

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:
COWS IN MILLBRAE?

BY TOM DAWDY



When I was a young kid growing up in **Bayside Manor**, all we had to do is jump over our back fence to play in the cow pasture. Even today, I think of all the good times my friends and I had in the field between our house and the airport. I remember one day we got stuck in the mud, and we all thought it was quicksand. We thought we were all going to sink and die like in the movies we watched at the **Millbrae Theater**. A group of neighborhood moms came to our rescue and pulled us out, and we were certain that they saved our lives that day.

Strangely, it seemed like one day the cows just disappeared from the field. What happened to these cattle that all the kids in Millbrae remember so well?

Although the history of cattle grazing in San Mateo County goes way back, the first dairy farm was not opened in San Mateo County until 1853 when **I.G. Knowles** opened his dairy in Daly City. In 1870, **Darius Ogden Mills** (*Mr. Millbrae*) was developing his estate and saw the need for milk, especially for the city of San Francisco. Mills opened the **Millbrae Dairy** in 1870 and partnered with local resident **Alfred F. Green** (who lived in the house at 1 Lewis Avenue) to run the operation.

Hundreds of cows now made their home in Millbrae. These were not ordinary cows, mind you - they were the best purebred Holstein cattle in the country. During its peak

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT
JOHN MUNIZ

The New City of Millbrae

On **January 14, 1948**, residents of Millbrae traveled to **Sacramento** to present their new City's charter. **W. F. Leutenegger** was elected mayor to represent Millbrae's nearly 8,000 residents. The first public meeting of the Millbrae City Council was held on **January 20, 1948** at the **Taylor**

Middle School Auditorium. Millbrae became the 13th incorporated city in San Mateo County on **January 15, 1948!**

I am describing the first City Council meeting as a reminder of **Millbrae's Diamond Jubilee** on **January 14, 2023**. The City of Millbrae is in the process of planning many celebrations to commemorate Millbrae 75th anniversary throughout 2023. **Tom**



Dawdy, Joe Teresi and **Wayne Lee** are representing the Historical Society on the Planning Committee. Keep on the lookout for information from the city about event dates and times.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Pictured Front row, left to right:

James T. Kilpatrick
WM F. Leutenegger, Mayor of Millbrae
Harold C. Taylor

Pictured Back row, left to right:

George T. Warman, City Clerk Pro tem
George L. Kelly
R. F. Reifscheider, City Treasurer

Not Pictured:

John W. Colberd, City Attorney



First Meeting of the Millbrae City Council - 01/20/1948

Elsewhere in this newsletter, Joe Teresi announces that the interpretive signage for the **Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail** project has been completed! Joe has been diligently working on this project for over three years. Some of you may recognize the project site (pictured at right) as the entrance to the **Sawyer Camp Trail**. Travel to the top of Hillcrest Blvd, cross under the 280 freeway and you can't miss the site. I am anticipating the dedication of this site on **Thursday, December 15th** with great excitement!

I hope that you braved the rain and attended the **City of Millbrae Tree Lighting** on **Saturday, December 3rd** in front of City Hall. It was certain to get you into the Holiday spirit! I heard that Santa was spotted at the event and that the crowd was greeted by a dusting of snow!



All the best to everyone,
 John Muniz
 Millbrae Historical Society President
"The Past is our Key to the Future."

DEDICATION OF NEW OHLONE-PORTOLÁ HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE PANELS IN MILLBRAE



You're Invited!

About:

The Millbrae Historical Society, in collaboration with the San Mateo County Parks Department, the San Mateo County Historical Association, the City of Millbrae, and the Millbrae Community Foundation has recently completed the design and installation of new educational panels interpreting the historic and cultural significance of the site of the State Historical Marker located at the top of Hillcrest Blvd in Millbrae, describing the practices of the native Ohlone inhabitants of the area as well as the Portolá Expedition's experiences during their exploration of the region. Please join us as we celebrate the dedication of these new community resources.



When: Thursday, December 15th at 10:00 am

Where: Top of Hillcrest Blvd (at Sawyer Camp Trail trailhead), Millbrae

Please walk, bike, or carpool and park along both sides of Skyline Blvd. south of Hillcrest Blvd.

Questions: Please contact Joe Teresi at (650) 455-4887

www.millbraehs.org



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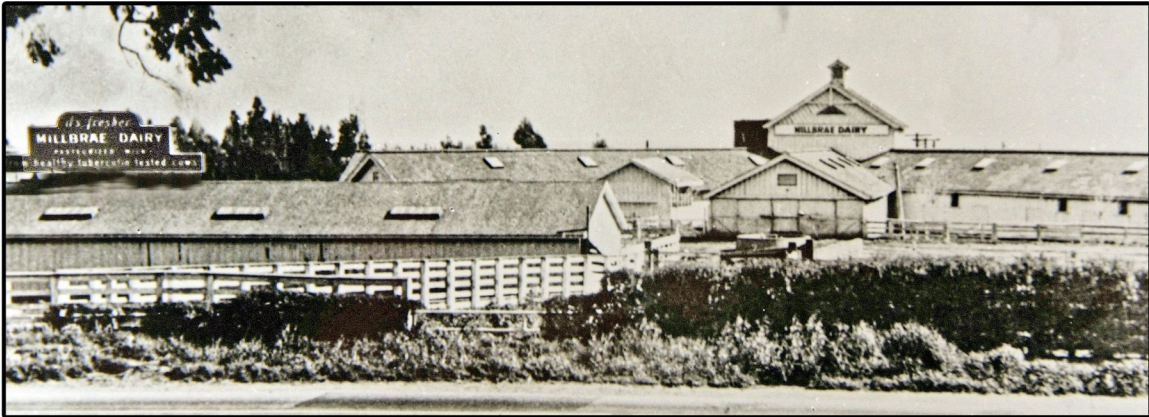
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COWS IN MILLBRAE?
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Millbrae Dairy 1870-1948



period, the Millbrae Dairy produced 750 gallons of milk per day that were shipped by train to all the finest hotels in San Francisco. The dairy also had daily milk delivery routes on the Peninsula and in San Francisco. This immaculate facility was the largest dairy in San Mateo County, and their fine Holstein cattle were sold all over the world. There were stories from people in the early 1900's traveling through Millbrae on the dusty **El Camino Real** seeing cattle from the Millbrae Dairy being herded along the highway to different pastures.

In the 1930's, changes came to the dairy. **Borden's Milk** took over the operation, and in 1937 the dairy went out of the retail milk business. In 1942, **Frank Zwissig**, a well-known dairy man, leased the Millbrae Dairy. Zwissig added more cows and ramped up the production of milk to meet the emergency needs of World War II workers and the military in the Bay Area.

After the war, Zwissig acquired a 780-acre ranch in Napa along the **Silverado Trail**. He remodeled all its dairy fa-

cilities there, and in 1948 moved 400 cows to his new ranch in Napa. He did leave a couple hundred of his young stock to graze on the pasture lands in Millbrae. At this same time, in October of 1948, **Leslie Moore**, the general manager of the **Mills Estate**, announced that the Millbrae Dairy, a 78-year landmark on El Camino Real, would be demolished immediately. So this was the beginning of the end of the "Cows in Millbrae".

Cattle grazing reached its peak on the Peninsula in the 1960's when there were an estimated 48,000 cattle in San Mateo County. 8,200 of these were dairy cows. It has been written that they gained a reputation as destructive 1,000-pound beasts, turning creeks into mud holes, overgrazing lush fields, and escaping broken fences to pose risks to drivers. As farmers retired and their land was bought by conservation districts, the cows were evicted. Today there are fewer than 1,000 cattle in San Mateo County. So this answers the question I have been asking all my life - the cows in the pasture were evicted! Long live the San Francisco Garter snakes and the red-legged frogs!

CURATOR'S REPORT

DOROTHY SEMKE

It is such a pleasure to once again see all of you in person at the Museum! If you haven't been in yet, do try to come as there are new exhibits to see.

We would like to welcome new members **Gina Miranda, Sandra Gaunt, James Shea, Zoe Evanchik, Steven Finacom,** and **Rose Ann & Norm Goodwin.** Also we are welcoming two new docents **Zoe Evanchik** and **Lorianne Richardson.** We are very happy to have them joining us.

On October 4, we were able to host a field trip of 60 second and third grade students from **Spring Valley**

School. I have to say our children in Millbrae are the best. Their teacher **Elizabeth Graff** has been bringing her students for the past few years. She has worked up a scavenger hunt for them within the Museum and Carriage House with small groups of six led by a chaperone. They alternate rooms and then go on to visit the Library and City Hall. They then walk back to school for lunch.

Thank you to **Gaetane Andrews'** friend who donated both a 1950's wall calendar and hat to match one of our mannequin's dress. Thanks also to **Caroline Cannizzaro** for the



beautifully put-together album of her late husband, former Millbrae Mayor **Frank Cannizzaro** and also for the coffee mug commemorating the opening of the Millbrae Overpass.

Stay well,
Dorothy Semke

TRAIN MUSEUM NEWS

VERN BRUCE

Hello everyone!

We had a wonderful and very successful **Grand Re-Opening of our Train Museum** on **Saturday, October 22.** In spite of rain earlier that morning, and a biting-cold wind, we had a good turnout. **President John Muniz** spoke first, giving his as-usual inspirational speech. **Vice-Mayor Gina Papan,** also gave an inspirational presentation. We then went on to hear from

myself, the **Train Museum Director,** about a brief history of the museum, as well as what future projects are in process and 'dream' projects that we hope to accomplish. The ceremony was completed with a ribbon-cutting by our Vice-Mayor, Gina Papan.

A special thanks goes out to those volunteers that helped out with the planning and implementation of the event: **Ben Guzzardi; Charlie He-**



garty; Jay King; Joscelyn Lampman; John Muniz; Peter Sheerin; and Rose Shubin.

MILLBRAE 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Millbrae Diamond Jubilee
Saturday, January 14
11:00 am - 3:00 pm
Millbrae Recreation Center

Please plan on attending the kick-off event for the City of Millbrae's Diamond Jubilee (75th Anniversary)

at the beautiful new Millbrae Recreation Center. There will be food, entertainment, and activities for residents of all ages. There will be a special room curated by the Historical Society featuring historic photos, maps and exhibits. Mark your calendars and plan to be there!!



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



**MILLBRAE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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Phone: 650-692-5786

MHS OFFICERS – 2022-23

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 & Carriage House Curator

Ray Gier, Museum Facilitator

Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor

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

Thursday, December 15: Ohlone-Portola Interpretive Panels Dedication Ceremony

- 10:00 am; meet at the top of Hillcrest Blvd. (Sawyer Camp Trailhead)
- Please join us for the dedication of the new interpretive panels
- Please park along Skyline Blvd. south of Hillcrest Blvd. & bring your own folding chair

Saturday, January 14: Millbrae 75th Anniversary Celebration

- 11:00 am–3:00 pm; Millbrae Recreation Center
- Enjoy this special event kicking off the City of Millbrae's Jubilee Year!

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!
(Please note that Board meetings are being held online via Zoom until further notice)