

# 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: MILLBRAE'S ROTARY PARK BY TOM DAWDY



One of the great things about living in Millbrae is that people living in our town often band together to make the City more beautiful and enjoyable. One example is a lovely place named **Rotary Park** on the corner of South Ashton Avenue and Millbrae Avenue. When I joined the **Rotary Club of Millbrae** in 1980, plans were already underway to develop this piece of land on the **Spur Trail** into Millbrae's newest park. This project was "hands-on", and everyone from our Club was out digging and trimming. Rotary partnered with forestry students from the **San Mateo County Regional Occupation Program** (ROP) on the project. The students helped us out a great deal and also helped us to maintain the park for many years. In turn, Rotary gave out generous "ROP Scholarships" to the students in this great program. In the early years, the park was very rustic. Picnic tables were carved from wood, and tree stumps were made into benches. We even built a bridge across the creek on the north side of the park that connected to Millbrae Avenue. Although the bridge was very cool, it was deemed a little dangerous, and after several years we had to remove the bridge and fence off the creek.

Over the past 40 years, Rotary has partnered with the City of Millbrae to implement many improvements to the park. Gone are the classic wooden picnic tables, replaced with commercial-grade tables and BBQ's that are now enjoyed by Millbrae residents.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

**Caltrain** will launch fully-electrified train service on **September 21st**. Caltrain has asked the **City of Millbrae** to co-host a small celebration at the Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station on **Sunday, September 22nd** from 12:30 to 1:30 pm. In conjunction with the Caltrain celebration, the Millbrae Historical Society will open the **Millbrae Train Museum** from 12:30 to 3:30 pm.

We invite you and your family to view our historic tribute to railroading on the San Francisco Peninsula. The first Millbrae train depot was built in 1863 when the **San Francisco-San Jose Railroad** was built, providing freight and passenger service to San Jose. The land for the depot was donated by **Darius Ogden Mills**. The 1863 Millbrae depot was destroyed by fire in 1890, and its replacement was also burned to the



ground in 1906. The current Southern Pacific depot building was constructed in 1907. This depot, listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**, serves as the Millbrae Train Museum.

(continued on Page 2)

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

In 1870, the **Southern Pacific Railroad** took over the route and operated trains until 1980, when Caltrain took over the line. The Caltrain legacy continues today. The Caltrain diesel-electric trains will be replaced with electric trains manufactured by **Stadler US** at their facility in Salt Lake City, Utah.

After the celebration at the Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station at 1:30 pm, walk south under the Millbrae Avenue overpass along California Drive to the Millbrae Train Museum, which will be open until 3:30 pm. Walk through the interior of the 1941 **City of San Francisco** Pullman sleeper car. Check out the Southern Pacific depot waiting room and ticket booth in their near original condition. Take a peek at the 1929 **REA** delivery truck, a 1931 Southern Pacific fire engine, a carriage from the **Borel Estate**, and other hands-on exhibits from the Golden Age of railroading on the Peninsula. As you are touring, enjoy watching the new electrified Caltrains whiz by.

Thank you,  
John Muniz  
Millbrae Historical Society President



Millbrae Train Museum



New electric Caltrain trainset



Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station



1941 City of San Francisco Pullman sleeping car

Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



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## VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### PAUL LARSON

Greetings MHS Trustees, members and friends,

As of this writing, I just got word about the **Caltrain** electrification celebration event on the weekend of September 21-22, 2024. The completion of this modernization project, with installation of overhead electricity powering new shiny trainsets, is a milestone in the history of the line. This improvement paves the way for eventual **High Speed Rail** to connect Southern California to San Francisco.

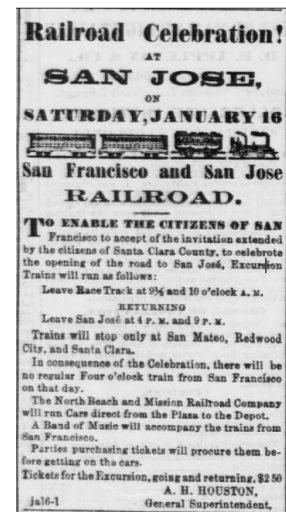
2024 marks the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of rail service between San Francisco and San Jose, the oldest continuously-run railroad west of the Mississippi. Its history dates back to 1851 when the idea for a rail line between San Francisco and San Jose was first proposed. I recently saw it noted in the news that the line up the Peninsula was inaugurat-

ed by **President Abraham Lincoln** himself! On **January 16, 1864**, the first steam train made its way down the Peninsula to San Jose.

Anticipation for rail transportation on the Peninsula and the state is at an all-time high. We all know the evolution of California High Speed Rail is not as fast as we would prefer, but let's be patient. The powers-that-be are working to make sure construction is done the right way with safety being a priority. Even though the cost for building High Speed Rail is daunting, it is very possible that in the near future we may enjoy a quick rail trip from Millbrae to Disneyland! Yes, that's the dream!

All my best wishes to you and your family, from MHS 1st VP Paul Larson,

Paul



## APPOINTMENT FOR DISTRICT 2 AND DISTRICT 4 COUNCIL SEATS

On August 22, 2024, the San Mateo County Chief Elections Officer Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder certified the results of the [July 23, 2024 Special Election](#), in which Councilmember Angelina Cahalan of District 2 and Vice Mayor Maurice Goodman of District 4 were recalled.

At the [August 27, 2024 City Council meeting](#), the Council decided to open the application process for District 2 and District 4 City Council vacancies.

<b>District 2</b>	One (1) Member of the City Council, Partial Term to end December 8, 2026
<b>District 4</b>	One (1) Member of the City Council, Partial Term to end December 8, 2026

For these Council appointments, eligible applicants must be at least 18 years of age and a qualified elector and resident of the City of Millbrae in Council District 2 or District 4, continuously, for at least 30 days by the time of appointment. The application also requires the filing of a [Statement of Economic Interest \(Form 700\)](#).

For additional information, please contact City Clerk Elaine Tran at [etran@ci.millbrae.ca.us](mailto:etran@ci.millbrae.ca.us) by calling (650) 259-2414.

The application period is August 29  
through October 1, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.



## MILLBRAE'S ROTARY PARK (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Millbrae Rotary has also acquired several grants to improve the playground for Millbrae kids. In 1998, in celebration of **Millbrae's 50th Anniversary**, Rotary hosted a free **Kid's Halloween Carnival** in the park. This year will be the 26<sup>th</sup> year of the Carnival. In my opinion, Rotary Park is one of the real underrated gems in Millbrae.

Millbrae is blessed with many well-maintained parks. Some of these have been created by community groups. For example, **Lion Bill Mitchell Park** (built by the **Millbrae Lions Club**) is located at the end of Richmond Drive. **La Serena Plaza** adjacent to the Millbrae Library is a great place to take a break and enjoy the shade un-

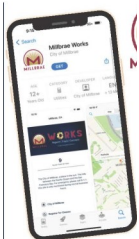
der the willow trees or relax in the gazebo. Don't forget **Mosta Grove** across the street from Rotary Park. I had the great pleasure to head the committee to propose and create this special place in Millbrae.

What's in the future for Rotary Park? I would love to see a nice restroom in the park one day. This would be a great asset for families utilizing the park and for small events like the Kids Halloween Carnival. My motto about the park is "It's always a beautiful day at Rotary Park"

— Millbrae Historian Tom Dawdy



### Rotary Park History



**WORKS**  
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**iOS and Android Phone Apps  
are now available for  
download!**

The City of Millbrae has launched request management software Millbrae Works powered by SeeClickFix. The application is available for all residents to download on any Apple or Android device. The Millbrae Works app allows Millbrae residents who identify community repair or service request needs to submit photos, location information, and details directly to City of Millbrae administrative staff members.

## CURATOR'S REPORT

### DOROTHY SEMKE

We are happy to report two new members who have joined the Millbrae Historical Society - welcome to **Lori Coustier** and **Zoe Batarseh**! Zoe has also chosen to become our newest docent. We thank her very much and really appreciate her help.

In case you have noticed a 1950 **American Flyer** wagon on the Museum porch which may bring back good memories for some of you, it was kindly donated by **Dan and Cathy Quigg**. Thank you so much for this addition and for all the other items you have donated in the past!

A first time visitor presented us with a replica of an old **United States Coast Guard** ship, which we have

on display in the living room. Our Facilitator **Ray Gier** found a very interesting piece online about this ship. It is the last ship named the **Eagle** still on water. Look it up online - they do an interesting tour of the boat.

Our 1st Vice-President **Paul Larson** recently donated a painting his very talented father did back in the early 1940's of **Abraham Lincoln**. It is beautifully painted and framed and now hangs in our **Carriage House Museum**. Some of you may not know that Paul's father started the **Chapel of the Highlands**. Thank you Paul for sharing this treasure with us!



Once again our President **John Muniz** has paid for the framing of a document he located. It is a 1952 **Millbrae Chamber of Commerce** Directory. It can be found hanging on the wall in front of the office. Thank you President John for all you do for us!

Stay well,  
**Dorothy Semke**  
Curator

## 2024 MILLBRAE VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to the 2024 Millbrae Volunteers of the Year! Come celebrate our wonderful community volunteers at a ceremonial dinner on **Friday, October 18** from 6:00 to 9:00 pm at the Green Hills Country Club. \$85 per person. **RSVP required**; please contact Cathy Quigg at (650) 245-2185 for an invitation.

Volunteers of the Year —> **Wayne Lee & Maureen Davis**  
Student Volunteer of the Year —> **David Huang**

## TRAIN MUSEUM NEWS

### VERNON BRUCE

Our volunteers have been very busy adding and enhancing many displays here at the **Millbrae Train Museum**. Among the many things done, **James (Jay) King** and I finished the restoration of the children's rocking train. It now rides smoother and has extra safety enhancements (not that it was unsafe in the first place!). The stairway to the railcar **Civic Center** has also been repaired so that it will last many years into the future. Jay has donated many items towards both of those projects.

Our other volunteers, **Elisha Cabatic**, **Ben Guzzardi**, **Charlie Hegarty**, and **Peter Sheerin** have been very busy doing everything from keeping things cleaned up, to repainting numerous items, to sophisticated computer work.

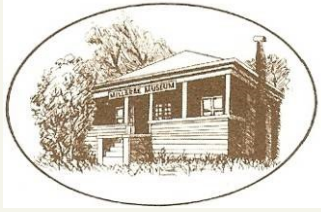
Please drop by for a visit to see what we've accomplished, since we're always open between 10am and 2pm on Saturdays.

Vernon W. Bruce  
Train Museum Director





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**MILLBRAE  
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SOCIETY**

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**MHS OFFICERS – 2024-25**

**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**

**Saturday, September 21: Relay for Life of North Peninsula**

- 9:00 am–8:30 pm; Millbrae Central Park
- Attend this community event to support the programs of the American Cancer Society

**Sunday, September 22: Caltrain Electrification Celebration**

- 12:30–1:30 pm; Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station
- Celebrate the start of Caltrain electric train service; visit the Millbrae Train Museum

**Friday, October 18: Millbrae Volunteers of the Year Dinner**

- 6:00–9:00 pm; Green Hills Country Club, 500 Ludeman Lane, Millbrae
- Please attend this special event honoring Millbrae volunteers; RSVP required

**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)