



Lafayette Historical Society

# NEWS

Enlightening Our Community

Lafayette, California

July 2019

Vol. 46, No. 3

**The History Room is Open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10-2  
Located on the Lower Level of the Lafayette Library**



**Lafayette Historical Society's**

## *Speaker Series*

**Watch your mail for our next  
Speaker Series in October**

**Stu Swiedler will return with another  
presentation:**

***"How Eminent Domain Changed  
Lamorinda"***

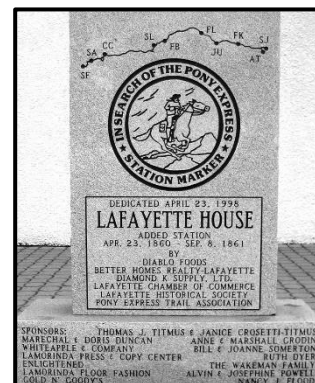
### **ARCHEOLOGICAL DONATION**



The Historical Society recently received a phone call from a former Lafayette resident, Glen Olson, who offered this archeological artifact he found in the early 1960s as a boy when he was delivering Oakland Tribune newspapers on Mt. Diablo Boulevard near Sunset Village. He took it to UC Berkeley to have it authenticated and discovered that it was a fossilized toe bone of a camel-like animal, possibly *Procamelus*, an extinct genus of camel that lived in Western North America from the middle to late Miocene period. Thank you Glen for a piece of really early Lafayette history!!

## LAFAYETTE HISTORY LIBRARY DISPLAYS

Please visit the Lafayette Library and view the informative display put together by LHS Board member Laura Torkelson, one on “Snow in Lafayette” and the other on the “Pony Express in Lafayette”. We are appreciative to Laura for her displays which highlight earlier times in our town. There have been several times over the years when snow has fallen in Lafayette and there are photographs to document this unusual occurrence. The Pony Express stopped in Lafayette 17 times in 1861 when a Pony Express rider missed the boat to San Francisco in Sacramento and then had to ride overland to Oakland, where he took a ferry to San Francisco, first passing through Lafayette. A monument on Mt. Diablo Boulevard commemorates this history.



## FAREWELL TO SOME SPECIAL LHS VOLUNTEERS

Recently the Lafayette Historical Society reluctantly said goodbye and thank you to two longtime Board members who have decided to retire:

Marechal Duncan has been on the Board since 1993. He has served in various capacities on the Board from President (1994-1996) to Vice President (several stints beginning in 1993 and most recently until 2019). He also worked on the Oral History committee for many years. Marechal attended many local meetings to spread the word about the Historical Society. He will be missed as an enthusiastic Board member and supporter but since he is 97 years old, we will allow him to cut back on his activities.



John Otto joined our Board in 2011. John's fabulous graphic and photographic talents have been much appreciated. He was the fellow with the camera who documented our events and was responsible for the many text boxes advertising our programs and brightening our newsletters. His wonderful humorous emails that arrived each and every holiday always brought a smile.

We will all miss Marechal and John and their talents and humor but most of all we will miss their friendship and the assistance and support they have given to the Historical Society over the many years they have been part of our organization.

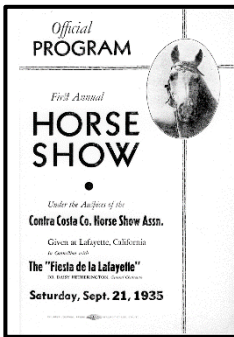
## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2019

Welcome to our new members and to those who have recently renewed their memberships:

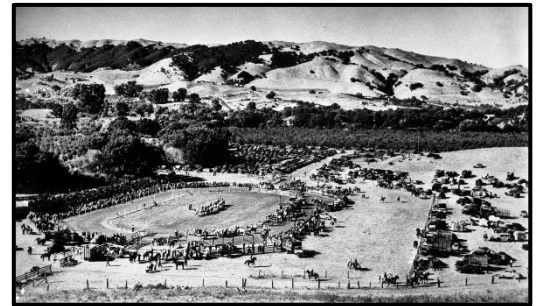
<b>Tokiko Noricks (L)</b>	<b>John &amp; Jenny Kallio</b>	<b>Dawn &amp; Patrick Eames (L)</b>
<b>Nancy Flood</b>	<b>Tom &amp; Joan Grimes (S)</b>	<b>Eric &amp; Margaret Schreiber</b>
<b>Tami Mullins</b>	<b>Leonard &amp; Louiselle Holmes</b>	<b>Linda Ferrarotti</b>
<b>Rebecca Mallon</b>	<b>Lauren &amp; Chris Herpich</b>	<b>Laura Torkelson</b>
	<b>Ken &amp; Emily Haas</b>	

**Thank you for your support of the Lafayette Historical Society.**

## THE HORSE SHOWS OF LAFAYETTE

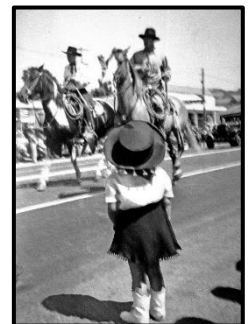


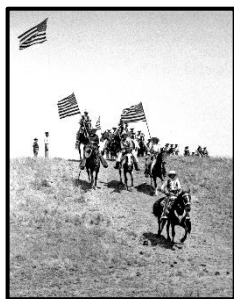
Lafayette was the focus of Contra Costa County horsemen and women for two days a year. The Lafayette Horse Show, which began as the Fiesta de la Lafayette in 1935 and ran under various names through the mid-1940s, was a huge event sponsored by the Contra Costa Horseman's Association....180 horses competing, and 300 horses parading down Moraga Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard extending over a mile. What a sight! The horse show grounds were on the Hamlin ranch on St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road.



From 1935 until 1942, when World War II caused it to be discontinued, the Horse Show delighted and enlivened the town. Dave Long, a child who attended the Horse Show remembers, "One of the big events here was the Lafayette Horse Show. For kids, that was just wild! It was just a big event. They had a horse parade.... The Lafayette Horse Show was exciting for everyone, but for kids it was just a wonder. ... They had big bins of soft drinks... the kids could go out there and drink themselves silly on Coke. ... That was our whole existence for those days – we looked forward to that every year."

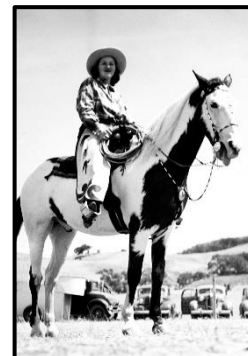
The parade was one of the popular features of the horse show festivities. In 1935, it began at 11:30 a.m. and had 216 horses, chuck wagons, and a few floats. Staged a mile down Moraga Road, it paraded onto Mt. Diablo Boulevard. and then to the arena. Lafayette Historical Society Board member, Nancy Flood, is shown dressed up in her finest western wear to watch the horses and floats on Mt. Diablo Boulevard.





The horse show was more than just people showing off their horses. It was the pride of a generation of ranchers who, despite the coming of the automobile, still felt connected to their horses and the land. In this 1937 photo, the riders make their “Grand Entry,” presenting the colors. The horse show was just that, and not a rodeo, but there was a roping contest. Over the years, there was also team roping, single-steer roping, and pig roping. There were events for judging Arabians, palominos, pintos, trail horses, stallions, hackamores, colts, and gaited horses. There were children’s and women’s events, saddle races, and watermelon races.

Patti Brooks Boyer and Pagero, a paint horse and former polo pony, were winners of the trophy in the Trail Class in 1939. Two years earlier, Boyer and Pagero participated in the parade on the Great Highway for the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge. Boyer’s father, George Brooks, was the announcer at the horse show for many years.



Festivities included a Horse Show Dance at the Town Hall. The Town Hall had a flexible wood floor and was refinished just for the event to make it very smooth. Ideal for dancing, which along with a good live band, contributed to the popularity of the event. Western clothes were the order of the day, and prizes were given. The skills used on local ranches, plus the horsemanship of the riders and beauty of the horses were showcased. Wonderful prizes were donated by businesses. Several of the trophies

are in the History Room. -Laura Torkelson

There will be a display about Lafayette’s Horse Shows in the Library soon with lots of pictures. There are even more in the History Room. Come and visit.

## 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](http://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.

**Larry Blodgett:** Larry was interviewed on July 18, 2008. He had started a career in the architectural field when, in 1991, he chose instead to become involved in running the family business. He has worked there ever since, and has also served on the City’s Design and Review Commission, worked with the Chamber of Commerce, Historical Society, and the Rotary Club. He describes the high level of dedication to local civic affairs, which he himself personifies, as being the critical factor in the development of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. His experiences in architecture and as a member of the Design Review Committee enabled Larry to make a significant contribution to the plans for the new library.

**Bob Fisher:** In this interview for the Lafayette Library and Learning Center project, Bob Fisher describes in detail the pivotal role he played beginning in 2005, in the planning, funding, and building of the City’s new library, which quickly became its center of activity. He also played an

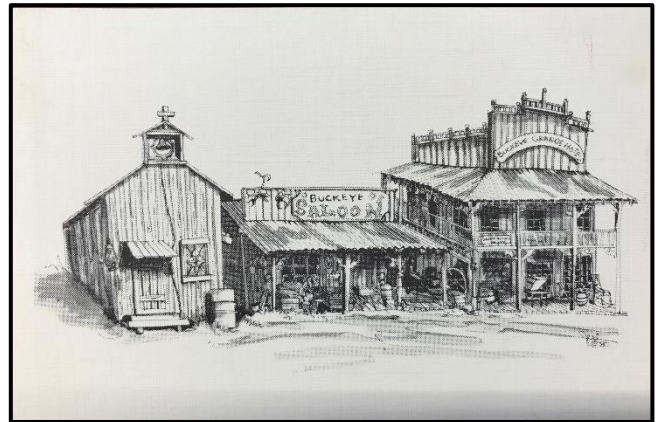
important part in conceiving and creating the unique Glenn Seaborg Consortium which connects the library to leading East Bay institutions. After growing up in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and earning degrees from Harvard and the London School of Economics, Bob settled in Lafayette in 1977 when he accepted a faculty position at UC Berkeley. He was a member of the original City Council when Lafayette incorporated, and served a term as mayor. He has continuously served the City in a variety of roles for over 50 years. He was the Lafayette Citizen of the year in 1977.

## **BUCKEYE RANCH**

Growing up in Lafayette in the 1940s and 50s, Buckeye Ranch was an idyllic place to visit. There were horses to ride and hayrides to go on. In those days there was no traffic on Pleasant Hill Road, no freeway....Lafayette was really out in the country, especially at the end of Springhill Road.

Buckeye Ranch started out as Tarantula Ranch, established by Paul Albert and his wife Worth, and a friend Dorothy Smith. Paul was the founder of the Western Horseman Magazine for "Admirers of Western Stock" in 1942. The Alberts drove a small herd of cattle through Northern California to new land of 128 acres near Lafayette in the mid-1930s. They named the property Tarantula Ranch after their original ranch located on the Tarantula Flat near Yosemite National Park. For \$24 a month they rented the land and raised cattle but also decided to establish a dude ranch. They had horses that could be rented by the hour. They also raised cattle and Arabian horses.

After Paul died in 1942, Worth moved to Twain Harte. Tarantula Ranch continued on, run by Worth's nephew, Bob Keeney. He continued with the dude ranch and expanded it. The ranch was renamed Buckeye Ranch for the trees growing on the land. Keeney had been a Hollywood set builder and added parts of a Western town to the property including a saddle shop, a blacksmith shop, and a general store. People who visited Buckeye Ranch came away with a taste of living in the days of the Old West.



Keeney kept 150 horses at the ranch that could be rented by the hour. The horses were cared for by a group of young horse enthusiasts who fed, groomed, and exercised them. A blacksmith kept the horses' feet shod. Horses could be boarded there.

By 1978, Lafayette had changed from a rural community to a suburban one, with more houses and a bigger downtown area. The freeway brought more cars and more people to the area. The interest in horses and horseback riding waned. The owner of the land sold the property to a developer and the East Bay Regional Park District wanted some of it for an eastern entrance to Briones Park. The Keeneys, for all their long and successful tenure, never owned the land. A fund raiser was organized to purchase the property but not enough money was raised. The western buildings were torn down, the horses sold, and Buckeye Ranch closed its gates in May of 1980. In 1982, Bob Keeney and his family relocated near Dixon, California. The developer never built houses and today the Girl Scouts and the Regional Park own most of the land.



Lafayette Historical Society  
PO Box 133  
Lafayette CA 94549  
925.283.1848

[www.lafayette.history.org](http://www.lafayette.history.org)

**LHS**

**Board of Directors-2019**

Larry Blodgett  
Nancy Flood  
Lauren Herpich  
Sande Hubbs  
John Kennett  
Mary McCosker  
Judie Peterson  
Laura Torkelson  
George Wasson

**Return Service Requested**