

Millbrae Life & Times

M I L L B R A E H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y N E W S L E T T E R

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HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT: ROB ICKES—MILLBRAE'S GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING ARTIST BY PAUL BAXTER



Sometimes you simply have to move to where the grass is greener. Perhaps you take a position with a new company that has opportunities not available locally. Or maybe you need a different climate. Millbrae has been home to a number of famous and highly accomplished people that did in fact leave for greater opportunities that would enhance their careers. Among them **George "High Pockets" Kelly**, the 1973 Baseball Hall of Fame inductee and two-time World Series champ; **Larry Grenadier**, renowned bassist who has performed with Jazz greats Stan Getz, Pat Metheny, Joe Henderson and Gary Burton; **Craig Venter**, famed biotechnologist, biochemist, geneticist, entrepreneur, 2008 recipient of the National Science Award and one of the first people to map the human genome; **Charles Baty**, guitarist extraordinaire with the W. C. Handy Award-winning band Little Charlie and the Nightcats.

We can add to that distinguished group musician **Rob Ickes**, a 1984 graduate of Mills High school. Rob is a celebrated dobro player who now makes his home in Nashville, TN. Rob's list of achievements and awards is simply amazing. Rob won the International Bluegrass Association's Best Dobro Player of the Year award for a record-setting fifteenth time in 2013; IBMA notes that Rob is the most awarded instrumentalist in the history of the IBMA awards.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

A lot has been going on at the Millbrae Historical Society since our last Newsletter. In case you were not aware, with the passing of our precious, long-time champion, **Curator Alma Massolo**, **Assistant Curator Dorothy Semke** has been elevated to Curator. Dorothy is dedicated and capable of ensuring that our Museum continues to provide an informative and educational experi-

ence for our visitors. With the passing of our beloved friend **Jack Gardner**, I have named **Ray Gier** as Museum Facilitator. We are fortunate to have Ray accept the position as Facilitator, because he knows which end of a hammer to use; I don't. Next time you visit the museum, please congratulate Dorothy and Ray. We are very fortunate to have so many talented people involved in our museum.



As you know Millbrae has lost one of its most prized assets, the **Millbrae Recreation Center**. We are blessed there were no injuries in that unfortunate fire. In the aftermath of the fire, I asked the

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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City of Millbrae to clean out the brush from the Fire Department fence and to enclose the under-section of the Museum's ADA ramp to prevent access to the underside of the Museum's front porch. The City also replaced the Museum's leaking rain gutters with copper gutters that really enhance the look of the Museum. Thanks to the City staff for completing all of this needed maintenance work.

The Carriage House project is moving along at a slow pace, but it is moving. Engineering drawings were submitted to the City on July 26th. On September 9th, I received a correction list pertaining to the drawings. The contractor has made the necessary corrections and returned the drawings to the City in order for a building permit to be issued. I do not envision any construction occurring before the first of the year.

We had another successful **Millbrae Historical Society July 4th BBQ**, serving 108 guests, an increase of 12 guests from last year. Thank you to all our volunteers who help make our picnic a fun and profitable event. The **Millbrae Lions Club** has been cooking at our picnic for the past 31 years, and the **Millbrae Leo's Club** has been serving for the past 9 years. Thanks to our wonderful Millbrae businesses, who support our picnic with their donations of great raffle prizes. I also can't forget to thank our members, who year after year continue to support our Fourth of July BBQ Picnic.

In August we had our annual **Rummage Sale** in conjunction with the Friends of the Library book sale. Our Curator, **Dorothy Semke** and her crew of Leo's did an outstanding job moving the merchandise of gently-used goods and one-of-a-kind knick knacks from the basement.

The Millbrae Museum now has free high-definition TV (HDTV) for your enjoyment and an ISO (Apple) charging station. My next project is getting WiFi coverage at the Museum. Even a museum must keep up with the latest technology in order to move forward.

Now that the Millbrae Recreation Center is no more, I have opened the Millbrae Museum to any of the civic organizations (the City of Millbrae, public or private) that formerly used the recreation center for meetings. Please contact me at 650-455-3472 or jfmflash600@gmail.com if your organization needs a comfortable place to meet, and we can work you in.

Thank you to all our members and friends who have donated memorial gifts in honor of our members who have passed away. The Millbrae Historical Society and Museum meant a lot to those who have passed. Memorials are a great way to receive a tax deduction and to keep our Millbrae legacy alive and prosperous.

I am waiting in excitement for **Joe Teresi** to announce this year's Millbrae Historical Society Field Trip. The date and destination are disclosed in this issue of the Newsletter.

Thank you to all our members and Board of Trustees for your dedication, participation, and loyalty to our Museum.

Best wishes,

John Muniz
Millbrae Historical Society President
2009 – Present
"The Past is our Key to the Future"

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO ALMA ANN MASSOLO

JULY 19, 1921 - AUGUST 16, 2016
BY MARY VELLA TRESELER

On behalf of the Millbrae Historical Society, we were deeply saddened to hear of the death of our **Curator Alma Massolo** on August 16, 2016. I was honored to have been asked by her son **David** to give a eulogy at her Vigil Service on August 24, at St. Dunstan Church, followed by our **President John Muniz**.

Alma was born on July 19, 1921 in South San Francisco on a farm which was located at Baden Crossing and El Camino Real. It is the site of what is now the California Golf

Club. Her parents **Anita and Armando Pera** grew all sorts of vegetables and they had chickens and cows. Even during the Depression, they always had food on the table.

Growing up, Alma always had a great passion for music and at the age of 10 was playing classical piano. Following her marriage to the late **Silvio Massolo** in 1944, they moved to Millbrae where she lived for the rest of her life. She is survived by her loving son **David Massolo** and

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VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE PAUL LARSON

Greetings Millbrae Historical Society Trustees, members and friends.

September is warm, and swimming has been an activity that is becoming more common for me. Did I mention that September has been warm? It is hard not to notice, at least as of this writing, that it was 91 degrees in my backyard yesterday (I think I have a micro-climate because the weather report said it was to be 81 degrees in Millbrae). In the back of my mind, I wonder if this is all due to global warming. This past August was reported to be the warmest on record across the world. It was also reported that this temperature rise has been the speediest build up of warmth in recorded human history. My mind imagines glacial ice melting, sea levels rising with visions of the bayshore of the Peninsula lapping up along El Camino Real in a not too distant future Millbrae.

Back to an historical perspective, here are a few note-worthy events that took place in the month of September:

September 1, 1983 - Korean Air Lines Flight 007 was shot down by a Russian fighter jet while on route from New York to Seoul, killing all 269 persons on board. The Boeing 747 reportedly strayed 100 miles off course over secret Soviet Russian military installations on the Kamchatka Peninsula and Sakhalin Island. It crashed in the Sea of Japan.

September 2, 1666 - The Great Fire of London began in a bakery in Pudding Lane near the Tower. Over the next three days more than 13,000 houses were destroyed, although only six lives were believed lost.

September 5, 1997 - Mother Teresa died in Calcutta at age 87, after a life of good works spent aiding the



sick and poor in India through her Missionaries of Charity order.

Birthday - September 5 - Wild West legend Jesse James (1847-1882) was born in Centerville, Missouri. Following the American Civil War, Jesse and his brother Frank formed a group of outlaws, robbing banks, trains, stagecoaches and stores. In 1882, after the governor of Missouri offered a \$10,000 reward for their capture dead or alive, a member of the gang shot 34-year-old Jesse in the back of the head and claimed the reward.

All my best to you, your family and loved ones,

Paul Larson
MHS 1st Vice President

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO ALMA ANN MASSOLO JULY 19, 1921 - AUGUST 16, 2016 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

his partner **Kathy**. She was the beloved sister of **Bruna Maffaei**, brother **Armando Pera** (Louise) and the late **Bruno Pera**. She is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Alma, with her late husband Sil, joined the **Millbrae Historical Society** in 1989 as Lifetime Members. She became Curator in 1995 and a Lifetime Trustee in 2001.

In 1997, she was named **Millbrae Woman of the Year** and served on the **City of Millbrae's 50th Anniversary Committee** and helped design the Millbrae Historical Society 50th Anniversary Coverlet.

She was awarded the Millbrae His-

torical Society "**Living History Award**" in 2004 for her significant contributions and devoted community services. In her role as Curator, she worked diligently over several years to compile both the text and photographs that would accurately and lovingly tell Millbrae's story and on December 3, 2007, these efforts came to fruition through the publishing of **Images in America: Millbrae**, released by Arcadia Publishing. On behalf of the Millbrae Historical Society, Alma received a Commendation from the City of Millbrae on January 8, 2008, for this historical project.

Alma was a member of the **Millbrae Woman's Club** for 44 years. She founded the Starbright Chapter of

the **Children's Home Society** in 1959. Member of the Italian **Catholic Federation, Branch #403, St. Dunstan Woman's Club** and **North Burlingame Woman's Club**, serving as President 1990-1992.

Her late husband Sil was a member of the **Millbrae Lions Club** for over 50 years and Lady Alma was always supportive, involving herself in their numerous community projects.

Alma was loved by all who knew her. She was a tireless, generous and creative woman.

On behalf of her family, friends, and the Millbrae Historical Society, she will be sorely missed. Rest in peace my dear, dear friend.....

— Mary Vella Treseler

ROB ICKES — MILLBRAE'S MULTIPLE GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING ARTIST (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Rob has toured and collaborated with a huge range of musicians, including **Merle Haggard, Alison Krauss, Willie Nelson, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Kenny Rogers and David Lee Roth**, to name just a few. Rob is also a multiple Grammy Award winner for ***The Great Dobro Sessions*** in 1994, which won in the category of Best Bluegrass Album. He was also on Alison Krauss & The Cox Family album, *I Know Who Holds Tomorrow*, which won the Grammy for Best Southern Gospel.

You may be asking yourself, "What is a dobro?". A dobro is similar in appearance to a guitar but has a special resonator inside the instrument that acts as an amplifier and gives it a unique sound. Dobro players press a steel bar on the strings and move the bar to alter the pitch. The sound of the instrument is heard widely in the Bluegrass and Country styles of music, though Rob has stretched the boundaries of the instrument and has introduced its sound to very appreciative jazz audiences and widespread critical acclaim.

Rob was born at Mills Hospital in 1967 and grew up in Millbrae's **Bay-side Manor** neighborhood. He remembers their home being near Highway 101 and that there were frogs and snakes in the open spaces near the freeway where he and his brother Bruce often played. Rob attended **Chadbourn Elementary School** and was in the last graduating class before the school was closed. He was in the school play that year and states that it was a big deal because the school would be closing and it would be their final play. There were a few tears.

Rob went to **Taylor Middle School** and remembers walking to school. He also remembers that his grandpa worked at United Airlines and walked to work. It was during these years, around age thirteen, that music began to take on great importance to him. His ear had been trained as a child at his grandparent's weekly Bluegrass and Old-Time music sessions, and the family had given him a fiddle in the hope that he would play it like his grandpa. The instrument never left its case. But during his Taylor years he heard the celebrated dobro player, **Mike Auldridge**, play the dobro and suddenly knew what he wanted to do in music. Soon thereafter he made a deal with his parents that if he could save half of the money they would throw in with him so he could pur-

chase a dobro. He met that goal, purchased his first dobro and has played music ever since.

A graduate of **Mills High School**, Rob remembers the principal, **Mr. Moser**. Some of his favorite teachers were **Mr. Froomin, Mr. Looney, Fran Tomakov and Mr. Faulkner**. Rob says he would occasionally perform at lunchtime for the students. Other fond memories of Millbrae include going to **Round Table** for pizza and to **Famous Frankfurter** for butterscotch shakes and kosher hot dogs. Rob's brother dated one of the **Stanaway** daughters. After graduating from Mills, Rob attended Cañada College and UC Davis.



But music called, and Rob, frustrated that he could not find local musicians as committed to music as he, departed for Nashville in 1992. Soon thereafter he became a founding member of one of America's best known and celebrated bluegrass bands, **Blue Highway**. Rob toured and recorded with **Blue Highway** throughout a very successful twenty-one years that included nine albums, Grammy nominations, six **International Bluegrass Association Awards** and other distinctions too numerous to count.

In 2011 Rob made the cover of **Guitar Player Magazine** and was featured in a twelve-page story. A copy of the magazine will be available for viewing at the Millbrae Museum

along with three CDs that Rob has graciously donated.

In November of 2015, Rob parted ways with **Blue Highway** and is busy carving out a new and simpler way of continuing his career in music by forming a duo with the amazing up-and-coming guitarist **Trey Hensley**. Together, they have already received a 2016 Grammy nomination for their debut album, ***Before The Sun Goes Down***. They are currently on tour with bookings well into 2017. Look for their newest album, ***The Country Blues***, which was released on July 8, 2016.

Clearly Rob is in a very creative period in his career. And though he went where the grass was greener, what was there for him was Bluegrass.

To learn more about Rob Ickes, please visit:

www.Robandtrey.com

www.Robickes.com

www.Bluehighwayband.com

CURATOR'S REPORT

DOROTHY SEMKE

We all are very saddened by the loss of our beloved **Curator Alma Mas-solo** and miss her dearly. Her presence is felt in every inch of the Museum. Hopefully we will keep up the high standards she set in motion so many years ago.

When you come to visit, please take note of the beautiful dressing table in the Heritage Room donated to us by **Dan and Cathy Quigg**. Thank you so much for this lovely piece that belonged to Dan's mother. The "Club Books" that were in the bookcase in that location have been moved to the Dining Room cabinet on the back side of the Kitchen wall. **Carol "Camica" Fields** has donated a bellows found in her grandmother's basement in Millbrae. Although slightly damaged, it is an interesting piece now located by the

fireplace. We also want to thank **Anne Merics** of Burlingame for the milk bottles from the **San Francisco, Spreckels and Millbrae Dairies** that she found in her home after purchasing it. **Lois Way** has again gifted us with a donation of a 1920's egg cup and ice pick that can be seen in the Community Room. We also received some old recipe booklets put out by our local schools from **L Benintendi** of Millbrae. Thank you all so much.

Thank you to **Dan Quigg** for joining our list of hard-working docents and welcome to new members **Anne Merics** of Burlingame, **Christine Peng** of Millbrae, **Alan, Trish and Katrina Kirth** of Millbrae, **Kelly Rodriguez** of San Bruno, **Philip Warring** of Millbrae and **Joyce and**



Rich Wheeler of Millbrae.

We will soon be hosting a visit from the 2nd grade students of **Spring Valley School**. They will be visiting City Hall and the Library as well and doing a scavenger hunt while here. As you probably know, Spring Valley School is built on the location of the D.O. Mills Mansion. It is one of ten designated historical buildings located in Millbrae. Do stop by the Museum and pick up a map showing the location of all ten sites. It makes for a lovely walk.

Dorothy Semke, Curator

MILLBRAE NOW AND THEN

A PHOTOGRAPHIC RETROSPECTIVE

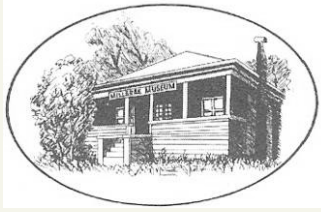


The Mills Mansion, located near what is now Spring Valley School, burnt down in 1954 under nefarious circumstances. In the lower left of this last surviving color photo of the mansion is a statue of unknown origin, depicting a woman and child.



This photo shows the same statue, now located at the El Camino Real entrance to the El Rancho Inn. The statue is bronze and very weathered.

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT
WWW.MILLBRAEHS.ORG



**MILLBRAE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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MHS OFFICERS – 2016-17

John Muniz, President
Paul Larson, 1st Vice-President
Joe Teresi, 2nd Vice-President
Gaetane Andrews, Secretary
Vern Bruce, Treasurer
Mary Vella Treseler, Parliamentarian

Dorothy Semke, Curator
Tom Dawdy, Historian
Ray Gier, Museum Facilitator
Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor

C A L E N D A R O F E V E N T S

Friday, November 4: Millbrae Historical Society Field Trip, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm,
Tour of Hayward Area Historical Society Museum of History & Culture
- RSVP by 10/31 to Joe Teresi by e-mail at jtnia@comcast.net or by phone at (650) 455-4887.

Wednesday, December 14: Millbrae Historical Society Annual Holiday Party, 7:00 to 9:00 pm,
Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. All members are encouraged to attend!

Thursday, February 18, 2017: Rob Ickes & Trey Hensley in Concert, 7:30 pm
Mountain View Masonic Lodge, 890 Church Street, Mountain View
Tickets available through Redwood Bluegrass Associates website: www.rba.org

Fourth Wednesdays of the Month: Millbrae Historical Society Board Meetings, 7:00 pm,
Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. MHS members and guests are welcome to attend!

Millbrae Historical Society Museum Operating Hours

Millbrae Museum: Saturdays, 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm

Millbrae Train Museum: Saturdays, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm