

### Museum News

August 27 - September 29: Quintessential Quilts: Floral Fantasy

Featuring the Museum's collection plus invitational juried selections, including Michelle Landis' historic quilts.

October 5 - November 10: Indian Life and Celebration of the Village Theater

Including the Grange, Odd Fellows and Black Diamond Mine.

November 19 - January 5: Christmas Memories



#### Walking Tours

Walking Tours led by Karen Stepper – 3rd Friday of the month – Meet at Village Theater at 6:15pm: 9/20, 10/18.

Walking Tours – 2nd Saturday of the month – Meet at the museum at 10am: 9/14, 10/12

The requested donation is \$3 per person. No reservations required.

Alamo Historic Cemetery Tours Saturday, October 26, 2013.

Open to the public, no reservation required. The requested donation is \$3 per person.

Meet at the Alamo Cemetery at 10 am.

#### 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.

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

**Need a Ride To The Society Meeting On September 19th? Contact Bill Lloyd: 837-9382.**

*Over 43 Years Looking Back!*



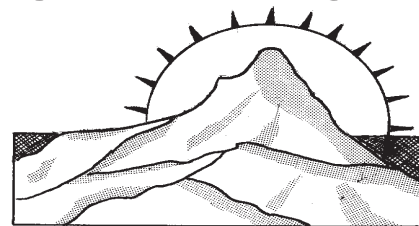
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SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 521 • DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94526

**NEXT MEETING  
THURSDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 19TH  
TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD  
THROUGH NILES CANYON**

## SAN RAMON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



September 2013

ALAMO · BLACKHAWK · DANVILLE · DIABLO · SAN RAMON

### We Learned Many Interesting, Enjoyable, Unusual Facts About Mount Diablo At Our May Meeting

Seth Adams spoke about the history of Mt. Diablo at the San Ramon Valley Historical Society Meeting on May 16, 2013. Seth is the Land Programs Director for Save Mt. Diablo. He is an avid photographer, runner, cyclist, and probably the most knowledgeable historian of Mt. Diablo in the East Bay.

As a child of an army family Seth moved a lot: Florida, Mississippi, Texas, Italy, and Germany. When his father did four tours in Vietnam, the family stayed in North Carolina.

As a collector of small animals, moving or not, North Carolina was a grand place to be. When Seth was eight, his family gave him the garage to get his animals out of the house. He had aquariums and terrariums and Styrofoam coolers with glass plates on top.

Although he had never been in California, he was drawn here and arrived in Berkeley in 1981, sort of against his parents' wishes! He had \$400 in his pocket. Within his first week in Berkeley, he was working on the campaign against the Peripheral Canal in the Delta.

In 1988 Save Mount Diablo was getting ready to hire their first staff person. Seth applied and was hired.

Mount Diablo is home to the giant rattlesnake and many species of wild flowers. It offers keys to understanding California's geology. It is the site of the Diablo Meridian and Base Line. It also affects property values by helping to make the East Bay and Contra Costa County a wonderful place to live.

The early explorers of California were amazed at how pastoral the area was. It was a paradise. There were large herds of California Antelope in the San Ramon Valley. By the 1800's sheep and cattle from the missions were grazing on the southern slopes of Mount Diablo. At the time of the gold rush, there were about 4,000 permanent residents, including the indigenous population.

General Vallejo was one of the Californios who prospered after California became a state. He became a member of the legislature. He was responsible for collecting stories of early California.

One version of how Mt. Diablo got its name involved a group of discontented Indians at Mission San Jose. They decided to leave and head north. The Spanish fathers sent Spanish soldiers after them. The soldiers caught up with the Indians near the present location of Highway 4 and I-680. The Indians had taken shelter in a willow thicket. The soldiers decided to wait until morning to capture them. During the night, the Indians escaped across the Carquinez Straits. The soldiers claimed the Indians could only have done that with the help of the Devil. Hence the name Mount Diablo, Devil's Mountain.

### Transcontinental Railroad From Sacramento Through Niles Canyon Topic Of September 19th Dinner Meeting

"Curse of Dead Cow Curve" is the topic of the September 19th Dinner Meeting. Alan Frank, Curator of the Niles Canyon Railroad, will tell the tale of the scandal in the construction of the extension of the transcontinental railroad from Sacramento to Oakland through Niles Canyon.

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.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

### Learning More About Mount Diablo (Continued)

Bret Harte told another story. A Spanish padre atop the mountain conversed with the Devil who offered him a deal. The padre would be able to see what would happen as the Spanish are replaced by Americans moving into the area from the east.

In the 1830's Mount Diablo was surrounded by ranches. Only one ranch went up the slopes. It was called the ranch of walnuts and nuts.

The first American settler, Dr. John Marsh bought Rancho Los Meganos from Jose Noriega of San Jose in 1835. He paid \$500 for about 13,285 acres. At this time there was no American habitation between the ranch and the river. He built a home and named it Brentwood after his ancestral lands in England. His cattle were often stolen.

Marsh prospered during the gold rush by selling provisions and cattle to miners on their boats from his pier near present day Oakley.

The gold rush changed everything. There were about 3,000 Californios before the gold rush. Suddenly, there were hundreds of thousands of people coming every year.

Most gold miners did not succeed at mining. Many turned to farming. They spread out and transformed the state.

Wheat was planted and harvested from ridgeline to ridgeline throughout Contra Costa County. Huge clumps of dirt fell into streams and caused local flooding. The landscape was transformed.

On July 15, 1851, Colonel Leander Ransom planted a stake atop Mount Diablo to establish the point for the Diablo Meridian and Base line in California. This formed the E-W and N-S meridian lines for northern and central California, as well as Nevada. This remains the foundation for all property lines in these areas today.

In 1861-1862, the legislature funded the California Geological Survey to write an overview of mineral resources of the State. The scientists were specialists in many different disciplines and looked at a wide variety of issues including weather, climate, botany, etc. The survey members became convinced that understanding the geology of Mount Diablo was the key to understanding California's geology.

The leader of the survey was Eli Whitney. Most of his time was spent negotiating with the Legislature over money. The real leader of the group was botanist William Brewer. He collected many California plants. The group used a covered wagon as a photographic studio.

One of the unidentified plants found was a weed that grew about a foot tall and had pink flowers. Brewer sent it to be classified. The rare plant was found over seventy years ago and has been recorded only seven more times.

Brewer and his team looked at coal deposits in the hills around Antioch. Before long the coal fields were developed and five mining towns appeared. The development evolved into an industrial wasteland. Trees were cut down. Streams were black with coal dust and coal runoff. However, the industry provided diversity of employment.

Concentrated energy from coal was needed for manufacturing. Lime was another natural resource. These resources provided jobs and activity during recessions in Contra Costa County.

About 1874, Joseph C. Hall, an Indian guide, arrived in Contra Costa County. He was from New Hampshire. He lived with the Crawford family that managed a toll booth near Mt. Washington. Hall built a path up the mountain and was hired as a guide. Later he built a wagon road up Mt. Washington and the first hotel was built. However, he didn't secure property rights and lost everything. He was took part in the Civil War. After the War, he returned to Contra Costa County and Mt. Diablo.

Hall built some of the first wagon roads up Mt. Diablo. He built the sixteen room Mountain House Hotel a mile below the summit. An established wagon road went through Danville and Diablo. A road also went up Pine Canyon from Walnut Creek. People would stay at the hotel for weeks. The Castle Rocks were spectacular.

The idea of tourism had reached California by 1874. It started with the beginning of the National Park System. Public parks were being created throughout the Bay Area. Local walks were being published by 1900. Berkeley and Stanford academics had a lot to do with this movement.

John Muir, who lived in Martinez, became a spokesman for Yosemite National Park. His heart was broken by the loss of the Hetch Hetchy Valley, but he has had a lasting impact on open wilderness areas. Muir is considered to be the founder of the conservation movement.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

### 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. Postcards of the one room school at Tassajara are out of print.

Do stop by the Sales Table.

Need a Ride  
To The Society Meeting  
On September 19th?  
Contact Bill Lloyd: 837-9382.

**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  
This contribution to the Society REMEMBERS ( ), HONORS ( ), EXPRESSES APPRECIATION ( ), OTHER ( ). Please check one. This Donation for:  
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### Dinner Reservations **Thursday, September 19, 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 September 17, 2013)  
Mail to: S.R.V.H.S., P.O. Box 521, Danville, CA 94526

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

## President's Corner — Karen Stepper

### SPINNING A WEB TO BRING SOCIETY INFORMATION TO MEMBERS AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

Not only was the picnic a social, educational, and entertaining event, it increased our membership! Ross Smith did an awesome job developing a new presentation on the "History of The Danville Grange" (the book he authored) and Don Wood personalized our participation with memories from the fire at the Wood Ranch in the late 80's--the 1880's, that is!

These events are a great way to introduce a friend to our Society, but we hope you had a chance to explore the laptop that was setup to show you how to entice your friends through our new internet site. Go there now with me—google <http://srvhistoricalsociety.org/> then

- Click on Society Newsletter. There is the newsletter from May 2013--so your friends can read about us in the here and now (and a great index with historical newsletters).
- Click on Upcoming Dinner Meeting. A picture is truly worth a 1000 words--why is that curve called "Dead Cow Curve"?
- Click on New--the Caldecott Tunnel Tour. Yes--some of you donned mud boots and really got "down and dirty" to see the inside of our newest bore.
- Click on Train of Lights. If you missed the picnic, we missed you. And you missed a chance to hear about our reservation for the historical lounge car train ride during the upcoming holidays. But you can still sign up--\$40 on Sunday December 8. Read more in this newsletter!
- Click on Membership Application to help your friends become our next newest members!

We'll have more online pictures of you to show your friends ---just as soon as you send them to our historian [lhazmateer@aol.com](mailto:lhazmateer@aol.com) and to me [coachstepper@yahoo.com](mailto:coachstepper@yahoo.com).

So welcome our newest members--

Webmaster Steve Mick (and his wife Alicia Watson), Vicki Harris, and Lee and Esther Halverson.

## In Memoriam



### Clara Holmes Harris

June 24, 1916-June 1, 2013

Resident of Danville

Clara Harris passed away peacefully on the morning of June 1st, a few weeks before her 97th birthday.

Clara was a native of Danville, born in 1916. She developed her amazing work ethic helping her mother raise chickens and turkeys on their farm near what is now El Cerro Blvd. She attended Danville Grammar School, San Ramon Valley High, and UC Berkeley, graduating in 1938 with a degree in Spanish. A year later she married Philip Harris, a grocer. The couple built a home on Love Lane and had one child, Caren, in 1944.

Clara lived on Love Lane until she was 88 and was a fixture of the neighborhood. She loved being outside, working tirelessly sunup to sundown in her straw hat. She grew all kinds of fruits and vegetables that she shared with friends and family and enjoyed tending her beautiful rose garden. She was an animal lover and was especially fond of cats and wild birds. She was active in the community and was proud to have served on the Danville School Board for 6 years. Clara was also a lifelong Golden Bear and fondly remembered attending Cal's Rose Bowl win over Alabama in 1938.

Clara was preceded in death by her husband and daughter. She is survived by her 2 grandsons, Steven Eckert, of Danville and Brandon Eckert, of Seattle, son-in-law Alvin Eckert, of Fairfield, and her 6 great-grandchildren. A graveside service took place at the Alamo Cemetery on Monday, June 17th at 11 AM.



## Learning More About Mount Diablo (Continued)

About the time John Muir died, Robert Nobel Burgess proposed a large development on Mt Diablo. The son of a Danville pastor, Burgess grew up knowing the Railroad Ranch on the western slope of Mt. Diablo. [The ranch, later known as Cook Farms and Oakwood Stock Farms, still later became the property of Seth Adams and Dan Cook.]

Burgess made a fortune shipping his fruit from Martinez and building houses in Oakland after the San Francisco earthquake. He next went into Mt. Diablo area real estate. He eventually acquired land stretching from Concord to the top of Mt. Diablo and down to Pleasanton. He proposed an estates project on the western slope of Mt. Diablo. He proposed a luxury hotel, Torre del Sol, at the top of the mountain. The hotel did not materialize, but the community of Diablo did. World War I brought an end to development as sales dried up. The land Burgess had acquired wound up in the hands of several people, including his investors.

Ansell Mills Easton (an uncle of photographer Ansell Adams) and his son-in-law William A. Ward purchased 1200 acres from Burgess and started the Black Hawk Ranch. The ranch was named for Easton's famous Irish race horse.

Mt. Diablo State Park (MDSP) was dedicated twice. The Park had been created legislatively in 1921, but no land was included. A 631 acre parcel was acquired in 1931. MDSP was dedicated again. It was one of the first seven state parks created before the state park system was established.

Walter Craig (business partner of Burgess) had sold the state the first piece of land for the park and began lobbying the State to buy more. He retained some of his land in the hope it would increase in value. Like Burgess, Craig got into trouble in the 1929 crash. He died in 1937. The land was locked in his estate for many years. Land representing more than half of Mt. Diablo was locked by developers for about four decades.

Standard Oil installed a series of beacons across the United States and along the Pacific Coast to encourage commercial night flying. A beacon was installed atop Mt. Diablo in 1928. It could be seen for 100 miles. Directional letters on each side of the beacon told pilots the direction they were flying. The beacon became known as the eye of Mt. Diablo.

In 1930 Mary Leolin Bowerman came to University of California, Berkeley from Pasadena Junior College. As a graduate student in the Botany Department Mary was assigned to Mt. Diablo. At the time she was the only graduate student in the department who had a car. Craig allowed the graduate student from UCB free access to his land - no toll road fees for Mary. She sought out the little wild flower that Brewer had first discovered. She made two records of it. She published her PHD thesis in 1936, her book "The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Mount Diablo", California in 1944. Her study boundaries became the basis for the state park's first map and for the park's eventual expansion. Many of the park's place names have their origins on the map. She co-founded Save Mount Diablo in 1971.

During the Great Depression, Mt. Diablo was able to benefit from cheap labor from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Camp grounds and picnic areas were built with a rustic park agricultural design. The most important CCC construction was the Summit Building. A bit of the fossil history of Mt. Diablo can be seen in the local rocks used in the construction of the building. The beacon was placed on top of the summit building and the Standard Oil Diablo Tower was removed.

From the 1900's to the 1940's a push developed for new ways to fund public facilities. Cities were growing so fast that private businesses providing water or fire services could not keep up with the demand. There was a call for public institutions to provide those services.

EBMUD was formed to provide water. Private water companies and their lands were purchased. Large water supply reservoirs were built. EBMUD wound up with 10,000 acres of land that they deemed surplus and put them up for sale. Private individuals and groups approached EBMUD board with proposals for using the land for recreation. The board rejected the proposals to concentrate on water and erected barb wire fencing to limit access.

Citizens then proposed creation of the East Bay Regional Park District. In 1934, the East Bay Regional Park District was established and started collecting park lands. It was funded by property taxes.

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## We Learned Many Interesting, Enjoyable, Unusual Facts About Mount Diablo At Our May Meeting (Continued)

In 1936, the San Francisco to Oakland Bay Bridge was completed, In 1937, the two-bore Caldecott Tunnel was completed. Rural Contra Costa County was more accessible.

The 1940 census reported 1,587 people in Walnut Creek and 1,373 in Concord. Local citizens began lobbying for a local park district. A park at Briones was proposed. It failed. It was then proposed to expand the East Bay Regional Park District into Contra Costa County. That would be easier than creating new agency. The proposal was successful.

The organization Save Mount Diablo (SMD) was founded on December 7, 1971. It was founded by Art Bonwell and Dr. Mary Bowerman. Subdivisions were spreading toward the mountain. There was no open space organization working on the area. Bowerman provided the vision, and Bonwell was the nuts and bolts guy.

SMD acquires land and works with agencies to acquire land. SMD works to restore natural habitat and build trails. The mantra is to preserve, then restore and enjoy.

Actions in the last 42 years by environmental groups to preserve land in Contra Costa County as well as Mt. Diablo include the following: Shell Ridge was preserved in Walnut Creek. The head waters of Marsh Creek along Morgan Territory were saved. Parts of Hyatt Canyon on the old Diablo Ranch were saved. Lime Ridge open space between Concord and Walnut Creek was saved. The corner piece between Marsh Creek and Morgan Territory Roads was saved for Mt. Diablo in 1977. A ranch area in Alamo at the end for Green Valley Road was saved. The 14 acre piece including the John Marsh ranch house was saved.

Each decade represents dozens to hundreds of acquisitions. Black Hawk Ridge was protected. Coal Canyon in addition to the Black Diamond Mines was saved. The Morgan Territory Regional Preserve was expanded. Plans for connecting the Preserve and Mt. Diablo were begun. At this time, the two places were separated by 5 miles of private land. In the next 16 years a two mile wild life corridor was created between the two parks.

Grass Valley was a site considered for a new Contra Costa land fill in the late 1980's. The owner was upset that some one would think of putting a dump on his family's lands. This was a beautiful valley. He sold it to the East Bay Regional Park District. In one quarter of the piece, there were 1,400 Indian mortars.

There was a game changer in 1988. California Proposition 70 would provide funds to acquire land for parks. State bonds have to pass by 50%. Local bonds have to pass by 2/3. The June vote totaled over 2/3 in favour of Proposition 70. Six months later a much larger local bond issue was placed on the ballot. It also passed. This began a 30,000 acre expansion of the East Bay Regional Park District. Since this event, the amount of open space lands has more than doubled in Contra Costa County.

In the late 1980's, a new reservoir, Los Vaqueros, was proposed. This was different. It wasn't on a river. Dry land would be taken, and water would be pumped from the Delta during high quality and high flow periods. Some 20,000 acres was acquired for this water shed. About 1,600 acres is used.

In the 1990's Hidden Ranch was preserved as part of the Dougherty Ranch and Dougherty Valley development. Most of the Brushy Creek Regional Preserve is mitigation land paid for by Shappel Industries.

The Vasco Caves Regional Preserve was saved as a part of the Los Vaqueros project.

Some Roddy Ranch open space was preserved. This is an area between Black Diamond Mines, Round Valley, and Los Vaqueros. There was a 10 mile corridor between Black Diamond and Mt. Diablo. SMD thought it would take 10 years to obtain the corridor. But two separate acquisitions managed to get all but the last mile within three years. The Roddy Ranch Golf Course provided a 4.5 mile ridge line as a condition of the golf course construction. Another source was a compromise over an urban limit line. A portion of the Cowell Ranch was added to the State Park System

In 1974, Ken Behring acquired 4,200 acres of the Blackhawk Ranch for houses. SMD negotiated for 2,052 acres to be dedicated to MDSP as a condition of development, including much of the Black Hills (the Wall Point Area), Blackhawk Ridge, parts of Dan Cook and Jackass Canyons, and the area below Oyster Point. This was the single largest donation ever to a State Park..

Turtle Rock Ranch was preserved in 2000.

Some 4,000 acres have been acquired for Marsh Creek State Park. A general plan for this park has been adopted. If the State budget improves, this new park may be opened.

Seth talked about the California Buckwheat. In the 1930s Mary Bowerman found the plant on Morgan Territory property, No one had seen the plant since 1936. In 2002 Mary updated her book. Barbara Hurd of UCB started assigning graduate students to survey the property as Mary had done in 1930. In 2005, a student located a wildflower he had not seen before. It was a Buckwheat. The location was kept secret. Twelve plants were located. Seeds were gathered and planted. The discovery was announced and went around the world in 12 hours. The plant had been presumed extinct. Seeds were also taken to the Botanical Gardens at UCB. From this effort, 200,000 seeds were generated. These were replanted at MDSP. The plant was saved from extinction.

Seth discussed the size of parks, large versus small. Large is better for wildlife. If natural phenomena occur (wildfires) wild life can move. Why are grasslands preserved? They support the entire food pyramid. If grasslands are not there, it impacts many species of animals including birds.

There are tens of thousands of acres of public land in our area that are not yet open to the public. We can look forward to these lands becoming available. So far maintenance funds are a lot harder to get than capital funds.

*Join us for another enjoyable  
Dinner Meeting on  
September 19th to learn about  
the history of the railroad  
that went from Sacramento  
through Niles Canyon!*



**Jerry Warren, Seth Adams, and Karen Stepper  
enjoying our society's May meeting about Mt. Diablo**

### Members. Corner

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

Lee and Esther Halverson  
Vicki Harris  
Steve Mick and Alicia Watson

Danville, CA  
San Ramon, CA  
Alamo, 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.