

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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BRIEF HISTORY OF SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT

BY JOE TERESI



San Francisco International Airport is Millbrae's most prominent neighbor. Currently ranked as the tenth busiest airport in the United States, it started out on a much more modest scale in 1927. The original airport, known as Mills Field, was built on 150 acres of cow pasture leased from prominent landowner Darius Ogden Mills. The original terminal building

(pictured at left) was opened in 1937. The airport was renamed San Francisco Municipal Airport in 1931 and later to San Francisco International Airport in 1955 with the advent of international flights. Terminal 2, which is scheduled to reopen in April 2011 following an extensive remodeling project, was opened in 1954 and served as the airport's main terminal for many decades. Terminals 1 and 3, which flank Terminal 2 on either side, were added later and remodeled extensively over the years. The most significant changes to SFO came in 2000 with the opening of the new \$1 billion International Terminal, along with the AirTrain automated internal transportation system, and the opening of a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Airport Station in the International Terminal. The Inter-

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

JOHN MUNIZ

Spring is fast approaching, and it is time once again for our annual installation of the Millbrae Historical Society Officers and Board of Trustees. Please mark your calendars for **Sunday, March 20th**, at 1:00 PM at the Millbrae Public Library. Our Vice-Mayor **Marge Colapietro** will be swearing in our new Officers and Board of Directors for 2011-12. We will have

refreshments, and a Concentration game about the history of Millbrae. Our guest speaker will be **Dennis Sharp**, Assistant Curator of the San Francisco International Airport Museum, who will have some interesting insights and information about the relationship between San Francisco International Airport and the history of Millbrae. We will also be presenting our "Living History



Award" to a member of the Millbrae Historical Society who has demonstrated exemplary dedication and service to the Society over many years. Our "Living History Award" has only (continued on Page 2)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

been presented to nine dedicated individuals over the past 40-year history of the Millbrae Historical Society.

How many young people today know what an anvil is or its purpose? Not many. An anvil was used in the blacksmithing industry to shape and bend metal. As one of the Millbrae Historical Society's newest exhibits, we will soon have the original anvil that was used in **Alfred Gee's** blacksmith shop which operated in Millbrae from just after the 1906 earthquake until the 1940's. We will also obtain the forge that was used to heat the metal to be shaped on the anvil. The exhibit will be ready for viewing by June. A big thank you to **Ray Breitenstein** from the Sharpsteen Museum in Calistoga for donating the anvil and forge to the Millbrae Historical Society. Ray grew up in Millbrae and worked at the Millbrae Cabinet Shop for many years.

Speaking of exhibits, we have several new exhibits of late nineteenth century clothing displayed at the Museum. Also, many of our display cases have been upgraded with new lighting that enhances our collection of historical memorabilia. The new display case lighting was installed by one of our newest members, **Tom Wooley**. So come on down and check out our new clothing displays.

Our Board of Trustees voted to approve a new category of membership to the Millbrae Historical Society. We now have a "Lifetime Business Membership". A one-time four hundred dollar donation entitles a business to lifetime membership, a beautiful framed certificate that can be display in the member's business, and ad space in the Millbrae Historical Society newsletter. If you know a business owner who might be interested, please have them contact me. Thank you to our first Lifetime Business Members: **Corey, Luzaich, Pliska, De Ghetaldi & Nas-tari, LLP, Mateo Avenue Mini Storage, and Millbrae Lock**. Please patronize these businesses whenever possible.

I would also like to thank **Allied Security Alarms** of South San Francisco for providing security alarm service free of charge to the Millbrae Historical Society Museum for many years.

Later this year, don't forget our annual **Fourth of July Picnic**, on Monday, July 4th. Keep checking your Millbrae Historical Society newsletter for further details. Our annual **Millbrae Historical Society Yard Sale** will be held on Saturday, August 13, in front of the Millbrae Museum. If you have any items that you would like to donate to the yard sale, please bring them by the Museum, or give me a

call and I will pick up your donation. Thank you.

Get in shape for spring and summer by exploring Millbrae's history on our three-mile **Millbrae History Walk**. Pick up our brochure, which contains a detailed map, and look for our History Walk markers on the sidewalks. History Walk brochures can also be picked up at City Hall or the Millbrae Library.

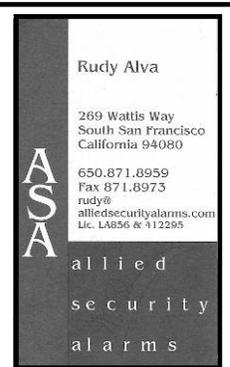
Museum Curator **Alma Massolo** has recently been under the weather. It is my hope that Alma will soon be able to return to her beloved Museum, which she has worked so diligently to enhance and preserve.

As we progress through the New Year, and technology changes our lives on a daily basis, we must pause to remember where we came from and where we are going. The best way to accomplish this is through an appreciation of history. Looking back to the past and viewing the way lives were lived makes us appreciate what we have today. What we have in Millbrae is something we can all be proud of. We have a beautiful museum and train depot that are distinct from any other. Please support your Millbrae Historical Society and the good work we do in preserving our past for our future. Thank you and congratulations to our Board of Trustees, who give of their time and talents to preserve our history. Thank you to our great and beautiful city of Millbrae, our place in the sun, and its citizens for allowing us to preserve our history. I am grateful and proud to be entering my third term as your President. I know our first President and founder John Brucato would be proud of we have accomplished over the past forty years.

Best wishes from your Millbrae Historical Society President, **John Muniz**

"The Past is our Key to the Future."

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



VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PAUL LARSON

Greetings MHS Members, Trustees and Friends.

Rain, rain go away...come again another day. As of this writing, the rain has stopped...and we even had a chance of snow! A few weeks back, there was a layer of hail coating cars and the parking lot at the El Rancho Inn and on El Camino Real...all looking like snow! I know there have been historical periods of snow in Millbrae. Several stand out — notably January 1962 and, according to Wikipedia, “the last measurable occurrence was on February 5, 1976”. The weather forecasters predicted snow at sea level back on February 25, but we all know how that turned out!

I'm excited about our upcoming MHS Installation of Officers taking place at the Millbrae Library on **Sunday, March 20th** at 1:00 pm.

I again will serve as MHS Vice-President. We have an interesting guest speaker: SFO Historical Museum curator **Dennis Sharp**. The airport is a favorite topic of mine, and I look forward to Mr. Sharp's presentation. Millbrae's history is so closely linked to the Airport's history that it would be nice to see our museums work hand-in-hand.

I just returned from a trip to the wine country and visited the old 1850's **Toscano Hotel** on the historic main plaza in Sonoma. The building's interior was nicely staged with beautiful 1860ish period furnishing, but the docent told me that its true function was originally a working man's stopover catering to Italian immigrants. Guests would pay for a meal and bed...but not a room. Beds would be placed wherever there was space, and sometimes there would be 20 people sleeping per



room. According to the docent, the place would have stunk. There was no indoor plumbing, and the “kitchen / Italian restaurant” was in a separate building which was also very interesting to see. If you are ever in Sonoma, please make a point to visit the main plaza and see the many historical buildings including the **Toscano Hotel**, **Mexican Army Barracks**, and **Mission San Francisco Solano**.

I hope you are having a wonderful month. Attached to this message are my many well wishes for you, your family and loved ones,
Paul Larson

TRAIN MUSEUM NEWS

ELIZABETH FURBER, EDITOR
VERN BRUCE, REPORTER

In a few months, all the windows will be sealed on the rail car **Civic Center**. After that project is completed, we intend to repaint/restore each bedroom one at a time, starting toward the end of summer. Our final interior modifications will be that of replacing the carpeting throughout the car.

During the winter, the number of visitors has been fairly low. We had

a welcome increase this last couple of weeks, however, due to our unusually warm spell. Please drop by if you haven't visited lately, as we are always changing the displays.

Our newsletter editor, and train museum docent, **Liz Furber**, is recovering from her car accident very remarkably. She is now at home. We hope to see her in the near future.



Thanks go to our docents who have faithfully kept our museum staffed these few months. They include: **Robert Gorran; Gino and Gerry Micheli; Richard Kennedy; and Vern, William and Theresa Bruce**.

MHS 2011-12 OFFICER / TRUSTEE NOMINEES

The MHS Nominating Committee has placed the following names into nomination to serve as MHS Officers and Trustees for the year 2011-12:

President:	John Muniz
Vice-President:	Paul Larson
Secretary:	Alicia Espinoza
Treasurer:	Vern Bruce

Parliamentarian: Mary Vella Treseler
Trustees: Tom Dawdy, Dorothy Semke, Lois Way, Judy Cullina, Clay Priola, and Cathy Quigg.

Please patronize our new Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:

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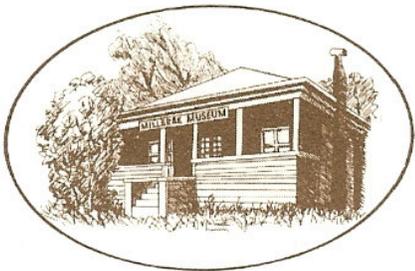
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Be sure to join us for this year's
**Millbrae Historical Society
 Annual Officer/Board Installation**

Sunday, March 20
 1:00 to 3:00 pm

Millbrae Library Meeting Room
 1 Library Avenue

Join your fellow Historical Society members as we install the new Officers & Board of Trustees for 2011.



- Special Presentation: *History of San Francisco Airport*
 Dennis Sharp, Asst. Curator of Aviation SFO Museum
- Special Activity: *Concentration* game show
 - Contestants selected from the audience
 - Prizes up for grabs!
 - Fun for all!

CURATOR'S REPORT

ALMA MASSOLO

It is with great pleasure that I begin my article with a profound thank you and appreciation to my assistant **Dorothy Semke** who kept the Museum in operation as usual during my illness. A job very well done! Thank you, Dorothy!

Clay Priola has joined the Millbrae Historical Society and volunteered to be a docent. Being raised in Millbrae gives him an keen insight on the history of our community. His specialty is reading and understanding maps. We also thank him for his kind donations of a mannequin, tools for use in the Museum, and an aerial photograph. We happily welcome you, Clay!

And of course we are delighted to have **Cathy and Dan Quigg** join our docent staff. Being involved in city government, they can be very useful in answering questions asked by our visitors wanting to know more about our community and the workings of the city.

Good news!!! **Margaret Ruggles**, who has been on leave for several months due to a fall, has fully recovered and will resume her docent duty. We are very happy to have you back, Margaret!

We extend a warm welcome to **Judy and Thomas Cullina** as new members of the Society. Judy is also becoming a Trustee on the Executive Board of the Millbrae Historical Society. We are looking forward to having her join us in helping to preserve our heritage and the history of Millbrae.

Thank you to **Tom Wooley** for his continued interests in improving our electrical components at the Museum for better lighting in our cases and wherever needed.

Thank you also to **Louise and Armando Pera** for their donation of the music bench placed in front of the pump organ in the **Fran Baxter** Room. It was much needed!



Janet McGovern from the Caltrain office visited our Museum in search of information on **D.O. Mills** and his connection to the railroad and the Caltrain corridor for her work in compiling and writing a new book for the Arcadia Publishing series. Much information was given to her, and she was most grateful.

My personal message.....

I wish to thank the Trustees and Officers for the beautiful card and the messages each of you sent to me on my return home from the hospital. I was very impressed, and I feel that we at the Millbrae Historical Society are one great family. Thanks to everyone for all the healing wishes.

— **Alma Massolo**

HISTORY OF SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

national Terminal, with its 1.8 million square feet of floor space, is the largest international terminal in North America.

The relationship between the airport and the residents of Millbrae has not always been positive. During the 1940's, an entire hillside in upper Millbrae was bulldozed in order to provide fill material that was placed in the Bay to lengthen the airport runways. The dirt from the borrow site, which was known as the Macco Pit, was trucked across town along a route paralleling today's Richmond Drive and thence to the airport 18 hours a day for years. The dust and

noise produced by the dirt hauling operation created a great deal of anger and resentment in the com-

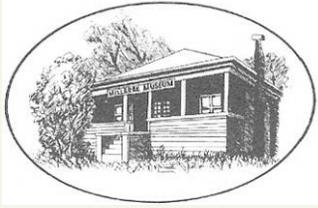


munity. The hauling operation was eventually halted due to lawsuits filed by local residents. The borrow site was later developed as the Millbrae Meadows subdivision.

Aircraft engine noise has also been a substantial irritant to Millbrae residents, particularly those living east of El Camino Real. During the 1980s, the Airport spent millions of dollars to install double-pane windows and insulation in homes located in the peak noise impact zone.

Today, the San Francisco International Airport provides significant economic benefits to Millbrae through employment of local residents, and as a major source of customers for local hotels, restaurants, and retail stores. The airport also makes access to any part of the world just a short drive away.

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



**MILLBRAE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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Millbrae, CA 94030
Phone: 650-692-5786

MHS OFFICERS—2011

John Muniz, President
Paul Larson, Vice-President
Alicia Espinoza, Secretary
Vern Bruce, Treasurer
Alma Massolo, Curator & Historian

Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor

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

Sunday, March 20: Millbrae Historical Society Installation of 2011 Officers and Board of Trustees, 1:00 pm, Millbrae Library Community Room, 1 Library Avenue.

- featuring a guest speaker, simulated game show, light refreshments, & good company.

Monday, July 4: Annual Fourth of July Barbeque and Family Picnic, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, David Chetcuti Community Room, 450 Poplar Avenue.

- Co-sponsored by the Millbrae Historical Society and the Millbrae Lions Club.

Saturday, August 13: Millbrae Historical Society Yard Sale, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue.

- Please consider donating items as you start your Spring cleaning around the house!

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