

President:
Dorothy Walker
283-3303



NEWS

Lafayette, California

April 2009

Vol. 36, No.2

Mark Your Calendar!

Annual LHS Potluck Dinner

- Date:** Tuesday, MAY 19, 2009
- Place:** Temple Isaiah, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd. at Risa Road up the hill from the Veteran's Building
(See map on last page)
- Time:** 6 p.m. Social Hour
7 p.m. Dinner
7:45 p.m. Short business meeting followed by
- Discussion:** John Coleman, EBMUD Director
Topic: *EBMUD in Lafayette: its history and the future*
- Price:** \$10.00 per person to help defray LHS costs PLUS
Your favorite hearty salad or casserole (*please bring serving utensils*)
Please observe Jewish dietary restrictions – No pork, shellfish or dairy products
Dessert and coffee provided by Board Members.
- Questions:** Call Ollie Hamlin - 283-6822 or Mary Solon - 283-7335
- To Arrange a Ride:** Call Keith Blakeney - 284-2221 for car pooling and rides

John Coleman, LHS Potluck Speaker

John Coleman was first elected to the East Bay Municipal Utilities District board in 1990. He represents Ward Two which includes Lafayette. He has served as President of the Board from 1996 to 2000; and currently serves as its Vice President. Mr. Coleman is going to speak with us on the history of Lafayette Reservoir and how it is part of the EBMUD's system. Additionally, he will talk about the District and California's continuing need for water conservation.

President's Message

If it's Spring it must be time for a Lafayette Historical Society's Pot luck dinner! I am looking forward to meeting with many of you on the evening of Tuesday, May 19th. I think we are very lucky to have our speaker, John Coleman, Ward Two representative. Water is always a critical issue in California. Be ready with your questions, as Mr. Coleman has agreed to a Q and A session after his talk.

In the last Newsletter I mentioned that we had a date to open our "History Room". Unfortunately that date has been moved back. We have been told that we should expect at least a one month's delay. We are disappointed, but understand that it is more important that everything be done with care.

I hope you will all continue to think about how you can help us in the History Room. It is our most ambitious endeavor. We have tentatively committed to being open three days a week. Our volunteers will be LHS's face in the community. We expect to have training sessions for all of you who volunteer prior to opening our doors. Look for information on these sessions in our next Newsletter.

I want to thank members that responded to my request in the last Newsletter for additional donations. James R. Moore, Mary McCosker and Nancy Flood were very generous and we are very grateful for their contributions. These donations will help us defray some of the new expenses we will be incurring with the History Room. I would like to remind members, we are a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation so that all such future donations are tax deductible.

Other thank yous go to Jeanine Kikkert for donating Andrew Young's own copy of "The Improvers" and to Keith Blakeney who did all of the coordinating for our successful trip to the Bancroft Library and Mark Twain Papers. It is our members that make this organization what it is.

—Dorothy Walker, *President of the Board*

BANCROFT LIBRARY TOUR

The L.H.S. bus tour of the newly renovated Bancroft Library drew thirty-seven members and guests. As the Rocky Road Bus, courtesy of Dryer's Ice Cream, drew up to the front steps of the Library Dr. Robert Hirst, general editor of the Mark Twain Project, was there to welcome us. Due to the size of our group we were divided into two tours. One group led by Dr. Hirst toured the Mark Twain Project. The second group led by Victor Fischer, curator, toured the adjacent U.C.Libraries. Each tour lasted about an hour; allowing each group to do both tours.

The Library tour started with the Bancroft Library. The Roger W. Heyns Reading Room is modeled after an Italian Renaissance palace and boasts an exquisite plaster cast ceiling. At one end of the room is one of the University's artistic treasures, a painting, by Emanuel Gottlieb Lentz, - Washington Rallying the Troops. At the opposite end of the room is the motto which translates to "To read well is to vanquish the centuries".

The library's North Reading Room, with its bronze guilt and white coffered ceiling, is both welcoming and grand. The room can seat 400 comfortably and when it was built (in the early 1900s) was second in size among American libraries.

The Morrison Library is relatively new, it was established in 1928, and was designed for recreational reading and has a restful atmosphere. The Morrison features golden oak wood paneling, a decorative plaster molded ceiling, and comfortable armchairs and sofas over oriental area rugs. It is often considered the "University's parlor".

The Mark Twain Project tour started in the exhibit area where displays of letters, literary manuscripts,



Dido Clark sits with a realistic Mark Twain outside the Morrison Library

scrapbooks as well as a time line of his life's activities can be viewed. Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835 in Florida Missouri. At the time of his death in 1910 he was heralded as America's most famous writer. Nearly a century later the world is still reading his books and we are still learning more about the man known as "the first truly American writer."

As we moved into the archives of the Mark Twain Project, our appreciation for the magnitude of Dr. Hirst's labors increased. The Mark Twain collection includes more than 17,000 letters written to him from all over the world, 50 notebooks, kept by him on a yearly basis, and over 12 file-feet of autobiography dictated over thirty five years. These are just a few of the documents on file and available to visitors.

Controlling, from the grave, Mark Twain stipulated that his complete autobiography be held back from release for one hundred years. On November 10, 2010, the 175th anniversary of his birth, the full text will be released to the public. For the first time Mark Twain's own uncensored account of his life and times will be available in its entirety, as "frank and free and unembarrassed", as the great American truth teller sought to be.

—Paul Sheehan

History Detectives

Several times a month there are historical inquiries made to the Lafayette Historical Society via our website. Sometimes it is simple to find answers to questions...other times the answers aren't known by anyone on our Board. As a result of these questions there will be a column in each newsletter with questions that have been asked and answered; and questions that still need answering. If you can help with the answers to these inquiries, please feel free to contact me by phone or email. Thank you.

—*Mary McCosker (284-5376 or Msm102746@aol.com).*

Q: The owners of the new Artisan Bistro restaurant (former Kaffee Barbara site) inquired about the Forge and the house that is in that location.

A: Steve McIntyre (former owner of Kaffe Barbara) told me about C. Carl Jennings, the son and grandson of blacksmiths from the Midwest, who moved to California and worked as a welder and on various projects for the Golden Gate International Exhibition (1939). He studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts and in the 1940's opened a business in Lafayette (El Diablo Forge) which produced fireplace equipment, gates and lighting fixtures. Steve shared that the gas lines for the forge passed through patio area of today's restaurant. Jennings apparently also did some horseshoeing there too. Before the house became Kaffe Barbara it was a restaurant called the Melting Pot.

Q: A Los Arabis Road resident is trying to research more about the history of her street. Her family built their home on Los Arabis in 1967. She believes that Arabian horses were raised in that area-hence the name. She wonders if there was one large farm area or if there was a grant given to someone to raise horses. She is also interested in the history and families that lived or owned land there 75-100 years ago.

A: I was able to find out that there were indeed Arabian horses in that location at one time. I have been trying to contact a man who knows all about it but haven't had an opportunity to speak with him about the history of the area. Any help would be appreciated.

Q: Cliff Franco, a member of the Franco Florist family, is looking for photographs of the following: either of the Franco Florist shops, the La Fonda Restaurant, the old Petars, the Happy Valley Inn, and the Red Mill.

Q: A descendant of Byron Hastings is looking for information on her great-grandmother Elizabeth Lois (Brown) Hastings. She would like to know her true relationship to Elam Brown, her date and place of birth and her parents' names.

Aerial Photography Web Site

I have encountered a free web site similar to Google Earth, except that that the site provides photographs of flights over various specified years. The aerial photos are acquired through the United States Department of Agriculture, United States Geological Survey, and other governmental agencies, as well as private aerial companies. Everyone who has internet access and a standard browser has unlimited free viewing of all the imagery made available on the website. (The oldest flight for the Lafayette area is 1946). A fee is required for some of the functions, but viewings through the years are totally free. Several methods are available to pinpoint the photographed area, one of which is simply to enter the street address, City and State. I tried several locations in Lafayette, each worked like a charm.

The website address is www.historicaerials.com Try it!

If you wish to purchase and download imagery, the site has made it convenient to download into jpg packages for use in reports.

—*Ray Peters*

“New to the Archive” Response

Last month we ran a photo of a farm and asked members if they knew the location of the photo. Sure enough, member Greg Snyder contacted us with this explanation. Board member Nancy Flood concurs.

From Greg Snyder:



“The photo could possibly depict the intersection of St. Mary’s Road and Moraga Road, looking east, taken perhaps from the vicinity of East View Drive or Herman Drive. School Street would be on the far left. Several factors lead me to this conclusion. There is a perpendicular row of oak trees just to the east crossing the road which may be the creek that is still in existence a few yards up St. Mary’s road. I lived on Solana Drive, and attended Lafayette Grammar School. I would often walk the creek.

Rosedale Avenue, not yet in the photograph, was there by 1950. The large flat expanse beyond the trees appears to begin about where Rosedale is now, spreads across today’s Avalon Avenue, and incorporates Stanley School, Topper Lane, Birdhaven, etc. In the very early 1950’s, Avalon Avenue and today’s Stanley School were covered with orchards.

If my hunch is correct, the beginnings (or predecessors) of the orchards are visible in the photo. The hill on the left may be where Hawthorne Drive is located. If so, the Sacramento Northern electric train ran eastward along the base of the hill, but I can’t see evidence of that in the photo. The distant hill on the right may be where Las Trampas Road and Reliez Station Road are currently located.

You wondered if this could be Reliez Station Road, or vicinity. As I recall, Reliez Station Road, near Glenside, curls south along a set of hills (on the other side of which is the old Del Valle High School), and I don’t recall a 90 degree cross road anywhere. The Burton Valley is too narrow. I’m not even considering the areas towards Pleasant Hill, or the western part of Lafayette, looking toward the reservoir.”

Now and Then

Excerpted from the Lafayette Sun:

It is always interesting to see how the prices of food at our local grocery stores have changed over the years as well as the grocery stores themselves. Here are some comparisons from ads in the Sun from January 1937 and January 1954.

January 1937:

Rupp’s Market/Chandler’s Grocery

Sirloin or Rib Steak - 27 cents/pound

Beef Roast -18 cents/pound

1 pound of butter for 39 cents

Soda crackers - 18 cents for a 1 pound package

Pioneer Store

Coffee - a one pound can for 27 cents

Sliced bacon -15 cents for ½ pound

Best Foods mayonnaise - 47 cents for a quart

January 1954:

Super Saver Market

Borden Ice Cream - 79 cents for a half gallon

Steaks for 85 cents/pound

Lafayette Food Center

Veal Roast for 39 cents/pound

Rabbits for 69 cents/pound

LaFiesta Foods

Chuck Roast for 45 cents/pound

In 1954 the Sun also had TV listings for programs for the week. There were only three channels then: KRON (4), KPIX (5), and KGO (7). It must have been easier to decide what to watch than it is today!!

—Mary McCosker

City of Lafayette

Lafayette Library and Learning Center Project Bulletin

March 27, 2009



Aerial photograph – February 2009

Construction Activities: The major exterior work continued to be the roof and the windows. Rain slowed the installation of the roof panels, but good weather has allowed progress to be made. The installation of windows is underway. Work on the interior includes sheetrock and finer details on the various systems – electrical, fire safety, HVAC, and plumbing.



Installing windows in the Bookstore



Community Hall Gallery

More About Old Betsy's Refurbishing

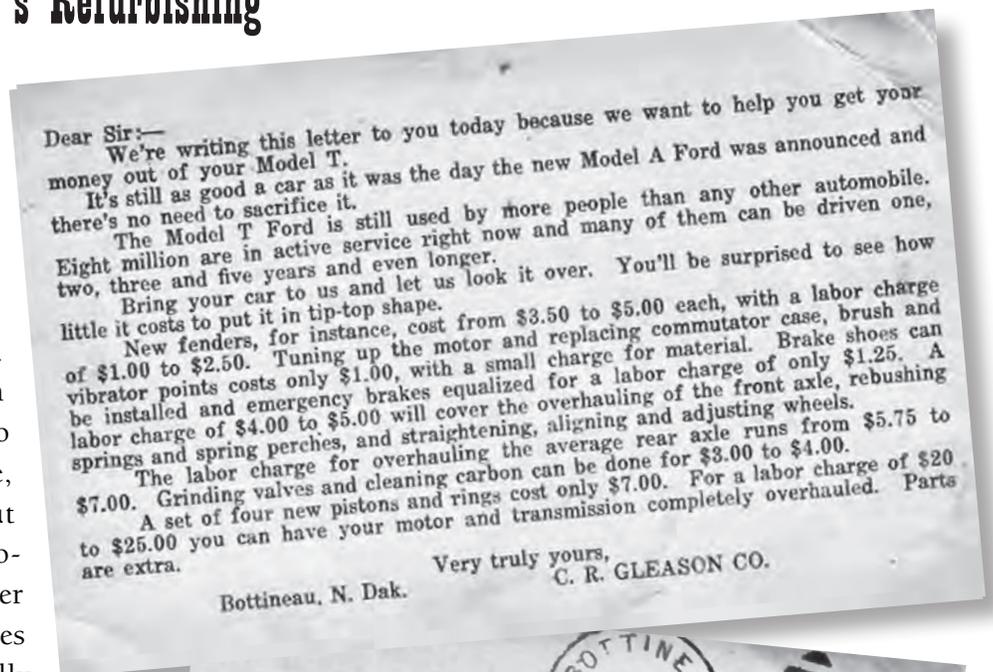
It seems every time I need to prepare a Newsletter item something timely comes to my attention. This time I received an email from a high school friend attaching a copy of a 1928 postcard with a solicitation from a Ford dealer to a Model T Ford owner in North Dakota offering services. To keep the card in prospective, the Model T was phased out when the Model A was introduced in 1928. The Ford dealer was offering continued services to Model T owners. Carefully read the prices quoted, but keep in mind that those prices were in 1928 dollars and the Model T probably sold for about \$500 when it was new.

Several years ago we rebuilt the engine in Old Betsy replacing the pistons, rings connecting rods- a complete internal engine overhaul. Our parts from a supplier of genuine Ford Motor parts was - pistons (set of four) about \$85, rings (set of four) about \$35,

connecting rods (set of 4) about \$55. There were lots of additional pieces needed so the total of parts alone was at least \$200. Compare that to the last paragraph of the postcard where a set of four new pistons and rings cost only \$7.00. It took us several days to remove and replace the old pistons and rings, and even though our labor was "free", if a present day auto mechanic was to be paid at current rates, that job would have probably been well over \$1,000. Note also the quoted price for "New fenders" at \$3.50 to \$5.00 each - the current catalog price for a fender for Old Betsy is \$440. I can not estimate our labor time for removing old rusted bolts to replace a fender, verses the quote of \$1.00 to \$2.50 labor.

I think that I can safely say, none of us want to be back to 1928 when the postcard was sent, but many of us can relate to the differences in labor and parts prices when having repairs done on our newer cars - the newer cars run better, but they cost a whole lot more!

We think you will all like the refurbishing job that is being done on Old Betsy and you will be proud to say you have participated (at least financially) in her new sparkling appearance. My estimate of the total labor charges in the above postcard is about \$35 to \$45; we have spent more than that just for paint in the refurbishing that is in progress! Be sure to come to the Pot Luck dinner to see Old Betsy or better said - New Old Betsy



—George Wasson

A Knoll for Remembrance

Excerpted from an article by Dorothy Mutnick (1978)

The Lafayette cemetery is located just west of the Pleasant Hill Road interchange and is the larger of the two cemeteries of the public Alamo-Lafayette Cemetery District, both of which have had continuing use since the 1850's.

In 1854 Henrietta Hodges, daughter of David and Louisa Hodges, died when she was 13 years, 7 months old. A proper place for burial had to be found. A corner of the Hodges' claim lay south of the road to the redwoods. There across the road near her family yet out of the path of their activities a pleasing grassy knoll with good drainage and a vista of lovely valleys and hillsides was selected. Hers is the first burial in either the Lafayette or Alamo cemetery which can be shown by headstone or cemetery record.

The grassy knoll and the expanse in front were naturally set apart by the roads which also made access convenient. After Lafayette was selected for the name of the post office, it could be called the Lafayette Cemetery. Two infants are known burials in 1858, one a Hunsaker from across the road east, the other a Renwick. Much information about burials is available except for some periods and most of the headstones can still be read.

On October 19, 1874, Medford Gorham sold 4 ½ acres of his land to the Directors of the Lafayette Cemetery Association for \$100 in gold coin. The cemetery has remained essentially the same shape and size except for a portion sold to the State in 1937.

Friends and relatives of the community planted trees and generally cared for the cemetery especially their family plots. In 1937 the Board of Supervisors established the Alamo-Lafayette Cemetery District when more than 58% of the registered voters of the elementary school districts of Lafayette, Walnut

Creek, Alamo and Danville petitioned them to set up a public cemetery district to tax itself for the care and upkeep of the Lafayette and Alamo cemeteries. The law established a maximum rate of 2 ½ cents per \$100 assessed valuation. Since 1937 purchase of plots for burial has been restricted to residents and taxpayers of the district and certain relatives of those previously buried there.



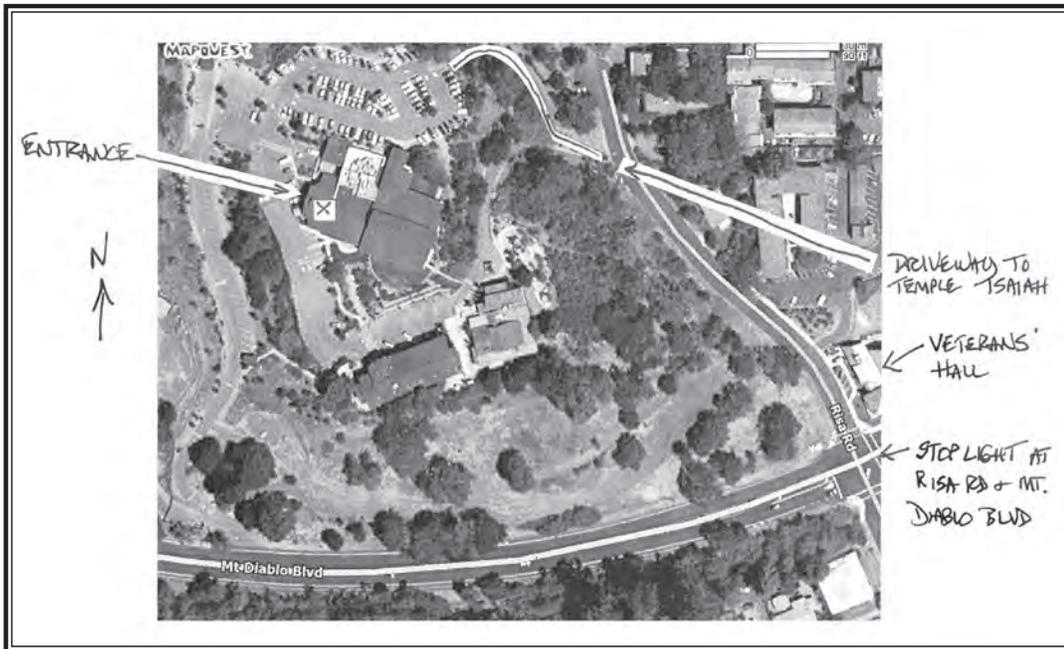
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George Wasson	284-4603
Tom Titmus	299-2030
Nancy Flood.....	283-3409
Keith Blakeney.....	788-0195

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Historian, Ruth Dyer	283-8312
Walking Tours: Mary McCosker.....	284-5376
Fire Engine: George Wasson	284-4603
Potluck Dinner: Oliver Hamlin.....	283-6822
Membership: Oliver Hamlin.....	283-6822
Newsletter: Dorothy Walker, Charlotte Robertson	

Return Service Requested



Directions to the **Annual LHS Potluck Dinner** on *Tuesday, May 19, 2009*