

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: THE BATTLE OF MILLBRAE BY TOM DAWDY

Today in Millbrae, occasionally there are some disagreements and compromises that in the long run make Millbrae a better place to live. But in the second half of the 1940's, Millbrae fought battles on two major fronts, while at the same time going through the incorporation process to become its own City! In these battles, guns were drawn, lawsuits were plentiful, and hills were blown up shattering windows of homes in the **Millbrae Highlands** neighborhood.

Most of us are familiar with the battle on our southern border with **Burlingame**. As early as 1937, Burlingame began eyeing the Mills Estate. While Millbrae claimed this area as its own, Millbrae was not yet incorporated. Several years later in 1944, a **Millbrae Taxpayers Association** was formed. The **Millbrae Sun** sponsored a straw poll that indicated incorporation was favored by a 2-to-1 margin. A long battle for control of the Mills Estate started be-

tween Burlingame and Millbrae that continued until Millbrae was incorporated on January 14, 1948, when local officials drove to Sacramento to obtain the certificate of incorporation from the Secretary of State. The very next evening, the first Millbrae City Council was sworn in at Taylor School and held their first meeting. **W.F. Leutenegger** became Millbrae's first Mayor. Millbrae ended up conceding several hundred acres of land to Burlingame, including commercial land east of El Camino Real.

Meanwhile, in the early 1940's **San Francisco Airport** needed landfill to expand. The **Macco Corporation** and **Morrison-Knudson Inc.** won the contracts to supply the landfill by blasting out the northern hills of Millbrae and hauling the dirt to the Airport. By 1946 the haul road was finished. The road went through the current **Meadow Glen** neighborhood.

(continued on Page 4)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

Friends and fellow members,

Many moons have passed since our last Millbrae Historical Society newsletter, and I have much information to impart to our members and friends. Please plan on attending our annual Millbrae Historical Society Officer Installation on **Sunday, March 30th** at 1:00 pm in Library Room "A". Once again we will have an in-

credible program and lots of refreshments. In addition to the swearing in of our Officers and Trustees, our program will be **'Little Boxes'**, a fascinating architectural and historical journey through the Westlake District of Daly City, one of America's first and most iconic postwar suburbs. The 43-minute documentary film will be presented by filmmaker **Robert Keil**, followed by a question and answer session. No reservation



required — just show up!

As mentioned in my last newsletter, this is the year the Museum will be painted (I hope). For the past two years, I have written to the City of Millbrae concerning the
(continued on Page 2)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

poor condition of the exterior of the Millbrae Museum. Last month I wrote another letter to our city fathers and supplied photographs. I contacted two professional painting companies, gave them a tour of the Museum, and solicited cost estimates. I also contacted the **Kelly Moore** store in Millbrae requesting assistance with the painting of the Museum. As a good corporate citizen, Kelly Moore has offered to donate the primer and paint to repaint the Museum at no cost. I have proposed a joint partnership between the City of Millbrae (the owner of the Museum building and property), the Millbrae Historical Society, and Kelly Moore to get the Museum painted. The Museum has not been painted since 2004, and the peeling paint contains lead, which means that special preparations must be made to contain the old paint in accordance with OSHA standards. The painting contractor chosen to repaint the Museum must use environmentally-safe practices, which means a more labor intensive and expensive process. I will keep you posted on the progress of the project to repaint our grand Museum structure and restore it to a condition more fitting with its architectural beauty and historical value.

The Millbrae Historical Society is the proud owner of two antique carriages — one is housed in the lobby of the **Wells Fargo Bank** on Linden Avenue in South San Francisco, and the other surrey is located at the Millbrae Train Museum in a state of total dilapidation. How it got to its current state of disrepair is another story, but the bottom line here is that we have to restore the surrey to its original state or dump it because Caltrain has complained that it is an eyesore. Therefore, I have tasked a blue ribbon committee of MHS members to develop a budget to restore the surrey and to present a proposal to the Board of Trustees to either fund the restoration or dump the surrey. The committee has determined by the markings on the wheel hubs that the surrey was manufactured by **Larkin's & Co** of San Francisco, makers of high-grade carriages from the 1860's through the 1920's. The surrey was housed in the Millbrae branch of Wells Fargo Bank until the bank interior was remodeled. Pictured on the left is the surrey before the damage; on the right is the surrey as it looks today.



The Millbrae Historical Society's **Friday Night at the Movies** series will restart on **Friday, April 18th** at 6:30 pm at the Millbrae Museum, focusing on "Blockbuster

Movies". April 18th is the 108th anniversary of the great San Francisco earthquake and fire. To commemorate and remember those who perished and lived through this memorable part of local history, we will present the 1936 MGM hit **San Francisco**, starring **Clark Gable**, **Spencer Tracy**, and **Jeanette MacDonald**. A list of the upcoming films is shown on Page 3. All movies are presented on the wide screen and in Technicolor where applicable.

As you know, each year the Millbrae Historical Society throws a big, old-fashioned Christmas Party, and each year it gets better and better. This year was no exception — we sang Christmas carols, drank champagne, feasted on appetizers, Santa came, and we had **Paul Baxter's** band **Side Track** to entertain us. The old Museum was really jumping!



In February, **Caltrain**, in conjunction with the **Native Sons of the Golden West**, celebrated 150 years of rail-roading on the Peninsula with a special stop at the Millbrae Multi-Modal Station. In recognition of Millbrae's Southern Pacific Railroad station built in 1907, the Millbrae Historical Society was presented with a commemorative bronze plaque. Pictured above at the event are **William Bruce**, **Vern Bruce**, **Vice-Mayor Robert Gottschalk**, **Bob Gorran**, **John Muniz**, **Joe Teresi**, and **Councilwoman Marge Colapietro**.

A big "thank you" to all our members and Board of Trustees for all you do for the Society and for Millbrae. This is what "community" is all about. Everyone contributes something of their time and talents to make Millbrae a better place to live for all.

Once again, it is an extreme honor for me to be selected to serve another term as MHS President. Being President and working with such talented people brings joy to my heart. I am inspired by the great accomplishments the Millbrae Historical Society has brought to the community throughout the years. Hope to see you soon!

John Muniz

MHS President (2009- present)

VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE PAUL LARSON

Greetings MHS Trustees, members and friends,

It seems like lately when a blurb is requested for me to submit to our talented Editor Joe Teresi for our wonderful MHS Newsletter, I've been away on a trip. This time I was in Arizona attending **San Francisco Giants Spring Training**. We stayed in **Old Town Scottsdale**, which has a good number of historical sights such as **The Mission** (with a top-rated restaurant of the same name next door) and the **Desert Botanical Garden** (closer to Phoenix with amazing varieties of giant cactus & local plant life). After several days of baseball, we headed north to **Sedona** which is unbelievably situated against red rock mountains jutting above the town. A wonderful restaurant in Sedona is **Dahl & Diluca Ristorante Italiano**, whose owners it turns out are San Francisco transplants — great food with old Italian atmosphere! Along the way we made several detours to **Montezuma Well** and **Montezuma Cas-**

tle National Monument, built by ancient peoples. Arriving in **Flagstaff**, we toured the historic downtown which is situated along old **Route 66**. The following day we continued to the **Grand Canyon** (my first time), which was awe-inspiring and breathtaking. After seeing photographs of the Grand Canyon over the years, I can now say that I never really saw it until I saw it



in person! I took a lot of photos myself, but they don't capture the grandeur and dimension of the Grand Canyon that your eyes do.

The Arizona ecosystem is as varied and different as can be imagined! Temperatures varied from the



80's desert valley heat in Scottsdale to the 30's mountainous snow in Flagstaff. While experiencing these beautifully quick-changing and historic landscapes, I found myself saying "Wow!" a lot. The TV news reports we've heard lately about Arizona do not correctly reflect the people that live there, and everyone I met was exceptionally likable. Having never been to Arizona before, I came away with a great positive impression and would like to go back and see more.

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

Paul Larson

MHS Vice President

MILLBRAE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES



WHAT: Come watch classic movies from the Golden Age of Hollywood.

WHERE: Millbrae Museum
420 Poplar Avenue

Bring your own popcorn and a spouse or friend for a fun Friday night on the town!!

Title

San Francisco
The Godfather
Mutiny on the Bounty
Gandhi
Lawrence of Arabia

Year

1936
1972
1962
1982
1962

Star

Clark Gable
Marlon Brando
Marlon Brando
Ben Kingsley
Peter O'Toole

Date and Time

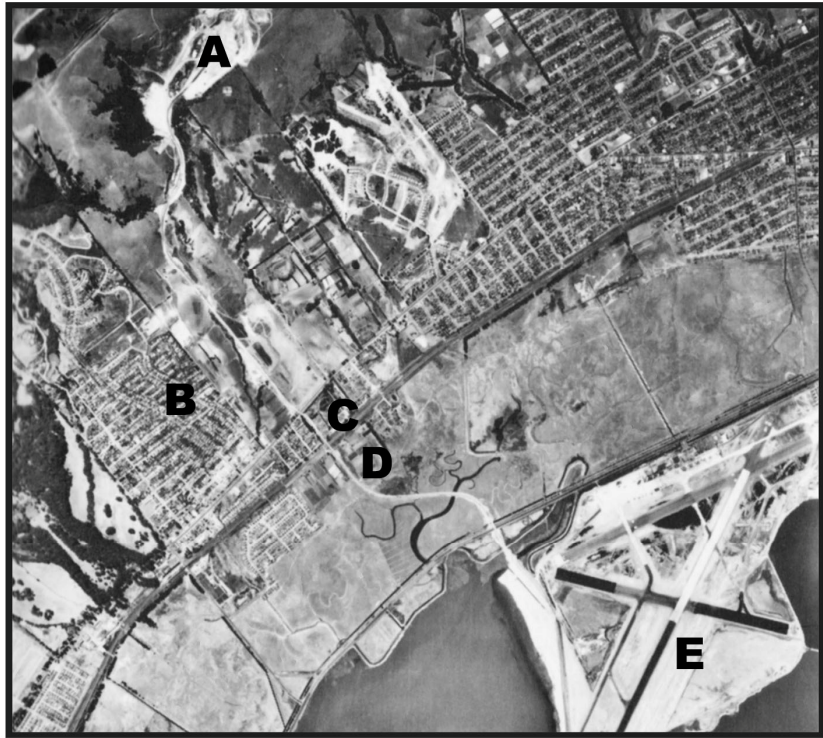
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THE BATTLE OF MILLBRAE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Two overpasses were built — one across El Camino Real, and the other over the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. Trucks hauling dirt traveled down these roads 18 hours a day. Dynamite was used to blast the hills out, shattering windows of houses in the Millbrae Highlands and the developing Meadow Glen neighborhoods. Petitions were signed by residents, and lawsuits were filed to restrain the operation. If this wasn't enough, a second contract was signed to haul dirt from what is now was called the **Macco Pit** to expand the **Bayshore Highway**. During this time, several truck drivers were arrested for violations, and in 1949 **Max Schmidt** (Developer of the Meadow Glen Tract) declared his own war on the truckers and halted the trucks by holding a gun in his hand and stopping the flow of traffic.

In 1950, the operation was finally finished. Millions of cubic yards of



A-Macco Pit, B-Millbrae Highlands C&D Overpasses over El Camino Real & Railroad E New Runways

dirt was hauled away from 200 acres of the upper Millbrae hills. At the time, it was California's largest excavation project. The land was then sold to **Stoneson Corporation** in 1951. Stoneson developed the area into what is now known as the **Millbrae Meadows**.

When I worked at my Dad's Shell Station on Broadway in the 1960's, I

remember the wind often blew down Broadway in the afternoon ahead of the fog. The "old timers" told me that before the extensive excavation of the hills, the wind did not blow nearly as much in Millbrae. The Macco Pit had in fact permanently changed Millbrae's micro-climate.

Tom Dawdy
MHS Historian

TRAIN MUSEUM NEWS ELIZABETH FURBER, EDITOR VERN BRUCE, REPORTER

In December, we had our second annual **Children's Christmas Party**. Thanks go again to **Kim Beliso** for her great handling of most of the details both before and during the event. We had a 'train' inflatable jump-house for the younger set, as well as numerous art & craft events, games etc. We have to thank the

Lions Club Leos group, as well as our junior docents **Joseph Bonavia**, **Jorge Jason**, and **William and Theresa Bruce**. We also have to thank our own President, **John Muniz** for his efforts that day. Additionally, one of our board members, **Joe Teresi**, played the role of Santa



Claus, arriving to the party by way of our 1931 restored fire truck. After he arrived, all the kids got to ride on the truck!

CURATOR'S REPORT

ALMA MASSOLO
DOROTHY SEMKE

It is so nice to start the new year out welcoming three new docents to our list of dedicated members who tirelessly donate their time and efforts to make the Museum a place we can all be proud of. We welcome **Judy Cullina, Angela Zink, and Ray Gier** as our newest docents.

We wish to thank **Louise and Armando Pera** and **Richard Stern** for their recent generous donations. Also Memorial gifts have been sent in for two long-time members, **Joseph Amaroso** and **Marilyn Rogers**, who passed recently and will certainly be missed.

We have the following new items on display at the Museum and wish to thank those who donated them:

- Mills Estate history book donated by **Janice Green** on display in the Heritage Room.
- Hat stand and pin donated by **Dario Pieracoini**, a 45-year resident in the hall outside the Community Room.

- Korean War uniform donated by **Patty and Louis Ghilarducci** located near the Office.
- 1950's naval uniform worn and donated by Docent **Clay Priola** on display in the Office.
- Hat and tie to add to our WWII uniform donated by **Dan Grassis** of San Bruno.
- Two American art albums, donated by **Mary L. Ferrari** and compiled by her mother-in-law **Christine Ferrari** on display in the Dining Room.
- Mail receptacle from the former Millbrae P.O. located at 200 Broadway was donated by **Ralph Petty**. It has been installed on the outside wall of the Museum by the front door.
- 100-year old pink vase owned by **Caroline Muniz** and donated by son John on display in the Fran Baxter Room.

Recently we opened up the Museum to a visit by Spring Valley 4th and 5th Grade students. 63 Students along



with their dedicated teachers **Joel Wheeler** and **Kathleen Zauvalata** arrived to do a scavenger hunt looking for different historical items within the Museum. Thanks to Clay Priola for all his help in preparing the Museum for their visit that day.

Our annual **Rummage Sale** in connection with the Millbrae Library Book Sale has been scheduled for **August 9th**. We appreciate any items you can spare - no clothes or books other than cookbooks please. Items can be left at the Museum on Saturdays from 12 - 4 after April 1st.

REMEMBER - we are open from 12 - 4 every Saturday and would love to see you!

Alma Massolo, Curator
Dorothy Semke, Assistant Curator

MHS 2014-15 OFFICER/TRUSTEE NOMINEES

The MHS Nominating Committee has placed the following names into nomination to serve as MHS Officers and Trustees for the year 2014-15:

President: John Muniz
Vice-President: Paul Larson
Secretary: Alicia Espinoza
Treasurer: Vern Bruce
Parliamentarian: Mary Vella Treseler

Trustees: Gaetane Andrews (new nominee), Judy Cullina, Tom Dawdy, Clay Priola, Cathy Quigg, and Dorothy Semke

Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



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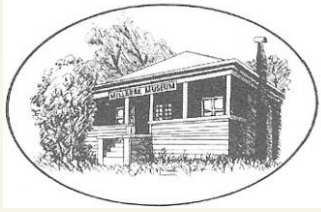


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MHS OFFICERS—2014

John Muniz, President
Paul Larson, Vice-President
Alicia Espinoza, Secretary
Vern Bruce, Treasurer
Alma Massolo, Curator
Dorothy Semke, Assistant Curator
Tom Dawdy, Historian

Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor

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

Sunday, March 30: Millbrae Historical Society Installation of 2014 Officers and Board of Trustees, 1:00 pm, Millbrae Library Community Room "A", 1 Library Avenue.

- featuring a presentation of *Little Boxes* (a documentary film about the development of the Westlake area of Daly City) by the film maker, light refreshments, and good company.

Friday, 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.

Third Fridays of the Month: *MHS Friday Night at the Movies*, 6:30 pm, Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. See schedule on Page 3.

- Bring your own popcorn and a spouse or friend for a fun Friday night on the town!!

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