

President:
Tom Titmus
299-2030



NEWS

Lafayette, California

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Veterans' Memorial Building and New Lafayette Library

The last six months have seen several—but not all—hurdles cleared on the path to building the new Veterans' Memorial building. In July, the City acquired property in front of the Hillside Inn and Suites on Risa Road as the site for the new building. With this acquisition, the City Council adopted a \$4.5 million preliminary project budget, and last August the Lafayette Redevelopment Agency issued \$5 million in redevelopment bonds to fund construction. Now we know where the Veterans' Memorial will be, how much it will cost, how we'll pay for it, and who may be using it. One major hurdle still remains, however: deciding what it will look like. The overarching design goal of the project is to create a fitting tribute to veterans that also responds to and complements Lafayette's semi-rural community aesthetic.

In July, after working with a committee of veterans and city staff for six months, architect David Paoli of Field Paoli Architects in San Francisco presented his conceptual plans for the building to the City. Those initial plans were refined (in response to comments by the City) and the resulting detailed plans were submitted for design review in October. After four public meetings, at which the building's design was considered and amended, the Design Review Commission (DRC) still had reservations. City staff is presently working closely with the architect and DRC members to develop satisfactory alternative concepts.

Ultimately, DRC, the Planning Commission, and the Redevelopment Agency all must approve the project before construction bids are solicited. In spite of the planning delays, construction is slated to begin early this Spring. The goal is to have the new Veterans' Memorial Building completed in time for a grand opening celebration on Veteran's Day, 2004.

One interesting possibility has arisen - the City of Walnut Creek, the Walnut Creek Redevelopment Agency, Contra Costa County, and Walnut Creek veterans are all trying to come up with a way to purchase the site of their existing downtown veterans building—dilapidated but valuable property—for redevelopment, and to fund construction of another elsewhere. If this project works out as hoped, the Walnut Creek agencies would contribute \$2.75 million or more toward the cost of constructing the Lafayette veterans building. In return, the Walnut Creek veterans would share this new building with Lafayette veterans.

At that time, attention will turn to the construction of Lafayette's proposed new library, since City plans call for it to be erected on the site of the old Veterans' Hall. With fundraising by the Lafayette Community Foundation already in progress, and the planning process under way for the Veterans Memorial Building, the City is now ready to consider the library's design. Both aesthetically and functionally, the design will be central to community life for years to come.

To find the right architect for our library, the Lafayette Redevelopment Agency is hosting a design competition. Last October, eleven West Coast architectural firms, all of which have previously won awards or received accolades for their library

"We believe in the power of history to ignite the imagination, stimulate thought and provide enjoyment. Through our collections and programs we strive to link Lafayette's history to the lives of people."

designs, were invited to submit statements of their qualifications to be project architect for Lafayette's library. Last month, the Lafayette Library Building Committee selected four architecture firms to participate in the competition: Field Paoli Architecture of San Francisco, Killefer Flammang Architects of Santa Monica, Group Architecture Research & Planning of south San Francisco, and Will Bruder Architect of Phoenix. Each firm is to develop conceptual drawings and models, which will be exhibited for public review through February. After receiving public comment, the Library Building Committee and Redevelopment Agency will select the competition winner as Project Architect.

Just as the new Veterans' Building is presently making its way through the Design Review and Planning Commission processes, so will the library, with plenty of opportunity for community comments at all points along the way. If all goes well, sometime in Fall 2004—the day after the Vets move into their new building—library construction will start with the demolition of the old Veteran's' Hall. Completion of the new library is scheduled for Spring 2006.

—by *Marechal Duncan*

From the President: 2003 Resolutions

Another New Year has blustered in. Well, to be strictly factual, the weather was a bit stormy, *before* January 1. We hope that all your 2002 resolutions have been fulfilled, making room for new ones. Do you feel that the stage has been swept clean in readiness for a triumphant 2003? What about the resolutions that have been fulfilled, making room for new ones. Do you feel that the stage has been swept clean in readiness for a triumphant 2003? What about the plans for our Society?

The Lafayette Historical Society is also making resolutions, and, further, following up on them. Board members have begun the process of cataloguing and verifying the locations of the documents and artifacts that have been donated, or otherwise made available, to LHS as custodian of these valuable resources for the benefit of all Lafayette residents and others who may have an interest in our local history. As you are most likely aware, LHS does not presently have an official,

permanent home. We look forward to our own space in the new library, where historical documents and other memorabilia may be properly stored and displayed. In the meantime, the cataloguing and database preparation will make the transition easy when it happens.

If you own or know the location of historical items like letters and photos, newspapers, furniture, pottery, etc. that could be made available to the Society, please contact any board member, or drop a note to the LHS at Box 133, Lafayette CA 94549.

It appears that the veterans groups and the city officials of Lafayette and Walnut Creek have been getting closer to "resolution" of the property and financial requirements to begin construction of the proposed new library at the site of the current Lafayette Veterans' Building. A new, separate Veterans' facility is proposed for the west side of Lafayette. The plan has been to combine the Lafayette and Walnut Creek veterans groups in that Building. Contra Costa County and the state may also give an assist. Heck, we wouldn't mind if the Feds kicked in a few bucks. It is anticipated that the current financial crunch, as commented on by all government subdivisions, will not speed closure, but a favorable resolution would be gratefully accepted by the Community.

May a happy and healthy New Year be delivered to you and yours!

—by *Thomas Titmus*

The Browns Choose the Wilds of Contra Costa The Browns Choose the Wilds of Contra Costa

Elam Brown and his family set out for the West in 1846, intending to join Elam's son, Thomas, in the Willamette Valley. While their wagon train was en route, however, the Oregon Settlement was reached with Great Britain: American land laws would prevail in Oregon. This made the prospect of settling in still-Mexican California enticing to the Browns, since the Mexican-American War was imminent, and emigrants were taking up California lands in defiance of Mexican law. Notwithstanding the outbreak of disease and death in the Brown-

Eight Bells: Time to Change the Watch on the *Californian*

On June 28, 2002, the state tall ship *Californian* was sold by the state to the San Diego Maritime Museum. With an overall length of 145 feet and carrying 7,000 square feet of sail, *Californian* has a maximum speed of 13.5 knots. Commissioned in 1983 as the official state tall ship of California, she was built by the Nautical Heritage Society and launched the following year at the northern end of San Diego Bay. From 1983 to 2002 she was also provided with a stipend, but in 2002 assistance for the *Californian* was terminated.

The *Californian* is a reconstruction of the 1848 revenue cutter C.W. Lawrence, which ended her service in 1850 when she ran aground and sank outside the Golden Gate. C.W. Lawrence's construction was state-of-the-art for that time. Revenue Service cutters were charged with securing revenue, relieving distressed merchant vessels and conducting scientific investigations of coastal harbors and water ways, much like our Coast Guard today.

For eighteen years, *Californian* has provided onboard educational and maritime programs for school children up and down the West Coast. She has voyaged to the East Coast to participate in various tall ship festivals and has made several passages to Hawaii, providing an unparalleled opportunity for her young crew to learn navigation and seamanship, and—most of all—working together in harmony.

Although the *Californian* is no longer the official state ship, she will continue to act as a sail-training platform for San Diego youth. We can feel glad that she has a wonderful new home at the San Diego Maritime Museum, sharing dock space with the *Star of India*, the oldest actively sailed square-rigged ship in the world, having been built in 1863. Lafayette residents will still be able to visit these fine ships when they travel to San Diego.

—by Paul Sheehan

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Lafayette Historical Society Member Information

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Lafayette Historical Society Member Information

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____

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Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

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Membership Categories & 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:

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Mail Check for dues \$ _____ and voluntary Fire Engine Maintenance contribution \$ _____ to:

LHS, PO Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549

Lafayette Historical Society CALENDAR

Annual Pot Luck Dinner Meeting

Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2003
Time: 6 pm Social Hour
7 pm Dinner
8 pm Short business items, followed by...
Speaker: Jerome Waldie—Congressman in the 1960's and 70's, on the
impeachments of Presidents Nixon and Clinton
Place: Lafayette Veterans Memorial Hall, Mt. Diablo Blvd. at 1st St.,
lower floor (on 1st St.)

Fall Program

Date and program to be announced

For information on membership, contact Oliver Hamlin, 283-6822.



Lafayette Historical Society

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