



BULLETIN

SPRING, 2010

Betty Maffei steps down as History Center Director

Honored at Reception



Betty Maffei received recognition from Congressman George Miller, State Senator Mark DeSaulnier, and State Assemblyman Tom Torlakson. Above, Betty inspects documents honoring her long service as History Center Director. Left to right: Resolution from Contra Costa Board of Supervisors; Certificate of Recognition, California State Assembly; Resolution, California State Assembly.

On the afternoon of Sunday, December 13, 2009, the CCCHS Annual Membership meeting was held at the History Center in Martinez. Board President Steve Lawton provided an annual report to the membership, outlining the financial condition of the society, the accomplishments for the past year, and the challenges that lie ahead. Following the society business, retiring Executive Director Betty Maffei was honored with a tribute to her 25 years of service by board director Traci Parent.



Board of Directors president Steve Lawton presenting Betty with Resolution from the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

In addition to the resolution from the Board of Supervisors, Betty was honored with not one, but two honorary documents from the California State Assembly. Here are some of the points made in the resolutions:

Betty:

--Served as president of the CCC History Society in 1987-1988

--Facilitated the County's Resolution 79/932 which designated the Contra Costa County Historical Society as the official Society of the County

--Was moderator of the Oral History Forum at Black Diamond Days for many years

--Helped organize the first County History Center at 1700 Oak Park Blvd in Pleasant Hill

--Accepted and cataloged major collections from Louis L. Stein, A. F. Bray, Dorothy A. Mutnick, Sheriff R. R. Veale, Nancy Fahden, Les Sipes, as well as precious Superior Court documents. Always with the help of an intrepid volunteer staff.

--With her husband Rick, set up today's History Center at 610 Main Street in Martinez in 2000, made available by the Board of Supervisors

--Has been executive director of the Center, assisting researchers, managing the office, training the volunteers and nurturing the Society for 25 years.

--Should be recognized for her knowledge of our County's history, her persistence, intelligence, enthusiasm, patience and affability in support of the History Center archives.

Betty Maffei will continue to apply her talents and expertise to the work of the society. At the regular board meeting, held on February 2nd of this year, she was unanimously appointed to the position of Board Member Emeritus, the first and, until now, only person so honored.

Abigail Norton Bush

(1810-1898)

An article by Bernard Freedman

The month of March, by Congressional edict, is designated as Women's History Month, an opportunity for Americans to sing the praises of those pioneers who struggled to achieve equal rights for women. It also happens to be the birth-month of one of those pioneers who, unsung, quietly lived much of her life in the town of Martinez, in the county of Contra Costa, in the state of California.



Abigail Norton Bush was born in Cambridge, Washington County, New York, on March 19, 1810. While still young, her family moved to Rochester in upstate New York, an area noted for its activism during the social ferment of the nineteenth century. In the early 1830s she worked for the Rochester Female Charitable Society, and organization devoted to the care of the poor and the ill.

In 1833, Abigail Norton married Henry Bush, a stove manufacturer about four years her senior and the father, in the next 13 years, of their six children, four of whom survived until maturity. Henry Bush was an ardent supporter of the abolitionist movement. In 1840 there was a schism in the organization and Henry Bush remained with the American Anti-Slavery Society, the faction that accepted women as active members.

The Bush home became a station on the Underground Railroad. When Frederick Douglass came to Rochester after he escaped from slavery, he was protected and helped by the Bush family. In their later years Douglass and Abigail exchanged warm, reminiscing correspondence.

In July 1848 the first Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. Although already known for her involvement in the movement, Abigail Bush, for unknown reasons, was not in attendance. At the conclusion of the convention, the group from Rochester decided to continue in that city and persuaded Lucretia Mott, the featured speaker at Seneca Falls, to participate at Rochester. On August 2, 1848, the Rochester Convention, meeting in the Unitarian Church, began its deliberations with a proposed slate of officers. Heading the list was Abigail Bush as president. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were vocal in their opposition to a female presidency. They feared a weak performance of a woman would color the image of the entire movement. At Seneca Falls, James Mott, husband of Lucretia, had presided.

When Abigail took her position as presiding officer, Mott and Stanton left the platform and took seats among the audience but they had been dissuaded from leaving. During the reading of the minutes of the Seneca Falls Convention, cries of "louder, louder" disrupted reading. Bush took the platform and addressed the audience.

Friends, we present ourselves here before you as an oppressed class, with trembling frames and faltering tongues, and we do not expect to be able to speak so as to be heard by all at first, but we trust we shall have the sympathy of the audience, and that you will bear with our weakness now in the infancy of the movement. Our trust in the omnipotency of right is our only faith that we shall succeed.

The Rochester Convention lasted for only one day and Bush presided at all of its three sessions. At its conclusion, Lucretia Mott is reported to have approached Bush and "hugged her warmly." Stanton is said to have apologized for her own "foolish conduct." From then on, the presidents of women's rights organizations in the United States were always women.

Her newly-found eminence in the women's rights movement did not result in any cooling of her anti-slavery fervor. December of 1848 found Abigail serving on a committee of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. But before too long she was to be uprooted and separated from her friends and

associates in both movements.

In 1849 or 1850, hit by a series of business losses, Henry Bush left his pregnant wife and sought to recoup his fortune in the newly discovered gold fields of California. He was accompanied by two of his sons, Henry Jr. and David. The three were eventually reunited with Abigail, daughter Eva, and son Norton sometime in the early 1850s. Nothing is known of the means of transportation used by Abigail and her two children. The primitive state of overland travel suggests the probability that they came by ship, a vehicle better than wagon but not by much.

The new Bush homestead was located in Martinez and consisted of 300 acres (or 600-- sources differ) just above what is now Brown Street. The house itself was of the Cape Cod style and was located on Susana Street. Henry Bush paid for their property with \$50 octagonal gold pieces, mined in Hornitos. He planted fruit trees, seedlings shipped from Rochester, and also cultivated a 12-acre vineyard. After Henry Bush's death in 1875, some 40 acres, including the home, were sold to the De La Salle Institute. The first Christian Brothers wine was made here from Bush grapes until 1931.

A famous crooner once added to his celebrity by telling the world that he had left his heart in San Francisco. Apparently Abigail suffered a similar loss because there is no evidence that she brought her zeal for social reforms to California. But she did correspond with Frederick Douglass and her eminent colleagues in the women's rights movement.

About 1883 Abigail Bush wrote Frederick Douglass asking if he remembered her and expressed a desire for his photograph. The local newspaper, the Contra Costa Gazette, reported as follows:

The answer came with a promptness that at once evidenced his recollection of a regard for the writer (Bush). He expresses his great pleasure to hear from one who had befriended him in days when friends were scarce . . . He speaks of his present position and future plans as he would to his most trusted friend, and in lieu of a photograph send s cleverly executed pencil picture of himself, together with a copy of his address on the 21st

anniversary of slavery Emancipation. Mrs. Bush feels justly proud of these treasures which it is needless to say will be carefully preserved.

A widow for 23 years, the now 88 year-old Abigail Bush was honored at the 1898 convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Convention. Bush wrote to Susan B. Anthony, reminiscing about her role at Rochester in 1848.

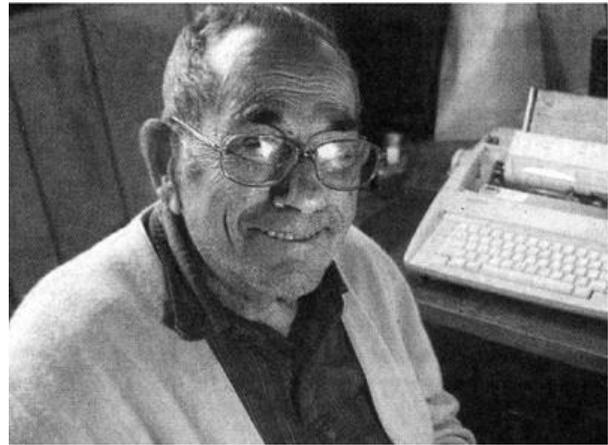
From that day to this, in all walks of life, I have been faithful in asserting that there should be 'no taxation without representation.' It has seemed long in coming, but I think the time draws near when women will be acknowledged as equal with man. Heaven grant the day to dawn soon!

It did not come soon enough for Abigail Norton Bush. Having moved three times after the death of her husband, she now lived with her daughter, Mrs. Eva Jones, in Vacaville, California. There she died in the waning days of 1898. She was laid to rest, as was Henry Bush, in Alhambra Cemetery in Martinez.

About the Author

Although Bernard Freedman received a master's degree in history, he set his passion aside for many years to provide for his family of five children. Retiring in 1981, Freedman spent the next twenty-nine years delving into the life and times of Contra Costa County residents, writing books on facets of county history and compiling research that fills many shelves at the Contra Costa County Historical Society's History Center. His subjects have included immigration, American and pre-American recreational activities, early aviation, schools, and the law. Now 92 years old, Bernard still manages to keep it fun; he never selects his subjects in advance. "It's like driving," he says. "When you're driving, you may make a turn onto a street and find something interesting you want to see. It's like that when you're working with history. You stumble across things that provoke your interest." Freedman compiled 39 volumes of newspaper clippings about Contra Costa schools from up to nine papers that span from April 1860 to 1955. His latest work is the monograph on Abigail Norton Bush printed here. (The foregoing biographical information partially excerpted from "Work of History: Scholar explores life in Contra Costa" by Rebecca F. Johnson in the San Ramon

Valley Herald, 2/15/05.)



Bernard Freedman, CCCHS Volunteer

Program Committee Hatches New Ideas For 2010

Your Program Committee met on February 11th to begin planning membership meetings for 2010 and beyond.

The first thing we did was establish meeting dates to help members plan their 2010 social calendars. Our bylaws specify four meetings a year. That won't happen this year because we agreed that there just isn't enough time to pull together a successful meeting for March. We guarantee four meetings next year.

Meeting dates for 2010 are:

Saturday, June 19

Saturday, September 25

Saturday, December 18

Working on the theory that a new executive director, a new president, a new board member and a new year are four outstanding reasons for coming up with new ideas, we decided that the June meeting will be a potluck. As Clint Eastwood proclaims in *Paint Your Wagon*, "It's history making!"

We also concluded that we will make every effort to meet throughout the county by asking each historical society to host one of our meetings. In other words, we will provide the program and the

host society will provide the site. A happy benefit of this arrangement is that it provides the perfect opportunity for members of various societies to meet one another and share their mutual love of history. A second major benefit (are you sitting down?) is that the price of admission will be appreciably less than has been customary.

At our next committee meeting, we will fill in the blanks concerning the who, what and where of our 2010 membership meetings and tell you all the juicy details via the *Bulletin* or a flyer for each event.

Our next chore is to talk county historical societies into becoming hosts. We are very pleased to announce that Antioch Historical Society has agreed to host our meeting in December 2010. Orinda Historical Society has invited us to join them sometime in 2011. Who will volunteer next? Don't be bashful – we need your cooperation to make our new plan work.

We intend to hold several types of meetings. Some will include a luncheon and speaker and some will consist of a meeting with speaker and light refreshments. Field trips to historic sites are another idea worth exploring.

Your immediate assignments are to circle with a broad-tip Sharpie the above dates on your calendars so you won't miss our meetings. Second, talk your boards of directors into including CCCHS in their plans for the future.

The Program Committee is most eager to share the fun of planning membership meetings so please give serious thought to subjects you would like to learn more about and historic sites you have always wanted to visit. Phone Priscilla Couden at 925.229.1042, e-mail her at info@cocohistory.com or put your thoughts in a letter and mail it to CCCHS, 610 Main Street, Martinez, CA 94553. Priscilla will send all communication to us post-haste.

Thank you,
Program Committee:
Mary-Ellen Jones, Chair Andrea Blachman
Traci Parent Mario Menesini Lucille Irish

Are my membership dues current?

It is entirely possible that your dues are in arrears. That may be our fault, as we have not sent out reminder notices recently, or as regularly as we should have. But luckily, there is an easy way to check on your membership status. Just take a look at the address on this newsletter. Just above your name you will see a date. That date represents the last date your dues were most recently due (life members are excepted, of course). If that date is a year or more in the past, we need to hear from you pronto. Please be aware that your membership is VERY important to us. A significant portion of our operating expenses are covered by membership dues—we literally cannot do without you. We will be sending out regular reminder letters in the not distant future, along with return envelopes, but we are asking that you take that extra step and make out your own return envelope-- just this one time.

Below is a membership application, which you can complete, snip out, and mail along with your check (please do not send cash). The address is: Contra Costa County Historical Society, 610 Main Street, Martinez, CA 94553.

Or just drop by, take a look around, and pay in person. Thanks!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION		
___ New	___ Renew	___ Gift Date _____
Name(s) _____		
Address _____		
City _____		State _____
Zip _____	Phone _____	
E-Mail _____		
<small>___ Please check here if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by e-mail—saves money and trees</small>		
DUES:		
___ Individual \$30	___ Couple \$50	___ Sponsor \$75
___ Patron \$150	___ Corporate \$500	
___ Benefactor \$1000	___ Student \$15	

May is Museum Month: History buffs and friends are invited to a Community Fair hosted by the Antioch Historical Society at Riverview Union High School, on Sunday, May 15, from 10 am to 4 pm. Representatives from museums throughout the county will bring books, artifacts, and games for children and set up history booths next to a farmer's market. The Mangini Agricultural Museum will demonstrate butter churning, flour grinding, and wool spinning. World War II vehicles and antique cars will be on display. Quality Crafters and other products will be available, and, of course, the museum and the Sports Legends exhibit will be open. The address is: 1500 West Fourth St., Antioch. Call 925-757-1326 for more information.

The Contra Costa Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

Leonard Anderson	Dave Gray	Carole Barker
Barbara Clarkson	Nora and Charles Whisenant	
George Johnson	Ingrid Wood	Tino Capurro
Bernice Grimes	Diane Carlyle	Renee Swidler
	James Wright	



FOTO FLASHES

By Lee Taylor

From time to time, individuals bring in old photos and give us the opportunity to copy (scan) them into the CCCHS files. The advantage of modern technology is that copies can be transferred to our collection without the donor losing anything in the deal. And modern scans are often as good, if not better, than the original. So everybody wins.

Unfortunately, the donor often knows little, if anything, about the photograph(s) being offered. This is the case with a recent acquisition, an image simply identified as a shop in the town of Rodeo,

with a man (presumably the owner) standing inside.



If anyone in our readership can shed any light on the identity of this shop, or the individual in it, please contact the History Center, Photo Dept., and make reference to photo No. 13279.

Most of our digitized photos can now be viewed on our website. From the home page, just click on the "Photos" button and follow the simple directions. Our collection is a large one and is constantly growing, so if you don't see what you're looking for, keep checking.



Speaking of images, at the left is Stefan Avila, at the Black Diamond Mines. Stefan is a history student at DVC in San Ramon. His professor is Melissa

Jacobson, newly-appointed Contra Costa County Historical Society Board member. Visiting an historical site in Contra Costa County was an assignment for his class.

From the Executive Director:



Greetings!

What a wonderful way to begin the New Year! Coming

through the early morning to a Martinez still bathed in tule fog, leaving in the early evening with a view of lights and the bridge on the Bay...I love being so near the water and hearing the train whistles as I work. A long time history buff, I'm interested right now in local World War II memoirs, such as *Dark Clouds, Silver Lining*, published by a Lafayette housewife and mother of 6 adopted children. Her husband joined the Navy as an officer because husband and wife together agreed that the country needed him. If you can add to my brief bibliography, I'd love to hear from you.

In fact, I'd love to hear from our members at any time. Please feel free to call me with suggestions, ideas, questions, and encouragement regarding the way we do things at the History Center. Most important, please call to volunteer, and support our Society through the 2010's. We have some really marvelous volunteers already in place, but they can always use your help. There are many exciting ways for us to grow our organization, and I'm really good at finding something for you to do that you'll enjoy! Do call or stop by. Happy New Year to all of you!

Priscilla

From the President:

Greetings for the New Year! As the County Historical Society moves into this century's second decade, we are addressing our challenges with new staff and an energized Board. We welcome Priscilla Couden as Executive Director of the Society; she is bringing different perspectives and a lively intelligence to the job. We have appointed



Betty Maffei Board Member Emeritus and invited webmaster Scott Saftler to attend Board meetings.

The Board plans a new approach to quarterly meetings, an intern program at the History Center and renewed discussions about finances. Please call me with any suggestions at 925-837-7715 and, if you do, expect a cheerful invitation to volunteer.

Sincerely,

Beverly Lane, President, CCCHS

Volunteer Kudos!



Margie Newton, long-time volunteer at CCCHS, is the recipient of the **2009 SAVES Volunteer of the Year** award by the Sheriff's Department, Contra Costa County. SAVES (Sheriff's All Volunteer Extended Services) Program is designed to use volunteers

to supplement and provide additional levels of service to the departments and field units of the Contra Costa County Sheriff's office. Margie works at SAVES in two different locations on Mondays and Fridays.

At CCCHS, Margie is a dedicated volunteer who keeps the historical society's membership lists up to date. She is also involved in entering statistics from the CCCHS Archive's 107 volumes of Naturalization records into the historical society's database. So far, 11,273 records have been entered, and Margie estimates there are about 4,000 to go. Before coming to CCCHS, Margie worked as Interim Director of Special Education for the Lafayette and Mt. Diablo School Districts. Upon retirement, she came to volunteer at CCCHS but then moved to Healdsburg for several years for another Special Education assignment. Returning to Contra Costa County, Margie also returned to the Contra Costa County History Center, where she has worked on Wednesdays for the past five or so years.

Congratulations to Margie on this well-deserved honor!

Mark Your Calendar:

- March 25 – Final day of Abraham Lincoln Exhibit at History Center
- March 29 – April 22 Census 2010 Exhibit
- April 26 – August Keep It Wild Saving Contra Costa Wild Lands, Muir Heritage Land Trust—20 years of conservation
- May 15 – Family Celebration, Museum Month, Antioch Historical Society
- June 19 – Membership Meeting
- September 25 – Membership Meeting
- December 18 – General Membership Meeting

Mission Statement

The mission of the Contra Costa County Historical Society is the dissemination of knowledge about the history of Contra Costa County and the State of California through publications, lectures, workshops, and through the acquisition and preservation of pertinent historical documents.

Contra Costa County Historical Society

Officers:

President.....Beverly Lane
1st Vice President.....Andrea Blachman
2nd Vice President.....John Robinson
Secretary.....Webb Johnson
Treasurer.....Audrey Katzman

Directors:

Donald Bastin	Andrea Blachman
Lucille Irish	Melissa Jacobson
Webb Johnson	Mary-Ellen Jones
Audrey Katzman	Beverly Lane
Steve Lawton	Kathy Leighton
Mario Menesini	Traci Parent
John Robinson	Paula Wherity

Betty Maffei – Member Emeritus

The History Center

610 Main Street, Martinez, CA 94553

Phone: 925-229-1042

fax: 925-229-1772

Open Tuesday thru Thursday, 9 am – 4 pm

Email: info@cocohistory.com

Website: www.cocohistory.com



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