no longer there. The light was part of a series of beacons along the West Coast referred to as the "Pacific Flyway". This was an early time for aviation. Standard Oil was in the business of providing gasoline for cars and aviation fuel. In order to encourage night flying and at the same time make it safer, Standard Oil Company installed a series of five beacons. The beacons started at San Diego. There was one in Los Angeles, one on Mount Diablo, one in Portland, Oregon, and one in Seattle, Washington. These beacons were manufactured by the Sperry Gyroscope Company and were the most powerful beacons in the world. The Mount Diablo beacon is the only one to survive.

The Mount Diablo beacon was in continuous operation from 1928 to 1941 except for six hours in 1933 when power lines burned. Standard Oil quickly brought up batteries so that the beacon could continue to operate at night.

A stone building was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) atop Mount Diablo. A dedication ceremony was held in April, 1941 when the beacon was moved from the tower to the new stone building. The light continued to operate until December 7, 1941.

When the Japanese attacked, it was quickly realized that operating this light was not a good idea. The next day, the light was turned off. The other four beacons were also turned off.

WWII brought blackouts to the west coast. By the end of WWII, these beacons were obsolete. Aircraft had radio and radar navigation. The Mount Diablo beacon was forgotten.

The Pearl Harbor Survivors in the San Francisco Bay area felt it would be a fitting tribute to light the beacon every December 7th.

The modern history of the beacon began on December 7, 1964.

In 1928, following his trans Atlantic flight, Charles Lindberg turned on the light. In 1964, the light was turned on by another national hero, Admiral Chester Nimitz. Thus began the annual ceremony of turning the beacon light on every December 7th.

This ceremony became an important symbolic gesture for the Pearl Harbor survivors. There were subsequent times when the light did not function properly, and Burt committed himself to rebuild the light mechanism and work on the drive mechanism, Burt constructed a remote control for the light and mechanism.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## **The Coats Family And Early San Ramon History Topic Of March 21st Dinner Meeting**

Frances Edmonston will portray Fanny Coats, her grandmother, and will present a program on the Coats family and the early days of San Ramon Valley at the March 21st dinner meeting.

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.

### More Information Of The Mt. Diablo Beacon (Continued)

This had worked reliably until these last few years. The mechanism is suffering the effects of old age. In 15 years the light will be celebrating its 100th anniversary.

The current beacon mechanism is as reliable as any 1928 appliance or automobile you may have.

The Pearl Harbor survivors had hoped that the California State Park System would restore the light. That didn't happen.

The Save Mount Diablo Organization has come to the rescue. This non-profit organization has been responsible for the expansion of Mount Diablo State Park over the life of the park. The expense to restore the beacon is being underwritten by Save Mount Diablo.

The light and mechanism must be moved to a shop for restoration work. It weighs about a ton. Removal is planned for late spring, 2013. This is a technically challenging job.

During a recent test, lead paint and asbestos were found. Professionals will perform the removal and proper disposal of these items.

It is planned to have the rebuilt beacon back on the summit by December 7, 2013.

In the beginning of these local December 7th events, participating Pearl Harbor survivors numbered in the thirties. In 2012 four survivors attended the event.

The beacon uses a single 30 volt 1500 watt incandescent bulb. When the old bulb burned out, an identical new bulb could not be found. After much research, a perfect replacement was found - a projection bulb manufactured by the Ushio Electric Company of Tokyo, Japan. The Pearl Harbor Survivors were amused.

### Members' Corner

The Board of Directors and fellow members of the Society extend a warm welcome to five new members:

- Greg and Donna Marvel Danville, CA. Frances Ann Edmonston Sonoma, CA.
- Paula Sledge Danville, CA. Carl Levinson Sonoma, CA.

We hope that you will enjoy this organization. We urge you to attend the field trips and the bi-monthly dinner meetings with guest speakers discussing their areas of expertise, participate in the selection of historic sites in the San Ramon Valley, and share your views and experiences with other Society members. We also urge you to join and support the activities of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley and the San Ramon Historic Foundation.

### The Sales Table — Nancy Ramsey

(Nancy Ramsey)

The Alamo Grammar School 1876 notes and envelopes are available. There are Mount Diablo, Front Street, Southern Pacific Depot, Tassajara School, the "Grand Dames" series of three San Ramon older homes, and miscellaneous packages with eight historical scenes for sale. Our price to members is \$3.50 per package. Lots of postcards with historic scenes are available for \$0.20 each. Do stop by the Sales Table.



### In Memoriam

#### Barbara McNeil

July 31, 1924 - January 27, 2013 Resident of Folsom, CA Former Danville Resident.

Barbara McNeil passed peacefully in her home, surrounded by loving family. Burial service was held at 12:30 PM on Sat., Feb. 9 at Alamo-Lafayette Cemetery in Lafayette with Celebration of Life following at Lafayette Veteran's Hall. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Hospice.

Published in the *Contra Costa Times* on February 3, 2013.



**Karen Stepper presented Judy Sandkuhle a certificate in thanks for the many plants she has contributed to the San Ramon Historical Society events.**

**RECORD**

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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  
This contribution to the Society REMEMBERS ( ), HONORS ( ), EXPRESSES APPRECIATION ( ), OTHER ( ). Please check one.

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### Dinner Reservations

**Thursday, March 21, 7 p.m.**

\$20.00 per person

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO S.R.V.H.S. (Deadline March 19, 2013)  
Mail to: S.R.V.H.S., P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

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

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

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