

President:
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NEWS

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President's Message

The holiday season is upon us and in that spirit I wish you and your families all the best. The holidays are a special time for remembrance. Family traditions and stories make for great memories with historical significance. In that vein, please consider taking a little time to collect your family anecdotes and histories when you are all gathered together. Besides being a wonderful resource for your children, grandchildren, and relatives near and far, these seemingly small bits of personal history will, if you wish to share them, add to our town's larger history through the activities of LHS. We are considering a new project: to update the Pictorial History of Lafayette. In addition, we also want to continue collecting oral histories. Your family records and pictures can be important additions to these archives.

LHS will be taking on many projects for the new year, and they will all benefit from your involvement. First and foremost, the Board has been talking about what we will need to prepare for the History Room within the new Library and Learning Center. An essential task is to catalogue and update our database of artifacts. We also want to create a new brochure that describes our organization and to revise the walking tour brochure. The book I mentioned above is something that has long been needed as the original ended just after Lafayette's incorporation.

These and other interesting projects will only come about with the active participation of our membership. If you have not already done so, please take a moment to introduce yourself to our website, www.Lafayettehistory.org. The website will show you the projects we are working on besides providing an easy, quick way to contact us with your suggestions and ideas for additions to the site or our archives. Your involvement with LHS may bring you some unexpected pleasures, and is critical to helping our organization thrive.

This issue of the Newsletter initiates a new feature – "Looking Back in Lafayette." Using our archive copies of the *Sun* newspaper, Mary McCosker will give thumbnail sketches of events from 30 and 40 years ago.

Again Happy Holidays! I look forward to hearing from you during the holiday season and after.

—Dorothy Walker, President



Lafayette United Methodist Church Celebrates 150 Years of Service to the Community

Lafayette Sunday School classes began meeting in the home of Elam and Margaret Brown sometime around 1852. By 1855, these informal meetings had grown into the beginnings of the Lafayette United Methodist Church. The first church building was erected in 1857 on property leased by James Gorham. It was on the main street of town, which is now Golden Gate Way.

The church served people from many backgrounds with little concern for denomination. For several years, services were led by visiting ministers or laypeople. In 1868, Rev. Richard Kenrick became the first regularly appointed minister to the little church in Lafayette.

In 1880 the church building was moved to a lot between Elam Brown's orchard and barn, near the present Clock Tower Building. George Sanford charged \$75 to move it. The congregation met in this location until 1886, when the former Good Templars Hall became available for their use. This building, affectionately known as The Church on the Hill, served the community for 42 years.

In 1927, members of the church became concerned that there was too much traffic on the main road going past the church, which was a "menace to children going to Sunday School." The new site chosen was the former third schoolhouse, built in 1893, which was no longer in use. The church remains in that location today. There have been many changes and additions to the buildings, but the congregation maintains the same open atmosphere, welcoming all.

—*Nancy Flood*

Belated Recognition for FastFrame Donation

In our last newsletter, we inadvertently left out the acknowledgement of FameFrame and LHS business member, Anthony Ruiz for the beautiful framing he did of three historic photos which were raffled off at the May Pot Luck. Anthony has already generously offered to help us frame some of our collection for our new History Room in the Library and Learning Center.

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Update on the New Veterans Memorial Building

According to Ann Merideth, Lafayette Director of Community Development there is still a delay in Contra Costa County's taking over title to the new Veterans Memorial building from the contractor. This delay is caused by a lawsuit involving adjacent property owners with easements on which the new building is built. A trial date has been set for November 2005. As with most legal matters, a date for the settlement cannot be estimated, but Steve Faulk, the city manager, has stated that the City of Lafayette is making an effort to allow the Veterans to occupy the building regardless of the outcome of the trial.

On November 4, 2005, the City Council called a special meeting to negotiate with all the concerned parties, so that the veterans can manage the building directly, rather than the City's being the landlord. According to Mr. Falk, the city has agreed to rent the building to the veterans for one dollar a month. As soon as the suit is settled and Contra Costa County assumes title, the veterans can move into the new building and vacate the existing Lafayette Veterans Building.

As a result of this meeting, the veterans are presently still responsible for the old Lafayette building but will not move into the new building or move out of the old one until litigation is finished, escrow is closed, and transfer of the building from county to city government ownership is completed. The City of Lafayette will then take possession of our former Veterans Building, which will be the site of the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

A third building, the former Veterans Building in Walnut Creek, is also involved in the lawsuit because our plans call for both Lafayette and Walnut Creek veterans to use the new building in Lafayette when it is completed. The County owned that building as it does all veterans' buildings in California. When the City of Lafayette planned to take over the former old Veterans Building, Walnut Creek properly contributed a considerable dollar amount toward construction of the new Lafayette building and a facility for the veterans that formerly met in the Walnut Creek Veterans Building.

According to Terry Murphy, President of the Board of Directors of the Lafayette Veterans, now that they are responsible for the new building, they will be able to rent out the facility for public functions. Private functions will not be possible until the lawsuit is resolved and title has been perfected.

Due to the delays in the City's taking over the old Vets hall, demolition of the old building will probably not start until early spring of 2006, as demolishing an old building with asbestos and other possible hazardous materials in rainy weather isn't safe. According to Ann Groden, President of the Lafayette Community Foundation, groundbreaking for the new building should also take place in spring 2006. Bids on the proposed Library and Learning Center will be called for this spring, with construction to start in late summer of 2006 and to be completed in Fall 2008.

—*Marechal Duncan*



Looking Back in Lafayette

Excerpts from the *Lafayette Sun* from years past:

Fall 1975 (30 years ago)

- ◆ EBMUD is still searching for a 6-8 foot alligator spotted swimming at the Lafayette Reservoir on October 19th. The elusive reptile has been named “Marky” de Lafayette by some and Muhammad Ali-gator by others.
- ◆ The Golden State Warriors announced that they will move the team from San Francisco to the Oakland Coliseum.
- ◆ Debate and discussion are occurring on what should become of the city-owned “community center” property on St. Mary’s Road (now the home of baseball’s Buckeye Fields).
- ◆ The Senior Housing proposal is being discussed relating to the land bordered by Moraga Road., Moraga Blvd., First Street and Golden Gate Way (now the site of Chateau Lafayette, Lafayette’s Senior housing site). Wider community support is being sought to obtain government financing for Senior Housing in Lafayette.
- ◆ Bob Fisher, former mayor, wrote a guest column about life-long learning and adult education as John F. Kennedy University opens its doors in Orinda.

Fall 1965 (40 years ago)

- ◆ A public hearing has been scheduled on the proposed new route of Highway 24 to accommodate the BART tracks in the median strip through central Contra Costa County.
- ◆ Emilio Segre of Lafayette and Owen Chamberlain of Orinda (both Nobel Prize winning physicists at UC Berkeley) helped local Boy Scouts earn an atomic energy badge.
- ◆ There is much discussion and controversy around the proposed installation of a 22nd gas station in Lafayette.
- ◆ Federal and state funds of \$231,000 will aid construction of the new Pleasant Hill Bypass. Road widening there is progressing from Acalanes Junction to Geary Road.
- ◆ Controversy continues over the Lafayette Heliport (site today of Temple Isaiah) as many residents have complained about the late night noise from arriving and departing helicopter flights to Oakland and SFO.

—Mary McCosker



Art and Wine Festival

LHS was one of many organizations featured at the Art and Wine Festival over the weekend of September 16-17. We shared our space with Friends of the Library and the Community Foundation. Many of you stopped by and we met many other community members. This is one of our best ways of letting the community know what we are about and, of course, our future plans for the History Room in the new Library .

Old Betsy Digs Her Heels In

In years gone by and in snow country, motorized vehicles were put on blocks for the winter. So it is with our fire engine Betsy. Both front and rear axles are on blocks in anticipation of the removal of all four wheels and the replacement of the wheel spokes, tubes and tires.

As with every one of the tasks that we have pursued with Old Betsy, all has not gone with perfect ease. This is mainly because the hardware has not been loosened or removed for at least 30 years. As I said in my last report, it took quite a while simply to get the proper wheel pullers for the front and rear wheels. In Betsy's case, the rear wheels are quite a bit larger than the front wheels, and the corresponding axles are therefore of different sizes. With trial and error, however, we finally got the right pullers and started the job.

It took some effort to get each wheel off, and each wheel provided some lessons learned. But our education was not over. Now, most of us have taken a modern car in for a tire change or repair and watched the mechanic use their power equipment to remove a tire from a wheel. LHS Garage doesn't have that equipment, and when we started to remove a tire from its wheel we found that our most strenuous efforts were not good enough to break the seal between the tire and the rim. We suspect that Betsy's tires have been on their rims, where rust and residue have taken hold, for 30 to 40 years. We had to "clamp," "hammer," and "cut" that tire to get it released from its rim. But we did succeed and the first tire is now off the rim.

Next we took the wheel apart by undoing several bolts that also have many years of rust to impede our efforts. With a long wrench, manpower, and powerful human effort, however, the nuts are now off the bolts and the wheel is ready for sandblasting before new spokes are attached.

What did we learn? Well, we learned when we are licked. The next wheel will go to a tire shop (BIG O. for example) where the separation of a tire from the rim should go quickly and without the frustrations that we encountered with the first wheel.

More to follow with the next report on our perpetual learning process, with Betsy as schoolteacher. In due course she'll be ready to move her new quarters at the Library and Learning Center.

—George Wasson