



Lafayette Historical Society

NEWS

Enlightening Our Community

Lafayette, California

October 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*

"How Eminent Domain Changed Lamorinda"

Speaker..... Stuart Swiedler

Date..... Sunday, October 27, 2019

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

Place..... Lafayette Library & Learning Center -
Don Tatzin Community Hall

Donation Requested - \$10.00 LHS members; \$15.00
non-members; Kids under 14 free with paying adult

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

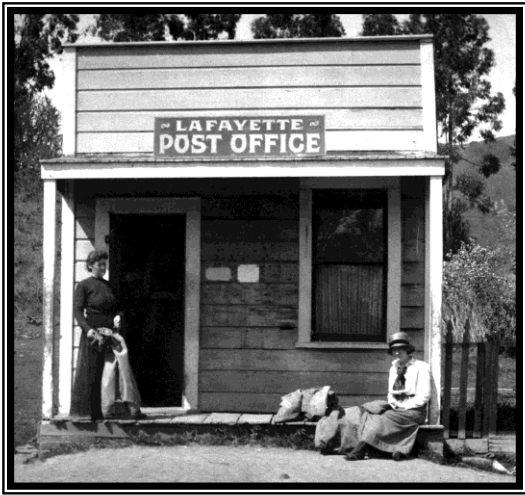


Imagine being told that the land your home sits on will become part of a reservoir that will not even benefit local residents. Or that your back yard was needed for a freeway. Eminent domain refers to the power of the government or its agent to take private property for public use if fair compensation is provided to the owners. This presentation will utilize aerial photographs, images of properties, and documents to examine how eminent domain impacted the course of Lamorinda in the 20th century, culminating in efforts to prevent a freeway's construction.

HELP CELEBRATE THE NEW LIBRARY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

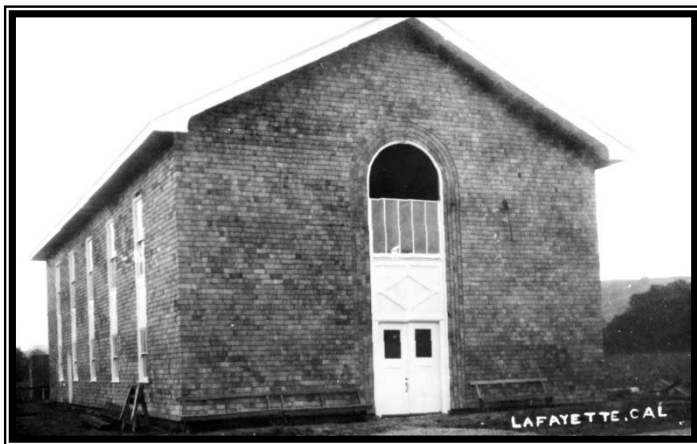
Thanks to all of the generous donors who made the building of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center a reality. Thank you to all who continue to support the Library. Thank you to the members of the Lafayette Historical Society who support our organization. We are the keepers of the history of our community and welcome visitors and new members. Please join our community in celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Opening of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center on Saturday, November 9th from 12-3. There will be activities throughout the Library complex. The History Room will be open so please stop by for a visit.

THE LIBRARIES OF LAFAYETTE

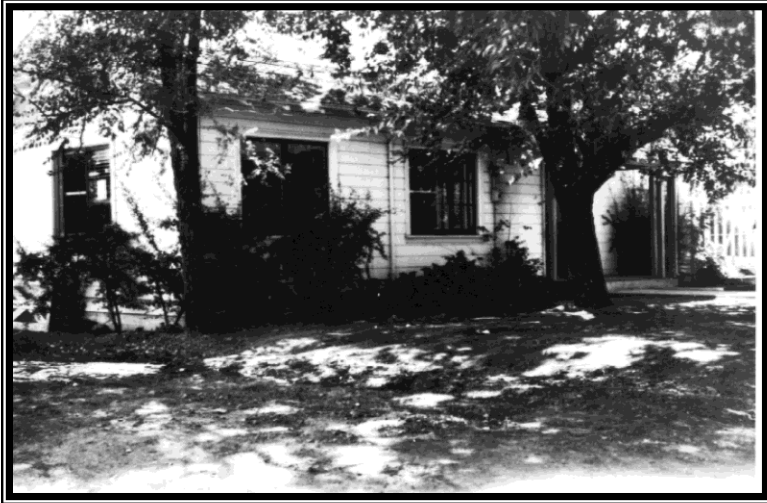


Carrie Van Meter (shown on the left) served as postmaster for 23 years at this location on the northwest side of the Mt. Diablo Boulevard-Moraga Road intersection. She was also custodian of Lafayette's early library. Originally founded in 1860 as a subscription library, the organization is believed to be the first public library service in the county. In 1913, the County Library was established and in 1915, Mrs. Van Meter took charge of the 60 books in the local "branch" which was in a corner of this post office. She continued as librarian until 1947.

In 1927, the Lafayette Improvement Club bought the old second school building, moved it from Moraga Road to Mt. Diablo Boulevard, and located the library in the building. By 1937, the building at 3553 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, owned by the Lafayette Improvement Club, could no longer serve as a post office, telephone exchange, and library.



Town Hall was announced as the site of the Library in 1937. A mass protest meeting followed this announcement as many citizens thought this would be too inconvenient a location. By 1939, the Lafayette Cooperative Library Association had been incorporated as a non-profit organization. Nine community groups were represented on the board of directors.




The Cooperative Library Association raised funds by subscription and used WPA labor to build a library in 1940 on Moraga Road on school district land. In 1949, the Library Association deeded the library building to the county which assumed the cost of adding a wing for a children's area and continued leasing the site from the school district for a nominal fee.

As the population of Lafayette grew in the 1950s, the building on Moraga Road was no longer adequate for the community's needs so thought was given to constructing new library.

THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE

- . A 646 sq. ft. BUILDING
- . CAPACITY to store 5,000 BOOKS
- . 11,075 BOOKS stored and in circulation
- . 90 permanent reference BOOKS
- . READING AREA for 6 children
- . READING AREA for 6 adults
- . 20 current publications ON FILE
- . 30 current newspaper file
- . 200 and more PEOPLE USING the library each day
- . 83,227 BOOKS circulated in 1956

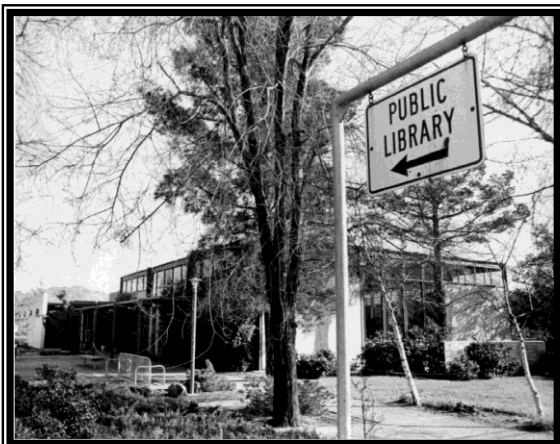
PRESENT LIBRARY



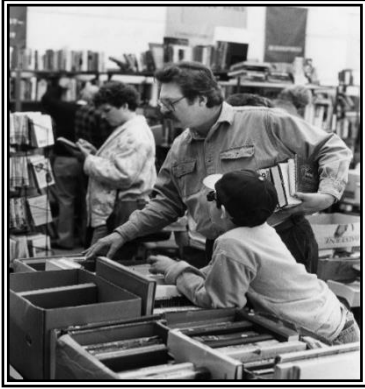
TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE OF LAFAYETTE.

- . 5,400 people have library cards
- . Today more than 3,000 FAMILIES in the Lafayette area
- . More than 3,500 CHILDREN in elementary schools
- . More than 1,200 CHILDREN in high school
- . More than 10,000 PEOPLE living in the area
- . LAFAYETTE IS GROWING - by 1965 we may have 30,000 PEOPLE in the area and 10,000 CHILDREN in schools

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The Lafayette Library Association became reactivated in 1956 and launched a campaign of public education on the need for a larger library. Lafayette citizens petitioned in 1957 for establishment of a service area, becoming the first County Service Area formed in California for library purposes. Land adjacent to the current library was acquired from the school district. Ground breaking ceremonies took place on June 5, 1961, and the library opened on March 25, 1962.

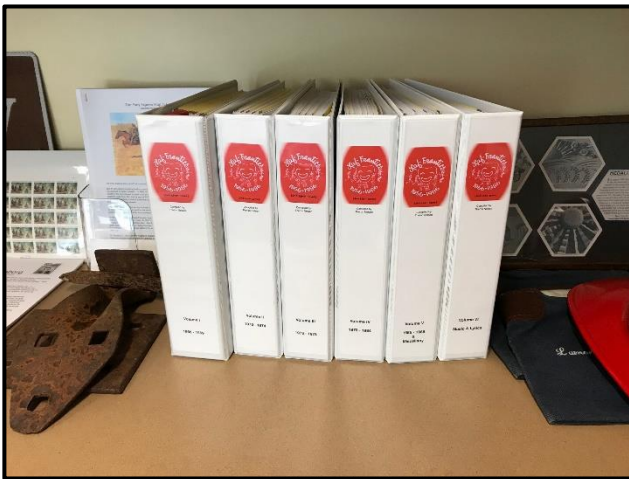


The Book Room Used Book Sales, begun the late 1960s at the Lafayette Community Center on St. Marys Road, raised money for the library and its programs. Donated books were placed in a large barrel at the Library and then transported to the Book Room for the sales which were staffed by Friends volunteers.

The Friends Corner Book Shop at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, opened in 2009, continues to raise money to support Library programs and operations. The Friends gave the first donation of \$1 million for construction of this state-of-the-art library.



THE HISTORY OF LAF-FRANTICS



Theron Nelson, long time Lafayette thespian, has completed a history of Laf-Frantics, a community group that was formed in the 1950s to secure and develop the site of the Lafayette Community Center (today the site of Buckeye Fields) at 711 St. Marys Road. The board of directors were seeking money to finish paying for the site and construct a building for youth groups to use. Fund raising events were held for this purpose. The most successful event was started by Jeri Burnside and Betsey Young who, with other local groups, created Laf-Frantics, putting on Melodramas and Olios at Town Hall. Theron has organized the group's history into six binders from 1956-1986, including the shows presented each year, music and lyrics

from the shows, and a roster of all those who took part over the years. The Historical Society is grateful for all of Theron's efforts to preserve this cultural history of Lafayette. Please come by to view this collection.....it's amazing!!

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.

Lucille (Lue) Jones: Lue moved to Lafayette at age 6 in 1927. Her father came here to work on building the Lafayette Reservoir. In this interview she shares memories of growing up in Lafayette at that time and of Carrie Van Meter, the town librarian, who would always tell you what book you were going to read next. Lue's husband, Orville Jones, was a descendant of Lafayette's original blacksmith, Peter Thomson. Lou was an active volunteer at Mt. Diablo/John Muir Hospital and the Friends of the Lafayette Library Book Shop.

Gayle Uilkema: Gayle served on the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors for 13 years, following 18 years of service on the Lafayette City Council. She describes the Lafayette Library project as being the result of a whole lot of very committed, far-sighted people, all doing what they needed to do. Her primary contribution was to handle the many challenges which arose in the area of government affairs, as the needs and expectations of numerous independent entities had to be accounted for. She hoped that new the library would become a safe and secure environment where individuals would find many opportunities to expand their minds. She also hoped it would be used as an after-school study center by students from the nearby middle and elementary schools.

Anne Cain: Anne, former Head Librarian for Contra Costa County, was interviewed on July 16, 2009, by Georgie McLain. An active participant in the process to create the new library, Anne was specifically responsible for making sure the building was built to operate efficiently. Anne's 37-years of experience as a librarian gave her a broad perspective for appreciating the way the City's staff and volunteers from the community worked collaboratively to acquire the ideal site, then design and build a library that would become the pride, as well as the new focal point, of Lafayette. Anne describes how a highly-talented group of individuals, many of whom were at a point in their lives when their families would not directly benefit from the new building themselves, worked tirelessly for years, nearly full-time when necessary, and refused to accept anything less than perfection. Her account is a portrait of, and a tribute to, a unique community.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2019

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

Richard Horonjeff

Thank you for your support of the Lafayette Historical Society.



Lafayette Historical Society
PO Box 133, Lafayette Ga 31549
925-283-1848
www.lafayettehistory.org

LHS

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