

President:  
Dorothy Walker  
283-3303



# NEWS

Lafayette, California

November 2007

Vol. 34, No. 5

## President's Message

Since we sent out the last Newsletter, many members of the Board have been out and about in the community. Several of us attended a birthday party for the City's namesake, the Marquis de Lafayette, at the Park Hotel. It was a very enjoyable event with many City leaders attending. The following night, at the community celebration for the Marquis in Plaza Park, Board members Mary Solon and Marechal Duncan found eager buyers for *Images of America: Lafayette*, their charming book about our City. During the 14th Annual Art and Wine Festival in mid-September, LHS members greeted strollers at the booth we shared with Friends of the Library, and many members were also on the USS Potomac as it sailed out of Oakland at the end of September. The Board looks forward to providing more opportunities for both members and non-members to learn about LHS, our community, and the history of the Bay Area.

The holiday season is upon us and, in that spirit, I wish you and your families all the best. Holidays are a special time for remembrance. Family traditions and stories make for great memories with historical significance. To preserve them for yourselves and others, please take a little time when you are all gathered together to collect your family anecdotes and histories. 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.

Given the season, it is often a challenge to find gifts for our family and friends when many of us are trying to limit our acquisitions. If you find yourself with this problem, perhaps you would like to consider giving LHS memberships as holiday gifts or stocking-stuffers. The present membership fee is \$10/year. Please send us the names and addresses of those you wish to add. LHS will send each recipient a beautifully designed gift certificate—or we can send some or all to you to distribute, if you prefer. How often do you get a chance to add to someone's education, community involvement, and enjoyment for this little outlay—tax free, with no added calories?

Both for gift-giving and for your own education and enjoyment, we also suggest purchasing our book: *Images of America: Lafayette*. The authors and LHS Board members, Mary Solon and Mary McCosker, are donating all royalties from the sale to LHS. Information on purchasing books can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter. Again: Happy Holidays! I look forward to hearing from you and learning your ideas for our vital community organization.

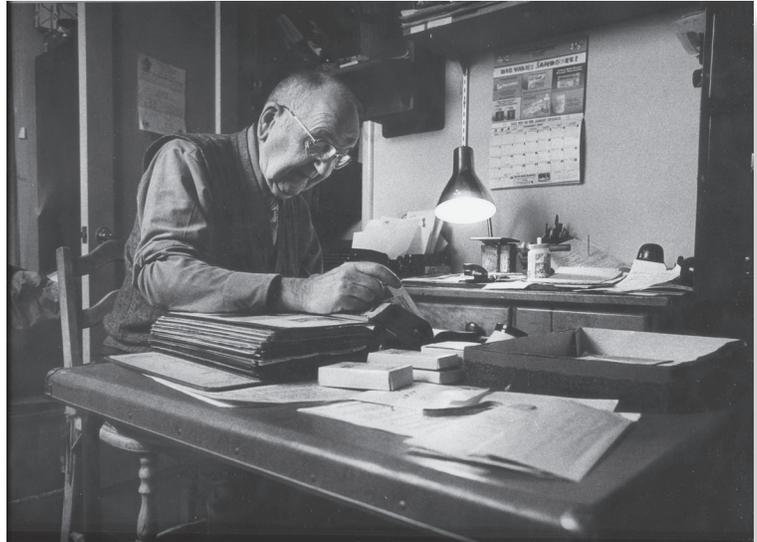
—Dorothy Walker, President of the Board

## Louis L. Stein, Collector

“I always wanted to be a historian, but my father said they don’t make any money. You go into business. So I did.”

Louis L. Stein was a pharmacist in Kensington who bought thousands of photographs and artifacts which he endowed to many historical societies and museums. This is his story.

Born in 1902 to German parents, Louis’ father was a butcher at Shattuck Avenue and Vine St. in Berkeley. Louis was born, raised and schooled in Berkeley. In 1915 the family owned a cattle ranch near present day Acalanes High School. He spent summers at the ranch growing vegetables, helping with the cattle, orchards, chickens, haying and egg delivery. Louis had two years of chemistry at Cal, an apprenticeship in pharmacy and some schooling at the California School of Pharmacology in San Francisco. He passed the pharmacist’s exam in 1925.



In 1927 Stein married Mildred Slater whom he met at Cal. They lived at 360 Rugby Avenue, Kensington. Borrowing money from his mother-in-law he opened the second business in Kensington, the Arlington Pharmacy with its soda fountain. In the beginning he worked long hours but as business improved he had some free afternoons. When his son Robert was 10 Stein attended a railroad lecture with him. At that time Stein got the bug for collecting. He began with all things railroad: photos and a 16 mm movie film of all the Berkeley streetcars, negatives, lanterns, maps, stock certificates, model railroad cars, clippings, interviews, railroad spikes, books, conductor and engineer hats, signal lights and even 2 railcars.

One railcar residing in back of Stein’s home was Oakland’s No. 2 horse car which traveled up and down Telegraph Avenue in 1887 and on University Avenue in Berkeley in 1893. Stein had a garage constructed for it. The car was used at the openings for BART in Berkeley and Hayward and for Cal’s 100th anniversary. It was sent to the Ardenwood Museum in Newark. The second was streetcar No. 352 on Oakland’s East 21st Street. It ended up at the Railway Museum in Rio Vista. The front lawn sported a signal switch stand from the Nevada, California and Oregon railroads.

The Stein family, including daughter Janet, used to go to the Santa Fe Railway yards in Richmond on Sunday afternoons so her father and brother could roam the yards. She and her brother Bob admit that Louis had an

obsession in collecting. But he also loved people, made friends wherever he went and loved to listen and tell stories of pioneer families.

Eventually when railroad memorabilia became more difficult to find, Louis switched to Northern California history and eventually Contra Costa history. Some afternoons he would call on people and ask to copy or buy material. The pharmacy also had a darkroom, as this was before camera stores and digital photos. If needed, Stein could copy photos and return them. He also called on widows and obtained some photos this way. Mostly, photos were donated. Known for collecting he also took many photographs, for comparison to his old photos and as documentation for the future.

All of his collections were housed at the Rugby Street house. It had an attic which was packed everywhere. The basement and garage housed items as well. Joan Merryman remembers visiting his wood house with all the paper inside and praying that there would never be a fire.

The breadth of his memorabilia was astounding. He had collections from the coal mines in Nortonville, Somersville, Judsonville and Stewartville. When the East Bay Regional Park District wanted to reconstruct the building sites in Somersville, UC Berkeley contacted Stein for his photos.

In 1966 Stein rescued a 500 pound bell that hung from Contra Costa County's first courthouse built in 1853. He bought the bell at auction, kept it for ten years and then donated it to the Martinez Historical Society. When he bought something, he didn't always know where it would end up, but he knew it needed to be saved.

Another impressive collection was the papers of Dr. John Marsh, the first American settler in Contra Costa County. There were many books on California History. Stein owned a guide to California by John Muir published in the 1880's. He also had McNear Warehouse records of the late 1800's. There were coded telegrams for the sale of wheat with the accompanying codebooks, prices being confidential in those days.

As a pharmacist he also collected pharmaceutical novelties, glass bottles and medicines. He had such a wealth of material that he outfitted an old time drug store in the gold rush town of Columbia and was asked for his expertise to set it up. He also advised Walt Disney for a drugstore on Main Street at Disneyland.

One of Stein's most famous acquisitions was the 1849 adobe house of Vincente Martinez, the second son of Don Ignacio Martinez in 1955. Developers were interested in buying the site and tearing down the house, once lived in by John Muir's daughter Wanda and adjacent to Muir's house in Martinez. Mildred and Louis bought the house for \$10,000 down on a \$25,000 sale price. Stein helped restore it and rented it out to defray the cost of the loan. Eleven years later he sold it to National Park Service for about the same amount and it became part of the John Muir Historic Site.

Stein had numerous awards and citations over the years. He was also on the boards of historical societies and museums. He gave 8 boxes of artifacts to the Oakland Museum when they began their collection.

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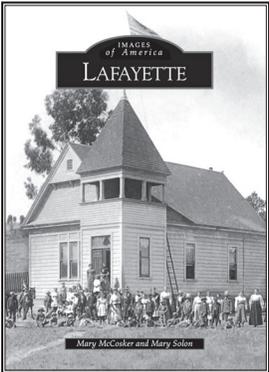
He helped to found and guide the Contra Costa County Historical Society and in 1984 donated over 50,000 papers and books, 20,000 photographs and numerous slides, negatives and maps. He donated all of the Contra Costa County court documents in large bound books (ledgers) that the county was discarding after having placed all the information on microfiche.

Betty Maffei, executive director of Contra Costa County Historical Society, remembers visits with Stein at Rugby Avenue. Stein paid for many of his acquisitions and then donated them to various historical societies including Lafayette Historical Society. But what amazed Betty is that Stein would leave photos out on the desk in the sunlight or exposed to other potential harmful elements. Considering his penchant for collecting and his generosity they developed a saying, "At least he saved it!" Betty noted that Stein didn't just collect, he knew the history of the photos, remembered where they were stored and could recall little details of each one.

Louis L. Stein died in 1996. He will be remembered as a major contributor to the history community in the East Bay including photos to the Lafayette Historical Society.

—Mary Solon

## Selling the Book

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Images of America "Lafayette"</b> <b>From Arcadia Publishing</b></p> <p>A short history book with 210 photographs, many new to the Lafayette Historical Society</p> <p>Available on-line at <a href="http://lafayettehistory.org">lafayettehistory.org</a> with PayPal Or Lafayette Historical Society P.O. 133, Lafayette CA 94549</p>	<p>Cost of the book including tax and postage:</p> <table> <tr> <td>1 copy</td> <td>\$23.77</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 copies</td> <td>\$45.75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 copies</td> <td>\$67.73</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 copies</td> <td>\$89.37</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Allow 2 weeks for delivery.</i></p>	1 copy	\$23.77	2 copies	\$45.75	3 copies	\$67.73	4 copies	\$89.37
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## Potomac Cruise

On September 22, twenty one members and friends of the Lafayette Historical Society enjoyed a two hour history cruise of San Francisco Bay on the USS Potomac. The morning began with a video relating the history and restoration of the yacht. We boarded the yacht at 11:00 a.m., sailed out of the Oakland Estuary and into San Francisco Bay. Puffy white and gray clouds with patches of blue sky and smooth waters helped to make this a very special day.

The Potomac was built in 1934 as a Coast Guard cutter and re-commissioned in 1936 as the presidential yacht by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. She was purchased in recent years by the Port of Oakland and restored in a cooperative effort of organized labor, maritime corporations and many dedicated volunteers.

—Nancy Flood

## The Pony Express Stop in Lafayette

In the April issue the need and implementation of the Pony Express was discussed. Here is more information on the start of the service and Lafayette's small role in the express delivery of the mail.

To keep weight down, the mail and special edition newspapers were printed on special light paper and wrapped in oil skin for waterproofing. Telegrams, business letters and government dispatches were also sent. Initially a letter cost \$5 per half ounce, the same price each way. Later the fare was reduced to \$1.00. Letters were franked or post marked with a special hand stamp.

The saddles were of a special abbreviated design believed to be made by the Israel Landis' Saddlery Company. The mail was placed in a mochila, a special rectangular piece of leather which was the saddle bag. There were 4 pockets at each corner which were locked for safety. The mochila had a hole for the saddle horn and it was thrown over the saddle at each relay station. The weight of the rider kept it in place. It is estimated that the empty mochila and saddle only weighed 13 pounds. The mochila carried 20 pounds of mail and 20 pounds of personal effects. The rider could carry water, a bible, a knife, a horn to alert the station masters of their approach and a gun. Later only the water and the gun were carried.

The Pony Express plan required riders to gallop about 10 miles between stations and change horses. They traveled 75-100 miles a day and then a new driver took over. Riders started at each end on the same day and crossed paths en route. Between San Francisco and Sacramento a boat was planned for service because the horses couldn't cross rivers and the Bay. Most trips took about 10 days in summer and a few more in winter.

Finally the time for the first Pony Express rides had come. On March 31, 1860, a special train carried 49 letters, 5 telegrams, and special edition newspapers from Washington and New York to St. Joseph, Missouri. At about 7:00 p.m. on April 3, 1860, after waiting around for hours for the train, the mail was put in the mochila and the rider left St. Joseph for points west. The whole town had gathered for the event. The name of the first rider is unknown as there are varying accounts of the first few blocks of the ride.

In San Francisco on this same April 3 at 4:00 p.m.



James Randall left with 85 letters to board the Antelope at the wharf and traveled to Sacramento. There the mail was transferred to another rider and the eastbound overland service began.

For the first part of 1860 there were weekly rides from each direction. There was a halt to operations for the Paiute Indian War from May to July, 1860. Stations were destroyed and men were killed between Salt Lake City, Utah and Carson City, Nevada. Once over, riders then started out twice a week including winter until October, 1861. A total of 308 runs were made for a distance of 616,000 miles. Lincoln's

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inaugural address in November, 1860 made it from St. Joseph to Sacramento in 7 days, 17 hours after special preparations for publicity and political reasons. Thirty-five thousand letters were ultimately carried by the Pony Express. Californians sent more than half of the mail they were so eager for news. Only one to two shipments were lost depending on accounts and only one rider killed, by Indians. Space does not permit the telling of the many stories along the routes.

Although it was easy for the eastbound riders to make the boat connection in San Francisco it was not for the westbound riders arriving in Sacramento. They were completing a long journey through all kinds of weather and Indian country, their timing was never exact. Riders often missed the boat which was to leave Sacramento at 2 p.m. on Saturday with no service on Sunday. Unexpectedly, they had to ride overland from Sacramento to Oakland where they took a ferry from Jack London Square to San Francisco. The route went through Davis, Fairfield, Cordelia, Benicia, by ferry to Martinez, Pacheco, Walnut Creek, Lafayette and Oakland.

Lafayette and these other towns became “added stations”. Lafayette House, run by N. P. Lake, was the hotel and way station on the southwest corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard at Moraga Road where a Pony Express monument stands today. The rider came in from Martinez, changed horses, galloped through Orinda, over Fish Ranch Road, then down Claremont, Telegraph and Broadway. He then caught a ferry, the Oakland, for the crossing to San Francisco. After the first unofficial run through Lafayette the Pony Express stopped twice more in 1860 and 17 times in 1861, always westbound.

There is very little information available for the Lafayette portion of the route. Although Nelson P. Lake is noted in Dorothy Mutnick’s compendium of Contra Costa history, *Some California Poppies and Even a Few Mommies*, there is no mention of Lafayette’s added station or the Pony Express. Mr. Lake bought the Lafayette House in October of 1859 and sold it in August of 1860 to William W. Orr. Lake and his wife acquired the old Lafayette Store in October of 1861 and within a year or two sold it and went to the Nevada Territory.

An April 16, 1860 article in the *Contra Costa Gazette* mentioned the overland Pony Express route but it implies that the rider took off from the ferry in Martinez, the Carquinez, and galloped to Oakland. Since this was possibly the first westbound express, there would not have been a station even thought of at this time.

The completion of the nationwide telegraph network in October, 1861 doomed the Pony Express. Service ended shortly thereafter. The venture never panned out as a financial success and bankrupted the owners.

However the Pony Express contributed to the western frontier in many ways. The central route became the basis for telegraph service and the transcontinental railroad which was completed in 1869. However, the Pony Express literally captured the hearts of the populace. Although it only covered half of the country, only ran for a year and a half, schoolchildren and adults alike think of it in a reverent, yet full of life, sort of way. Its memory far outlives the short time it was in service.

—*Mary Solon, Community Organization*

## Old Betsy's Progress

I am happy to report some real progress with the wheel project on OLD BETSY. In a past article "OLD BETSY GETTING NEW SHOES" referred to the rebuilding the wheels and the addition of new tires. That is a few words for the several steps of removing the old wheels, old tires, disassembling of the old wheels, the acquisition of new tires and tubes, the sand blasting of the old wheel parts and their repainting, and the rebuilding of the wheels with new wooden spokes. All of those steps are done or in progress and the reinstalling of the new wheels with new tires will follow.

Getting the parts has not been speedy. Each time I ordered parts it seems like it took two or more calls to the vendor to get the right parts. It is still surprising that authentic parts for a 1920 TT Ford truck are still available. Wheel hub bolts and nuts, tire rim bolts and nuts, wheel bearings, and tire hardware come in different sizes for our two different size wheels; but we now have all the needed parts (I think).

The tires, tubes and assorted pieces are in the hands of a shop that knows how to replace the tires. The Model T wheels are not like a modern wheel that is easily handled by a modern tire shop. For example, the tires have tubes, an inner rim liner protects the tube from the inside of the rim, and the tires are installed using tire irons while care must be taken to not pinch the tube against the rim. The mounted tires and rims are due back within a few weeks.

The wheel rim, wheel hub and hub flange are on their way to a wheel shop in Sonora where new wooden wheel spokes will be installed between the hub and the wheel rim. In the case of the rear wheel, a brake drum is also attached to the re-spoked wheel.

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George Wasson.....	284-4603
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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	

This should be completed within a few weeks. The Sonora shop is owned by a retired former resident of San Ramon.

The photograph shows the several parts of one wheel and includes a new tire on the left and the tire rim on the right, in the middle is a wheel rim with old spokes below it and the wheel hub, hub flange and brake drum to the left of the wheel rim. The spokes are the connection between the wheel hub at its center and the wheel rim at the outside. The spoked wheel is attached to the axle of the vehicle and the tire rim and tire is then installed on the outside of the wheel rim.

There still are a number of chores to complete in refurbishing OLD BETSY before the move to the new home. She has been housed in our garage for well over 25 years; its time for a change.

—George Wasson



**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 \_\_\_\_\_