

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: HIGHWAY DISTRICT 10 BY TOM DAWDY

If you ask the average person on the street in Millbrae, "What was **Highway District 10**?", I would bet that most people have never heard of it. This proposed infrastructure project would have split Millbrae in half, and Millbrae would be much different than it is today, but fortunately it never happened. Highway District 10 owned the rights to extend **Junipero Serra Boulevard** through Millbrae. In 1951, the project was moving south, and the extension was already under construction between **Sneath Lane** and **Crystal Springs Road** in San Bruno. The new plan was presented to the public with the proposed route running through Millbrae ending up at Trousdale Drive.



Millbrae's popular Spur Trail was once the planned route for the Junipero Serra Highway

By 1954, everyone in Millbrae was up in arms about this project, and the **Millbrae City Council** agreed to take action. One of the actions was to order a major traffic study.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

I am extremely happy to report to our members that great progress has been made on the Carriage House. We now see the light at the end of the tunnel. Building construction has been completed. As of this Newsletter, the only remaining task is the installation of the permeable driveway pavers! Upon completion of the pavers, the temporary fence will be removed and the City of Millbrae can

come in and restore the side yard.

What are we going to do to fill such a large interior space? Originally, we were going to house the MHS-owned **1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine** in the Carriage House. But, a better option was recently presented. Working with **Central County Fire Battalion Chief Kevin Mernick**, we have opted to house the City-owned **1936 American La**



France Fire Engine currently stored at Central Fire Station 38. The American La France was one of the original pieces of fire apparatus use by the **Millbrae Volunteer Fire Department** back when Millbrae

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

was a sleepy unincorporated area of San Mateo County. I know that we have all seen the American La France on display at the Millbrae Art and Wine Festivals. Once the vehicle comes to the Carriage House, we can enjoy and view it every weekend. We will also display other memorabilia from the old Millbrae Fire Department donated by Central Fire staff. In addition, the **Larkins Surry** currently on display at the South San Francisco **Wells Fargo Bank** branch will be relocated to the Carriage House. Historic photographs of Millbrae and memorabilia that has not been seen in over 70 years will also be exhibited at the new facility. The 1931 Southern Pacific Fire Engine will remain on display at the Millbrae Train Museum.

Allied Security, the same security vendor that protects the two MHS Museums, has installed a state-of-the-art security system in the Carriage House, consisting of fire, smoke, and door and window motion alarms.

I envision opening the Carriage House to the public sometime in mid-November. I will keep everyone posted!!

I hope that you had the opportunity to visit the annual **Millbrae Historical Society Rummage Sale** held on August 12th. It was fantastic! We had a great selection of gently-used merchandise and furniture, even FREE STUFF. Our curator **Dorothy Semke** always does an outstanding job of organizing and pricing the merchandise. Thank you, Dorothy, and your crew for making our rummage sale an outstanding Millbrae event!

FYI, the home at **1 Lewis Avenue**, the oldest house in Millbrae (built in 1865), is for sale. This is the house that **Alfred Green**, the manager of the Millbrae Dairy, owned and resided in. I don't know the asking price, but I'm sure it will be more than Alfred paid for it! The house is also featured on the **Millbrae History Walk** tour route. The Millbrae Historical Society, collaborating with the listing real estate agent, will be hosting a special tour of the house as soon as we can set a date in mid-October. Please be sure we have your e-mail address on file if you would like an invitation.

Millbrae's annual **Japanese Cultural Festival** will be held on **Sunday, October 1st** in the upper Library parking lot. The stage will be located on the west side of the Millbrae Museum. I have offered the Museum to the festival participants to use as a staging area for their performances. The festival is a wonderful way to immerse yourself in the culture and traditions of Japan while right here in Millbrae. Come on down and enjoy the entertainment, exhibits and culinary delights of Japan!

Best wishes,

John Muniz

Millbrae Historical Society President
2009 – Present



Millbrae Carriage House site as it looked in April 2017.



Current state of **Millbrae Carriage House**, as of September 2017.



Interior of the new **Millbrae Carriage House**.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PAUL LARSON

Greetings MHS Trustees, members and friends,

Weather Report: Millbrae has been HOT HOT HOT! I know most of you experienced the past HOT Labor Day weekend. Friday, Saturday and Sunday were hotter on the Peninsula than in much of the rest of the State... very unusual for the Bay Area in September! Remember the famous old quote that was questionably attributed to **Mark Twain**: "The coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco"? Well, over the Labor Day weekend, people were praying for the fog to come back! The high temperature of 106 degrees on Friday, September 1st smashed San Francisco's all-time record of 103 degrees (from June 14, 2000). On Saturday, September 2nd, the **Millbrae Art & Wine Festival** melted in the heat at 104 degrees. Other Bay Area cities couldn't escape the HOT temperatures either, and according to the National Weather Service the following historic September 2nd record highs were also smashed: Calistoga at 112 de-

grees (previous high of 104 degrees in 1998); Healdsburg at 111 degrees (previous high of 110 degrees in 1950); Santa Rosa at 110 degrees (previous high of 107 degrees in 1955); Half Moon Bay at 83 degrees (previous high of 76 in 2009); San Rafael at 105 degrees (previous high of 101 degrees in 1955); San Francisco at 102 degrees (previous high of 94 degrees in 1991); San Francisco Airport at 104 degrees (previous high of 93 degrees in 1950); Oakland Airport at 101 degrees (previous high of 97 degrees in 1950); Moffett Field at 106 degrees (previous high of 93 degrees in 2002); San Jose at 107 degrees (previous high of 102 degrees in 1950); Gilroy at 112 degrees (previous high of 104 degrees in 2002); Santa Cruz at 107 degrees (previous high of 93 degrees in 2009). Yahoo! News reported that fans sold out everywhere that weekend, and replacement stocks were gone in a matter of hours. People flocked to movie theaters and air-conditioned locations. We are lucky, though, that the Peninsula never



stays hot for long. After a few days of living in a frying pan, the cool winds blew in from the Pacific and gave us all a sigh of relief! Can you think of the hottest temperature that you've experienced outside of the Bay Area? I bet it was pretty close to what we all experienced on Labor Day weekend 2017.

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

Paul Larson
MHS 1st Vice President

MILLBRAE NOW AND THEN



Corner of El Camino Real and Hillcrest Blvd in the mid-1940s



Same corner today - some original buildings remain

HIGHWAY DISTRICT 10 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

In 1955, four major recommendations were made to the Council by **"D. Jackson Faustman's Traffic Study"**: (1) extend Broadway into the Mills Estates; (2) dead-end California Drive at Millbrae Avenue; (3) Divert the Junipero Serra Highway to Skyline Blvd; and (4) extend Center Street to connect to the Bayshore Freeway and the Airport interchange. The report found that a new freeway was needed, but that there would be no advantage to routing the highway through Millbrae, and that the Skyline Blvd alignment would be the logical choice.

Fast forwarding to April 1957, Millbrae engages in an all-out fight against the Junipero Serra extension. The proposed extension now had two alternative alignments: Route A and Route B. **Mayor George T Warman** called the proposed highway "the Road to Ruin". Route B was thought to be the lesser of the two evils, but Millbrae could not endorse either plan. Route A would have started at the Crystal Springs Road intersection and crossed Lomita Avenue 300 feet west of Bayview Avenue. Thence heading southwest down from Sleepy Hollow, it would have wiped out the 15th hole at **Green Hills Country Club**. A new interchange would have been constructed here, and curving west the highway would have crossed Anita Lane. From there the road would have crossed Taylor Boulevard and headed southwest towards Millbrae Avenue. After passing through the Mills Estates, there was a proposed intersection at Trousdale Drive.

In May 1957, **Mayor Mel Massolo** outlined Millbrae's opposition to any extension route through Millbrae. Later that year, there was a new proposal labeled "Route C". This new route would bypass Millbrae, Burlingame, and Hillsborough and would be called the **"Junipero Serra Freeway"**. The State Division of Highways held a meet-

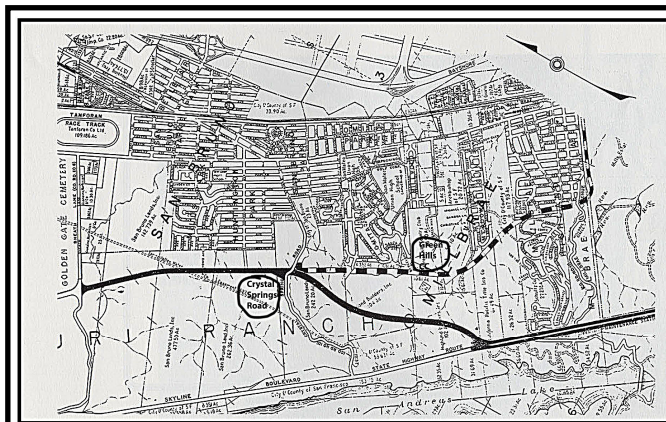
ing on Sept. 26, 1957 describing this new proposed route. Mayor Massolo called this a "wonderful solution", while **Councilman Douglas Morgan** quipped "why didn't anyone think of this before?". Despite Millbrae's opposition, San Bruno officials continued to endorse Route A plunging through the heart of Millbrae.

At this point, it looked like the present "Interstate 280 Freeway alignment" was a done deal, and soon afterwards the Highway District 10 was dissolved. The earlier plans were revived, however, by the State Division of Highways in November 1961. The new plan called for the

Junipero Serra Freeway to follow the Spur property, cross El Camino Real with a overpass, and knock out the **Kings Drive-In** on Millbrae Avenue. The City of San Bruno again endorsed this new proposal. At this point, Millbrae had been fighting this project for ten years!

Fortunately soon afterwards the proposed Junipero Serra Highway was absorbed into the Interstate Highway System, which led to the construction of I-280 connecting San Francisco to San

Jose. Rights to the land in Millbrae which had been held for years for the highway project were obtained by the City of Millbrae in 1969. Most of this land was rezoned for open space in 1975. The par course along Millbrae Avenue, **Josephine Waugh Park** near Hillcrest Blvd, and the **Spur Trail** are now located on this land. A portion of the property at El Camino Real and Millbrae Avenue was sold in 1984 for \$1,100,000 and developed as the **Hong Kong Flower Lounge**. In 1996, I made a proposal to the City Council to authorize the **Sister Cities Commission** to build a small park on the Spur at South Ashton Avenue. We had fundraisers to raise the money needed to build this project, dedicated as **Mosta Grove**, which sits across the street from the beautiful **Rotary Park**.



Original proposed route of 4 lane Highway through Millbrae (Dotted Line)

Special thanks to Rudy Alva at Allied Security Alarms for providing alarm service at the Millbrae Historical Society Museums free of charge for many years. Thanks, Rudy!

CURATOR'S REPORT

DOROTHY SEMKE

Our annual **Rummage Sale** on August 12 was once again a big success due to all of you who either donated or purchased items. It was a beautiful sunny day, and we appreciate all who came. A special thanks to our hard-working members who spent part or all of their day setting up, tearing down or working. These special people, who we can always count on, include **John Muniz**, (docents for the day - **Mary Vella Treseler** and **Gaetane Andrews**), **Ann Schneider**, the **Millbrae Leos**, **Vern Bruce**, **Gloria Borruso**, **Dan & Cathy Quigg**, **Alicia Espinoza**, **Glenda Erickson**, **Val Dambrosio**, **Angela Zink**, **Tom Dawdy**, **Ray Gier**, **Judi Sullivan**,

Kody & Joy Semke, and **Phil & Kathy Atwood**, who for the past five years have traveled from Southern California just to lend a hand.

Welcome to new members **Larry & Barbara Cappel** and **Dennis & Nancy Barbata**. We are so sorry that **Judy Cullina** has taken herself off our docent list due to her busy schedule, but her husband **Tom** has stepped in to fill her space. Welcome Tom!

On August 12, semi-retired Millbrae Police Sgt. **Ron Caine** dropped by with two badges belonging to his mother **Frances Caine** for us to photograph to display in our Police



Section in the **Heritage Room** of the Museum. Frances, who was given the title "Special Deputy Sheriff - Police Artist" worked as a volunteer, accepting no money for over 20 years covering Northern California. She is credited with clearing up over 350 cases.

Dorothy Semke,
Curator

TRAIN MUSEUM NEWS

ELIZABETH FURBER, EDITOR
VERN BRUCE, REPORTER

We have been quite busy with various projects at our **Train Museum**. Our **Board of Trustees** approved the purchase of much-needed professional-looking blinds to replace the badly deteriorating ones we installed 13 years ago. We completed the installation of those in August.

We have also been slowly progressing on the painting of the 1895 car-

riage. Other projects include maintenance of both vintage Ford trucks, sprucing up of the inside of the museum, and restoring the windows on the railroad car.

We must thank the following docents for taking their time to show our visitors through the museum as well as working on the above projects: **Joseph Bonavia**; **Jason**



Brady; **Vern Bruce**; **Richard Kennedy**; **Jay King**; **Gino & Gerry Micheli**; and **Jorge Quezada**. We also thank **Ralph Domenici** for his fine work cleaning up the grounds, weeding, and leaf-blowing.

Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



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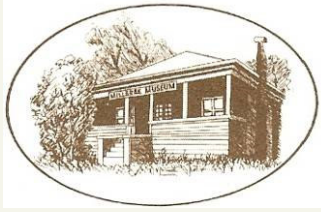
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**MILLBRAE
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SOCIETY**

Post Office Box 511
Millbrae, CA 94030

Phone: 650-692-5786

MHS OFFICERS – 2017-18

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Vern Bruce, Treasurer
Mary Vella Treseler, Parliamentarian

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mid-October: Tour of Historic Alfred Green House (circa 1985), 1 Lewis Avenue
- Be sure that we have your e-mail address on file if you would like an invitation.

Friday, October 20: 2017 Millbrae Man, Woman, & Student of the Year Dinner,
Green Hills Country Club, 500 Ludeman Lane

- No-Host Cocktails at 6:00 pm
- Dinner at 7:00 pm

- Reservations required — call Cathy or Dan Quigg at 245-2185 for an invitation

Ongoing basis: Take time to visit the area behind the Millbrae Museum from time to time to check out the progress on our new **Carriage House** as it nears completion!

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