



Lafayette Historical Society

# NEWS

Enlightening Our Community

Lafayette, California

October 2017

Vol. 44, No. 3

**The History Room is Open Tuesday Thursday & Saturday 10-2**  
**Located on the Lower Level of the Lafayette Library**



## Lafayette Historical Society's *Speaker Series*



Newspaper photo clipping  
of Mark Henry Harrigan  
in the arms of his  
proud mother.

### Lafayette's History Through Modern Media

Mark Harrigan – avid local historian and first baby born at Kaiser Walnut Creek will share his vast collection of photos & newspaper articles about the history of Lafayette & Contra Costa County.

**Date**.....Sunday, October 15, 2017

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

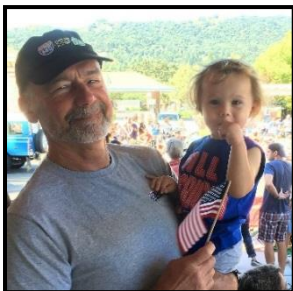
**Place**.....Lafayette Library & Learning Center - Community Hall

**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](mailto:Lafayette.History@comcast.net)

Even if you don't know Mark Harrigan's name from Facebook pages: "You know you're from Lafayette CA when" and "680/24 Corridor History", you will be amazed by the collection of photos and newspaper articles he shares with us during his presentation!



From first baby born in Walnut Creek's Kaiser Hospital to proud grandfather, Mark Harrigan has always been a local history buff.

He now shares his interest of Lamorinda and Central Costa County history on Facebook with pictures and newspaper articles he collects. On October 15 he will share his collection with us!

The best part of the afternoon will be meeting Mark. Please join us!

**Please join us on October 15 @ 2:00 p.m. for this most interesting look back at the history of our towns!**

# **LITTLE LEAGUE, COACHING AND COMMUNITY:**

## **An interview with Bruce Wood**

It was fitting that my first assignment as part of the LHS's oral history team would be on Memorial Day. That's the day when we stop, remember and appreciate the past, and more specifically, the people who shared and sacrificed to build the future we all live in and enjoy. On May 29th, 2017, I visited the home of Bruce and Pat Wood to learn about Lafayette's history, and as I listened, to appreciate the contributions they made to present day Lafayette.

Today, Lafayette is a well-known haven for growing young families, a place where education and youth sports thrive because of the dedicated support of parents, teachers and volunteers. But in the late 1950's, before Lafayette had become an incorporated city, sports were a fledgling pastime, enjoyed only as informal games with limited instruction. While neighboring cities enjoyed organized baseball, with successful programs and winning teams, Lafayette's young baseball players were limited by their lack of playing fields, uniforms and Lafayette's coaches struggled to keep the attention of young players who had never learned the fundamentals of the game. This was the state of Lafayette youth sports when the Wood family arrived in 1958.



Bruce Wood had grown up playing baseball in the sandlots of Berkeley, himself a product of loosely organized baseball. It wasn't until high school in Sacramento that he started receiving coaching and played on a well-trained and uniformed team that went on to play for state championships. He then continued to play baseball for Fresno State University, thriving as a pitcher and hitter until a shoulder injury halted his aspirations of playing professional ball. But these experiences instilled Bruce with a great love of the game, and when he and his young family arrived in Lafayette, he immediately started coaching. I would say he started coaching Little League, but that was the problem, Lafayette had no Little League.

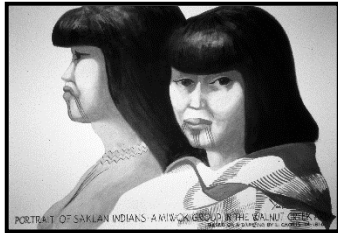
After several years of coaching, Bruce Wood spearheaded an effort to bring Little League to Lafayette. In those days, it was as simple as placing an ad calling for volunteers in the local newspaper. The response was immediate and enthusiastic. The team worked to create a baseball diamond in an abandoned field, form teams with local kids and coaches and went door to door fundraising to pay for uniforms. Within one year, Lafayette Little League enjoyed its first opening day, and there has been one every year since. Bruce went on to coach in the league for many years, focusing on teaching younger players a solid foundation of throwing, catching, hitting and base running, saying in our interview that "they would lose interest" if they didn't know these fundamentals. This work paid off as these many of these players grew into successful high school, college and even professional players.

The establishment of Lafayette Little League was by no means accomplished alone. Far from that, it required a coordinated effort of selfless community action done with a spirit of fun by a large number of volunteer citizens. But it took a man like Bruce Wood, someone who invested his passion and experience into his adopted home, to bring people together to build something beneficial for the future. If you would like to hear this story spoken directly by Bruce and Pat Wood, you can visit the Lafayette Historical Society's YouTube channel where a slideshow edited together with the interview can be found, along with many other oral histories from influential people in Lafayette's history.

*From an Oral History by Sean McCandless*

## **THE SACLAN RESISTANCE - 1795-1800**

The plight of the natives in the mission system was dire. When the missions first started, the idea was benevolent, but as it became clear that the natives did not want the European idea of life, things became more and more unpleasant. Natives were subjected to strange and unappealing food, uncomfortable clothes instead of near nakedness, constant “religious teaching” that made no sense, and none of the familiar customs of one’s own village. It was demoralizing. In addition, new diseases weakened and killed huge numbers of people. Escape became common. The response was to have a detachment of soldiers or trained natives at each mission to preserve order and bring back escapees. Punishment was severe.



In 1795, a small group of Saclan was granted permission to visit home. When they had gone across the Carquinez Straits to a large dance. Dancing was important to the culture in California. Saclan lived in harmony and mutual support with other tribes, such as the Carquin, instead of in competition as in most of the world. There was enough for all, and cooperation and trade increased security and prosperity.

When the retrieval party caught up with them, a pitched battle ensued. Seven of the Mission posse were killed, and the rest driven off. They returned to San Francisco with the news that the Saclan had beaten them. At that time, the Spanish army was stretched too thin, and there were no soldiers available to pursue the Saclan.

Word of the Saclan victory spread, and there was suddenly a mass exodus of Mission Natives! At least 280 fled Mission San Francisco in the summer of 1795!

By 1797, mission populations had dropped to levels that could not sustain them. So many had escaped or died that the Spanish colonial experiment was in danger of collapsing. More natives were needed!

On July 10, 1797 the governor directed his sergeant, Pedro Amador, to pull together both regular and retired soldiers to go after the Saclan who had killed the seven Christian natives in 1795. He was directed to attack at dawn and take the leaders, and any other Christians (baptized natives) to Mission San Jose. The attack occurred on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Even with barricades and fortifications, bows and arrows were no match for guns and lances. Thirty “Christians” were rounded up in Lafayette.

Continuing his foray, Amador returned to Mission San Jose on July 19<sup>th</sup> with 85 Christians and nine pagan leaders. He continued his relentless raids for several years until the Saclan were broken. Resistance finally stopped altogether in 1800. The mission populations increased.

Escape continued to be a problem for the missions as long as there was a life for the natives to return to. The solution was to remove all that they yearned for. It was achieved by depleting the wild animals and filling the land with cattle. Plus, as time went on, the memory of village life and sacred customs receded.

*Laura Torkelson*

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Our semi-annual membership mailing went out last week. We are grateful to everyone who renews their individual or family membership. If you received the membership form we hope that you'll renew yours. Your dollars help keep the lights on in our History Room!

Fifty-three of our members have renewed their dues this year, and we have 16 new members.

### New members in 2017:

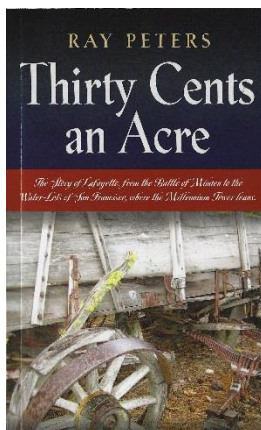
Barbara Levander  
Stuart Collett  
The Van Etten Family  
Lauren Herpich  
Jim Pingree  
Nancy Guth  
John Kallio  
The David Gerson Family  
Linda Ferrarotti  
Karl & Rita Pister  
Anne & Marshall Grodin  
Sue Cross  
The Erling Horn Family  
The Lou Cosso Family  
Mark Harrigan  
Sheila Rogstad



We've also included a membership application in the newsletter. Please feel free to pass this along to your friends and neighbors.

*Sande Hubbs, Membership Chair*

## ELAM BROWN: THIRTY CENTS AN ACRE



The Lafayette Historical Society is proud to announce the publication of *Thirty Cents an Acre* by Ray Peters, the story of Lafayette from the Battle of Minden to the Water-Lots of San Francisco, where the Millennium Tower leans. Ray, a longtime Lafayette Historical Society member, has done many years of research to chronicle the life story of Elam Brown. Learn about Brown's early years in the East and Midwest, why and how he decided to make the perilous westward journey overland by covered wagon, why he ended up in California when he was originally headed to Oregon, and how he came to purchase over 3300 acres of land for \$900. If you're a local history buff you'll surely want to read this book to learn about the beginnings of Lafayette. It's available at the History Room for \$20. Stop by on Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday from 10-2 to buy a copy or purchase one on our website ([www.lafayettehistory.org](http://www.lafayettehistory.org)) via PayPal.

# HOTELS IN LAFAYETTE

Milo Hough built and operated the first hotel within the confines of the city limits in 1853. It was located on First Street between Golden Gate Way and Mt. Diablo Blvd. He operated the hotel for two years and was appointed Postmaster of the Acalanes Post Office at the same time. He retired as postmaster in 1855, closed the hotel and built another in Walnut Creek which burned down in 1865.

The next hotel recorded was owned by Lawrence M. Brown, youngest son of Elam Brown. He built his hotel and store on the corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Road. In 1862 there was a ball held at the hotel on Christmas night. The tickets cost \$3.00 each and included supper, music and dancing, but the festivities were dampened by a storm which brought five inches of rain in as many days.

In 1875 Brown sold the hotel property to N.L. Hastings. Shortly after that Mary Yager Brown foreclosed the mortgage on Hastings. In 1881 she sold the property to J.S. Moore who then sold the property to Jasper Botters in 1883. He built a new building which was completed in 1884.

Then in 1892 Brian Hastings and John Vaughn burned down the hotel because the bartender refused to serve them drinks after hours. They were both sentenced to five years in San Quentin Prison.

The following announcement appeared in the Moraga items column in a local paper in September of 1894. "The hotel that was built in Lafayette by E. J. Brady and Co. is now completed. We must admit it is a great improvement to the town as it affords a bit of accommodation to travelers and excursionists". The hotel was located on Golden Gate Way across from the Plaza Park. In 1898 it was sold to B. Cunningham. Then it was sold to a third party who named it the Wayside Inn.

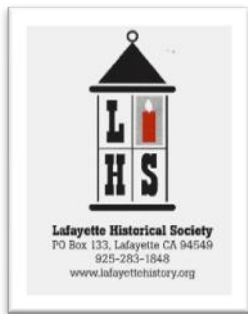
In 1899 "Liverpool Joe" ran a small hotel (location unknown). It burned down and it was believed that Joe died in the fire. He was seen in Oakland a few days later ending the rumor of his demise!!

In 1921 Pat Medau purchased the Wayside Inn. Since then it has been used as a butcher shop, ice cream parlor, insurance office, dress shop, Greyhound bus depot, and a residence until 1978 when it was purchased by the Assistance League of Diablo Valley.



In 1900 Philip Lamp built the last hotel on the hotel block. In 1928 it burned down when a cook forgot he was cooking a pot of sauce and lay down for a nap. The Lafayette Volunteer Fire Department responded with the 1919 Model T Ford fire engine but they couldn't control the fire. The Walnut Creek fire department also responded and as part of their equipment had a pump that they placed in the swimming hole located behind the Wayside Inn and were able to save all of the buildings in the area except the hotel.





**LHS**

**Board of Directors**

Ruth Bailey  
Larry Blodgett  
Marechal Duncan  
Nancy Flood  
Sande Hubbs  
John Kennett  
Mary McCosker  
John Otto  
Judie Peterson  
Laura Torkelson  
George Wasson

**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](http://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**

