

President:
Tom Titmus
299-2030


Lafayette Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549

NEWS

Lafayette, California

April 2005

Vol. 32, No. 2

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

 **Annual LHS Potluck Dinner** 

DATE: Tuesday, MAY 10, 2005

PLACE: Lafayette Veterans Hall, *Mt. Diablo Blvd. at 1st Street*

TIME: 6 p.m. Social Hour

7 p.m. Dinner

8 p.m. Short business meeting to elect officers

Speaker: Andrew A. Galvan, local California Indian historian
on the indigenous peoples of the Lafayette area

PRICE: \$5.00 per person to help defray LHS costs. ~PLUS~

Your favorite hearty salad or casserole (*please bring serving utensils*)

Board members supply dessert and coffee.

QUESTIONS: Call Dick Johnson (283-0100) or Ollie Hamlin (283-6822)

East Bay Historian Andrew Galvan to Speak at LHS Annual Dinner

California Indian Descendant Will Discuss Archaeological Sites near Lafayette

On Tuesday, May 10, 2005, Andrew A. Galvan, a principal and Senior Historian of the Fremont-based archaeological consulting firm Archaeor, will address the LHS board meeting and annual potluck dinner on East Bay and California management. Mr. Galvan, descended from the Ohlone, Bay Miwok, Plains Miwok, and Patwin Indians whose ancestral lands comprise the greater San Francisco Bay Region, will draw from his scholarly research, practical experience, and traditional Indian story-telling techniques. Mr. Galvan possesses degrees from California State University at Hayward and has worked with the East Bay Regional Park District, Ohlone College, and the National Park Service, among other organizations. He also serves as curator of San Francisco Mission Dolores and board president for Ohlone Indian Tribe, Inc.

President's Message

The LHS Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner is set for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 10, 2005 at the soon-to-be "former" Veterans Building. We are lucky to have enlisted Andrew A. Galvan, a distinguished East Bay archaeologist-historian who is descended from the original California Indian inhabitants of the Bay Area, to enlighten us about cultural sites and preservation activities near Lafayette. Your attendance with your families and friends will guarantee good company: the more the merrier!

This year spring seems to be holding back a bit. Mother Nature has blessed us with additional water in the form of downpours, which I am sure we'll all be grateful for come summer. The rain has not held back progress on the new Veterans Building, however. Its construction is proceeding nicely and should be completed on schedule.

I'm happy to report that, thanks to the generosity of LHS members and others, donations for the new library continue to accrue. A fundraising event to bolster support for that exceptional facility is scheduled for April 17th and will be followed by others. We'll keep you posted. Recent major grants have given us a big boost, but substantial funds are still required to reach our fundraising goal and to maintain an endowment.

Congratulations from LHS to local school district voters, especially the volunteers who worked for increased parcel taxes. Their sustained efforts brought in the substantial majority needed to pass that special election item. Historically, Lafayette's schools have provided a first-class education for our children and incidentally have helped to increase property values.

As George Wasson mentions in his article about Old Betsy, she could do with a bit of brightening before the Potluck and her appearances in the Fourth of July Parade and other activities this summer. Please lend a hand if you are able.

See you on May 10th!

—Thomas Titmus, President

LHS Board Pledges 100% To Help Fund New Library

At its March 8, 2005 meeting, the Lafayette Historical Society board of directors committed unanimously to support construction of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center—especially the History Room—with individual donations. LHS was one of the first organizations in Lafayette to support the concept of a new library, and many members have been involved in planning and fundraising from the beginning. As a result of our efforts, LHS will obtain a splendid research room with computers for public use, a climate-controlled storage room for the files and archives maintained by LHS, and a separate display for our 1920 fire engine, Old Betsy.

A number of members have already made generous contributions toward the new building. We hope that, now the directors are 100% committed, additional members will be encouraged to contribute as well—and that those who have already given may find an opportunity to add to their previous commitments.

The mailing address for contributions is:
Lafayette Community Foundation ♦ Box 221 ♦ Lafayette, CA 94549

If you would like your donation to be dedicated to the History Room, please indicate this on your check

The Lively Politics of the Mid-1860s

During the presidential election of 1864, Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson— a southern Democrat deeply loyal to the Union—ran on the Union Party ticket in California. Opposing them as Democrats were the popular General George B. McClellan and his running mate George H. Pendleton of Ohio. Some Democrats—although not McClellan himself— called for peace, hoping that the toll exacted by the Civil War would give them an advantage. However, the fall of Atlanta in September and the President’s moderate views on reconstruction won his reelection by 55% of the popular votes and a whopping 90% of the electoral tally.

In Lafayette, the 1864 election was preceded by lively gatherings, a Union Party rally, and a grand parade with delegations from all sections of the county among them. One of the many decorated carriages carried a man who was splitting rails in transit. Justice Thomas A. Brown, Elam’s oldest son, spoke in support of the Union Party and against the Democratic peace policy. Another speaker addressed the history of party politics. As it grew dark, the last orator shortened his remarks in view of the long distances some spectators must travel to return to their homes.

Tragedy struck the following April with President Lincoln’s assassination. A memorial for the martyred president was held in Lafayette’s village church, beginning with a prayer by the Reverend Mr. Bland. A committee was then formed to draw up resolutions “expressive of the sense of the meeting.” After a short time, committee chairman J. E. Stevens, the County Public Administrator, returned with the report, which had been drawn up by him, the Rev. Mr. Bland, and Elam Brown. Solemnly, Mr. Stevens apologized for its brevity, saying that he had just received word of “the death in a southern prison pen of a much beloved

brother, after months of suffering such as only Southern rebels and devils were capable of inflicting.” The report characterized Abraham Lincoln as a supporter of self-government, defender of civilization, apostle of freedom, and man of high spiritual qualities. It proposed a resolution that in this afflicting dispensation of Divine Providence the ordinary works of condolence but mock our woe; the nation mourns and will not be comforted, for one of the principal supports of our nationality has fallen. Humanity stands aghast at the enormity of the crime that has deprived us in the hour of need of the great pillar of our national strength. . . .

that on this sad occasion we will let the dead past bury its dead, extending a brother’s hand to all who from this time forward shall labor to stop the carnival of blood by a total extinction of all rebellious elements, and the cementing bonds Americans of every locality under the glorious old battle-stained banner, the flag of our fathers. . . .

that from this time henceforth and forever, there remains to persistent rebels, their aiders or abettors, no more sacrifice for the sin of treason, but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fury and indignation that shall consume the adversary.

An eloquent eulogy and brief addresses by townspeople followed the report. Next, the entire assemblage rose to adopt the resolutions, the doxology was sung, the benediction was given, and the meeting adjourned.

The Union party was active for two more years before it again became the Republican Party. Accordingly, it was the Union Central Committee that called for a convention in Pacheco in August 1865 to nominate candidates for the Assembly and county offices. The Committee called on every loyal voter to attend with the expectation of spending the entire day selecting candidates. The process was cumbersome. After the nominating speeches,

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the delegates left the room and ballot boxes—one for each candidate—were put in position. The delegates then filed in, inserting ballots for their candidates in the boxes. The vote took two hours and the votes were tallied in forty-five minutes, by which time it was almost five o'clock. Union Party candidates for Sheriff, County Surveyor, and Superintendent of Public Instruction had been selected. Run-offs still must be held for Assemblyman, County Clerk, and Assessor; however, since none of the candidates had received a majority of all votes cast for those respective offices.

To expedite matters, it was moved that candidates for the Assembly be selected by "division," with each voter joining a line headed by the candidate of his choice. The "ayes" prevailed, but the "noes" would have none of this process. This resulted in loud protests, general turmoil, and further delay. The Somersville and Antioch delegation, totaling over 200 persons out of the total 585, continued their objections in spite of others' attempts at conciliation. They insisted that the Convention observe its own rules and vote by ballot. Finally securing the floor, Dr. Davis broke the deadlock by calling for elections by ballot and offering to anyone lacking credit or money the ability to draw on him to pay his hotel bill. Again, voters lined up and wound through the hall, placing their ballots in the boxes of their favorites. After three

contenders for Assembly had withdrawn from the race, Thomas A. Brown, who had failed to be nominated on the first ballot by only eight votes, won 61% of the total.

At that time, Thomas A. Brown had already had a remarkable career. As a young man of twenty he emigrated from Lafayette to Oregon in 1843, where he was a surveyor and civil engineer. After a brief visit home in 1847, he moved from Oregon City to Martinez. He served as County Clerk, Recorder, and Auditor (1850-1855) and Supervisor (1855-1856). Meanwhile, he studied law and became County Judge (1856-1864). He was in the Legislature from 1865 to 1868 and ran unsuccessfully for United States Senate. He practiced in federal, state, and county courts and eventually devoted his time to service as Judge of the Superior Court. Throughout his life he carried on the family calling to public service.

In our small segment of the Republic, then, people of conviction and earnestness did their part toward carrying on the political and civic life of the nation.

(The Dorothy Mutnick papers at the CCCHS History Center were of great value in the preparation of this article.)

—Ruth Dyer

A Growing Community

Lafayette was becoming a convenient stopping place for farmers, ranchers, lumbermen, and travelers. A town center was beginning to develop near the area of Brown's grist mill. The community of Lafayette had grown to include a school, a church, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a general store and post office, and a tavern. In 1864, Elam and Margaret Allen Brown donated a small area of land in the town center to the citizens of Lafayette to be used as a park. Today, Lafayette Plaza Park is still enjoyed by the town's citizens in our downtown area and houses many historic monuments.

The Pony Express also found Lafayette a good stopping place. Between 1869 and 1861, the Pony Express – in route from St. Joseph, Missouri, to San Francisco, California – stopped in Lafayette 19

times to exchange horses.

The land that eventually became the Lafayette Cemetery was first used in 1854, when Henrietta Hodges, the 13-year-old daughter of Samuel Hodges, died from tuberculosis. Her family asked permission of Medford Gorham, a local landowner, to have her buried on his hillside property on the east end of town. Other burials followed in subsequent years. In 1874, Gorham sold 4+ acres of this land to five men, including Elam Brown, as directors of the Lafayette Cemetery Association, for \$100 in gold coin. With this sale, the Lafayette Cemetery was officially established. Other citizens of Lafayette have been buried there since that time, including many of Lafayette's early pioneers – Jennie Bickerstaff, Nathaniel Jones and Peter Thomson.

By 1900, the population of Lafayette had grown to 150 people, with more growth yet to come. Within 10 years, a tunnel was built through the Berkeley Hills, making transportation in and out of Lafayette much easier. The original tunnel was dark and narrow, allowing only one wagon at a time to pass through it. The early tunnel was located about 200 feet above what today is

known as the Caldecott Tunnel.

The Sacramento Northern Railroad began passenger service through Lafayette in 1913. The railroad service traveled between Oakland and Sacramento and offered faster access to other towns. Railroad stations were located throughout Lafayette, and signs for these stations can be seen today along the Lafayette-Moraga bike trail, which was the railroad's original right-of-way.

The growing community was now in need of a central building that could be used for town meetings and social events. Lafayette residents formed the Lafayette Improvement Club and asked the community to donate money to construct Town Hall. In 1914, the citizens of Lafayette celebrated the opening of Town Hall with a Grand Opening Ball. Residents of Lafayette and of nearby communities always enjoyed the dances at Town Hall as there were springs under the dance floor which caused it to bounce a bit when dancing took place. Town Hall is still located on Moraga Road and is used as a theater today.

—Prepared by *Mary McCosker & Emily Haas*

Betsy the Fire Engine Comes Out of Hibernation

Winter is not the best time to pursue a restoration project in a cold garage, so there is little to report with respect to Old Betsy. However, even before the weather warms up, some parts can be removed from the vehicle for indoor completion. It will be something to celebrate if Betsy can appear at this year's Potluck Dinner in newly refurbished finery.

One such project was to clean up and paint the fire axe and ladder. Marachel Duncan has recently sanded and painted both items, and they have now been returned to Old Betsy. (Although Doris Duncan was happy to have the ladder removed from their garage so that she could get to a corner where it had been standing. June Wasson was not so happy to see another item stored in our garage.) Last year I took the fire axe to the annual LHS Potluck Dinner but left the ladder at home.

We hope some LHS members may be able to spare a little time and energy to sand, brush, and paint accessories— besides the fire axe and ladder— that can be removed from Betsy for indoor work. Many hands make light work; maybe we could have a “Betsy bee,” like an old-fashioned barnraising. If you can help, please call me at 283-4420. I'll be sure you get a good project to work on and recognition for your efforts.

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Hub Anderson. As we all have reason to know, a Model T Ford never dies. However, from time to time we lose our human friends. Hubbard (“Hub”) Anderson, an original supporter for the acquisition and restoration of Old Betsy, passed away in late February at the age of 98. Hub had lived on Pine Lane in Lafayette for 37 years and then at Rossmoor for 20 years. He retired from his job as marketing executive for Union Oil many years ago. He knew a lot about Model Ts, having owned and restored several. He had once used a Model T truck to deliver Union Oil products to St. Mary’s College and Bishop Ranch, long before those areas had grown to their present size. Later, he frequently drove Old Betsy in Lafayette parades. Along with many others, I will miss him and his first-hand advice on restoring our Model T fire engine.

—George Wasson

New Veterans Building Update

According to Ann Merideth, Lafayette’s Community Development Director, construction of the new Lafayette Veterans Building has been delayed because of the recent heavy rains, but the dedication is still scheduled for Memorial Day: May 31, 2005. The new building promises to be one of the most beautiful buildings in Lafayette and one of which we will all feel very proud.

Work on demolishing the old Veterans Building will begin sometime in Fall 2005. Start of construction of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center is forecast for Spring 2006.



Lafayette Historical Society Member Information (Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Membership Categories and Annual Dues: *(please check one)*

— Life membership \$100.00 (one time fee) — Family membership \$10.00

— Business membership \$50.00 — Student membership \$2.50

Please indicate areas of special interest:

— Annual dinner — Archives — LHS Online — Displays — Photo collection

— Landmarks — News Clips — Oral History — Fire Engine — Programs

— Research — Telephoning — Walking Tours — Other _____

Family History Book Published

Long time Lafayette resident and Historical Society member, Bill Shurtleff, has donated to our Society a history of his family. The book entitled, *The Shurtleff and Lawton Families: History and Genealogy*, is of high quality and is a fine addition to our archives.

The following is excerpted from the publishers notes, sent with the book:

This book tells the colorful story of two families. The Shurtleffs trace their origin back to William Shurtleff, who was baptized in 1619, probably in Ecclesfield, England. One of the forefathers of New England and the British Colonies of North America, he worked as an apprentice in the town of Plymouth, Massachusetts by 1634. The book follows each generation of direct Shurtleff ancestors from New England, to Quebec, Canada, then across the Great Plains to California at about the time of the gold rush; many now live in the Bay Area east of San Francisco.

The Lawton family traces its origin back to Richard Lawton, who was born in about 1499 in Cranfield Parish Bedfordshire, England. In about 1658 Thomas Lawton, arrived with his wife, Elizabeth, and one child in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, where the next five generations lived. After his family's brief but eventful stay in New York, Frank Lawton arrived in San Francisco, California in the late 1870's.

The two families united when Roy Shurtleff and Hazle Lawton were married on 15 October 1913 in Berkeley, California.

This hardcover book, contains more than 480 family photographs, 19 family trees, 29 pedigree charts, 7 maps, a 30 page index and many de-

sign innovations. The result of twenty years of researching, writing, and design, the book is the work of three people: William R. Shurtleff and Lawton L. Shurtleff (the authors, son and father) and Akiko Aoyagi Shurtleff (*the book designer and illustrator*). All three live in Lafayette and Moraga.

Anyone wishing to borrow this book may do so by contacting Oliver Hamlin at 283-6822.

2004/2005 Directors

President: Tom Titmus	299-2030
Vice President: Marechal Duncan	283-6812
Treasurer: Paul Sheehan	284-1287
Recording Secretary: Ruth Dyer	283-8312
Corresponding Secretary: Oliver Hamlin	283-6822
Archive Retrieval: Mary McCosker	284-5376
Archive Database: Dorothy Walker	283-3303
Archive Documentation: Keith Blakeney	284-2221
Programs: Joseph Van Overveen	283-3650
George Wasson	284-4603

Committee Chairs

Potluck Dinner: Richard Johnson	283-0199
Walking Tours: Mary McCosker	284-5376
Fire Engine: George Wasson	284-4603
Membership: Oliver Hamlin	283-6822
Newsletter: Dorothy Walker, Charlotte Robertson	



Library Kickoff Celebration
Sunday, April 17, 2005
1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Kickoff Celebration will introduce the concept, the campaign, the excitement, and the opportunity to become part of Lafayette's stunning new *Library and Learning Center*.
What it's all about? A communitywide festival that will give every resident of Lafayette and the Bay Area a chance to experience what will take place when the new *Lafayette Library and Learning Center* is completed.

When will it happen? Sunday, April 17, 2005 • 1:00–5:00 p.m.

Where will it happen? First Street, Golden Gate Way, and portions of Moraga Road in downtown Lafayette, with venues stretching from the present Library site on Golden Gate Way past the Park Theater and Elam Brown Plaza to Veterans Hall on First Street—the future home of the new *Library and Learning Center*.

Why a celebration? *The Library and Learning Center*, which has already garnered national press attention for the visionary scope and innovative nature of its plan, has been approved and funded, and construction will soon begin. The Library will be the single most important civic project the



Return Service Requested