



Lafayette Historical Society

NEWS

Enlightening Our Community

Lafayette, California

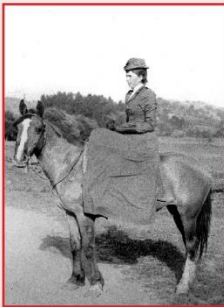
January 2018

Vol. 45, No. 1

**The History Room is Open Tu Th Sat 10-2
Located on the Lower Level of the Lafayette Library**



Lafayette Historical Society's *Speaker Series*



Jennie Bickerstaff rode
her horse to school when
she was a teacher

"Getting to School in Lafayette in the 20th Century"

Stuart Swiedler has combined his knowledge of transportation in our communities in the 20th Century with how kids of that era got to school. They walked, rode horses, drove tractors and took trains. Stu will cover it all.

Date.....Sunday, January 21, 2018

Time.....2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Place.....Lafayette Library & Learning Center - Arts & Science Room

Donation Requested-\$10.00 LHS members; \$15.00 non-members requested

Kids under 14 Free with paying adult

For questions or reservations please call (925) 283-1848 or email Lafayette.History@comcast.net

Make your plans to join us for another of Stu Swiedler's informative talks!!

If you think about it, not long ago all of the school kids in Lafayette could ride horses to school. You know Stu from his previous talks for the Lafayette Historical Society. He's combined his knowledge of transportation with the practicality of getting to school in the early days of our communities.

COMING SOON

Watch for our newest exhibit coming in January to the display case in the Lafayette Library:

The history of Mt. Diablo Boulevard from a dirt road when it was first known as the road to Oakland or Tunnel Road to Highway 75A to today's four lane thoroughfare that defines our City.

LAFAYETTE'S EARLY ICE CREAM PARLORS

In 1989 Ollie Hamlin and George Wasson, LHS Board members, conducted an oral history interview with members of the Hunt family about their property on Lafayette Circle. It is true that this old building (now housing Farmyard Darlings) was in fact an ice cream parlor, but it was learned that it was the third of three ice cream parlors operated by the Hunt family in Lafayette in the period 1913-33.



Alice Hunt, aunt of Harold Hunt, started the operation in 1913. She was a very enterprising woman who decided to take advantage of the tourist traffic coming to Lafayette via the new Oakland-Antioch Railroad (later known as the Sacramento Northern) which began operation in 1913. She opened a small ice cream store at the West Lafayette station (at the end of today's School Street) with ice cream, hot dogs, and other food sold mainly to tourists. Several members of the Hunt family helped to run the business. A real estate office was also established at the train station to sell lots in Lafayette. Alice Hunt made arrangements with the Miller Ice Cream Company of Oakland to supply and ship ice-packed ice cream to Lafayette by the same train. The Hunts had to add salt to the ice to keep the product frozen



because there was no refrigeration in those days. The business flourished.

In 1921 the business was relocated to a larger building on the north side of Tunnel Road (now Mt. Diablo Boulevard) near where Peter Thomson's blacksmith shop stood – the present location of the Bank of America.

The ice cream business continued to thrive. In 1924 the store was moved to its third location, the south side of Hough Avenue (now Lafayette Circle). Some years later the building itself was moved around the corner to face onto the side street to make room for a parking lot and probably to benefit from the shade of the huge oak tree at the new site. Alice Hunt continued to operate the ice cream and food business at this location until 1933. On a good day she would sell fifty to sixty gallons of ice cream. That represents a lot of ice cream cones – and a lot of work for five cents apiece! In 1933 Prohibition was abolished and the Hunt family decided to lease their building to Lou Borghesani for operation of a saloon (today's Roundup Saloon). Twenty years of a thriving ice cream business came to an end.



Alice Hunt died in 1935. She was well known and loved by many people in Lafayette for many years. The fact that she assisted in the birth of numerous Lafayette children probably earned her the loving name of "Mother".

HISTORICAL MARKERS IN LAFAYETTE

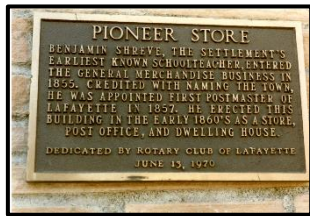
Past LHS board member Bill Somerton compiled a list of all of the historical markers in Lafayette in 2000. His list includes the locations and dates of dedication of the markers. Here they are in chronological order of dedication:

LAFAYETTE THE PIONEER SETTLEMENT

Erected by Lafayette Lions Club in August 1955 – Located in Plaza Park

OLD TOWN PLAZA

Dedicated by the Rotary Club of Lafayette in June of 1970 – Located in Plaza Park



PIONEER STORE

Dedicated by the Rotary Club of Lafayette in June of 1970 – Located on Plaza Way

WAY SIDE INN

Dedicated by the Rotary Club of Lafayette in June of 1970 – Located on Plaza Way

GEILS BUILDING

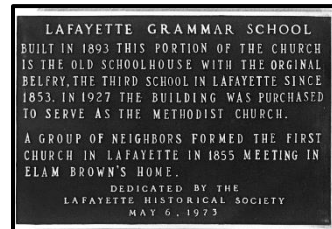
Dedicated by Soroptimist Club of Lafayette in June of 1971 – Located on Plaza Way

VETERANS MEMORIAL FLAGPOLE

Presented by the parents of Timothy A. Thomas who died in Vietnam in October of 1972
Located in Plaza Park

LAFAYETTE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Dedicated May of 1973 by the Lafayette Historical Society – Located at 955 Moraga Road

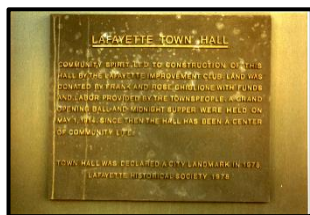


LAFAYETTE CEMETERY

Dedicated by the Lafayette Historical Society in 1974
Located on the entrance gatepost on Mt. Diablo Boulevard

BICENTENNIAL LIBERTY TREE

Dedicated in November of 1974 – Located at 950 Dewing Avenue



LAFAYETTE TOWN HALL

Dedicated by the Lafayette Historical Society in 1978 – Located at Moraga Road and School Street

ELAM & MARGARET ALLEN BROWN HOMESITE

Dedicated by the Lafayette Historical Society in 1981 – Located on Lafayette Circle near the Coffee Shop.

PONY EXPRESS MARKER

Dedicated by the Lafayette Historical Society in 1992 –

Located in Plaza Park in Plaza Park



FIRST SETTLEMENT IN LAFAYETTE

Dedicated by the Lafayette Historical Society on the occasion

of Lafayette's Sesquicentennial in 1998 – Located on Happy Valley Road

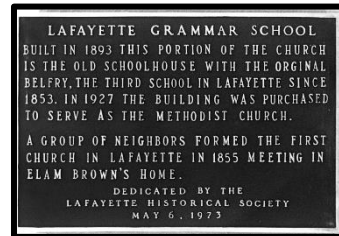
LAFAYETTE HOUSE – PONY EXPRESS

Provided by various donors in 1998 – Located on the SW corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road

LAFAYETTE SCHOOLHOUSE #2

Dedicated by Lafayette Historical Society in 1998 –

Located on Mt. Diablo Boulevard



ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral Histories which date from the 1970's have been stored on tapes and disks in the History Room. Many of these tapes have recently been digitized and are available for viewing on the Historical Society Website – lafayettehistory.org. In the top row on the website you will find Archives/Oral Histories which will take you to the oral histories. Below is a list of the tapes that have recently been added to the website. The committee continues to work to make additional tapes available.

MABEL SKUCE: Mabel Skuce moved to Lafayette in 1946, and she has lived here ever since. In this interview she describes and discusses the city as it existed in the middle of the last century: its stores, restaurants, and schools, as well as some of its more general characteristics. Her “tour” of the Lafayette of 60-plus years ago presents the city as it was before Highway 24 was built, when you could buy a hamburger at Rick’s Drive In and patrons of the Roundup could tie their horses in front of the establishment.

RITA SANTOS: Rita Santos moved to Lafayette in 1900 at the age of 3. She lived in Happy Valley, first on her father’s ranch, and then her husband’s, until she passed away in 1992. In this interview she describes what it was like to grow up and to live in a small town that was rural and agricultural, and also a true community. She rode her horse every day to school in the town center with a single teacher who taught all eight grades. Her accounts of daily activities such as making the trip to Oakland through the “old tunnel” gives us a sense of how different, and how challenging life was a century ago.

KEN AND MARGE CUSICK: Ken and Marge Cusick, long time Lafayette residents, tell stories of their neighborhood and area which has changed dramatically since they arrived here. They moved to the Springhill Valley in the early 1950s, and continue to live there today. Ken had a dental practice in Berkeley that attracted many of his Lafayette neighbors. Marge taught at Montecito School for five years. During her first year she had over 50 students in each of the two kindergarten classes she taught each day. They raised three sons who attended Lafayette schools and were involved in Boy Scouts.

FROM THE ANNALS OF THE CONTRA COSTA TIMES

“Surprise Reception Fetes Couple on Golden Wedding Anniversary”

From Wednesday, June 10, 1959

The golden wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Sumner Hodges of Lafayette was celebrated at a recent meeting of the Senior Group of the Lafayette Recreation Center. Mr. and Mrs. Hodges were honored guests for the day. They were completely surprised with the reception and “This is Your Life” program that fellow members had planned for the occasion.

The three tier wedding cake, decorated in keeping with the golden wedding theme, centered the table. Mrs. Hodges was presented with a corsage of golden roses, while Hodges received a boutonniere. Three solos were sung by Patricia Dixon of Acalanes High School: “I Love You Truly,” “At Dawning,” and “Thru the Years.” Antoine Van Pelt conducted the following program of “This is Your Life.”

Mrs. Hodges, the former Katie Mae Barnes, gave her hand to Sumner Hodges on June 6, 1909. The ceremony was performed at her home in Berkeley by the Rev. St. Claire of the Congregational Church. They spent their honeymoon in Sebastapol. The couple’s home in Lafayette is on property that has been in the Hodges family since 1860. Family and friends have been their greatest joy and the couple is blessed with good health.

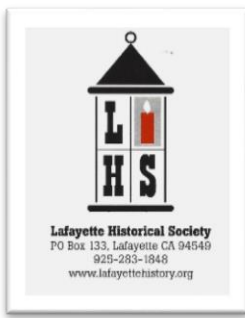
Sumner was born in Walnut Creek and was seven when his father gave up his livery stable and took up residence on Grandfather Samuel’s ranch. At that time Mt. Diablo Boulevard ended at the Moraga Road intersection. The traveler going east from the intersection used Golden Gate Way.

Sumner, now retired from PG&E, still enjoys riding his favorite horse, Gypsy Lee, and “keeping up the place.” Katie Mae keeps “her hand in” with cooking, sewing, and loving the grandchildren. They are real family folks and have made a place for themselves in the senior club, where they have made new friends.

One of the outstanding features of the program was a guest who knew Sumner when he was a little boy. In fact she was his school teacher in the old school house that is part of the Methodist Church today. Mrs. Margaret Jennie Rosenberg, better known as “Miss Bickerstaff,” taught all grades in the one room school. Some of her photographs of school days were passed around for all to see. These brought back happy memories to many of the senior members.



Visit the History Room to see Katie Hodges’ wedding dress and shoes on display.



LHS

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Return Service Requested

YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MATTERS:

Your Name _____

_____ Student Membership \$10 (thru high school only)

_____ Individual Membership \$25

_____ Family Membership \$50

_____ Donation \$ _____

Thank You

How to donate: • By mail in the enclosed envelope

• In person at the History Room

• Online: www.lafayettehistory.org

Make checks payable to the Lafayette Historical Society

Please mail this application to:

**Lafayette Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette CA 94549**

