

The San Francisco Bay Trail Meets Richmond’s Awakening Western Shoreline *Donald Bastin*
(Above, “World’s largest winery” at Winhaven, c. 1909) *Photo courtesy of Richmond Museum of History*

After years of litigation, mainly concerning the proposed construction of a gambling casino at the site of the old Winhaven winery (pictured above), a recent court decision has freed the city of Richmond to develop the area along its western shore in



alignment with the wishes of its citizens, who have made it clear that a casino is not a desirable option.

The areas in gray are owned by the city of Richmond. The larger area, at Point Molate, includes the old winery and is the area under consideration for current development. The red dotted line is the proposed Bay Trail.

A series of “visioning” workshops are planned to allow citizens to voice their opinions regarding the proper development of this beautiful

peninsula, which, until recent years, has been largely forgotten and virtually unknown to many west county residents.

At the same time, the Richmond portion of the San Francisco Bay Trail is nearly complete. With 34 miles built, only about 8 miles remain. Much of the remaining section will be along this very same western shoreline, and, once completed, will allow pedestrians and bicyclists a chance to explore this relatively undeveloped area without having to worry about traffic or other distractions. It is a wonderful opportunity to ensure that development occurs in a thoughtful and reasonable manner. But where exactly is Richmond’s western shoreline? What is its history? And how has it been overlooked for so long?

On New Year’s Day of 1903, the *Richmond Record Herald* warmly touted the construction of a belt line railway, along Richmond’s western waterfront and around Point San Pablo, tying together “. . . the dozens of factories and great systems of docks which are projected to entirely encircle the vast waterfront.”



In ten years, it was confidently predicted, the population of the little town of Point Richmond would reach 40,000, and the future of this “magnificent city” would “...exceed the expectations of the most optimistic.” Bold words. But, all things considered, not terribly unrealistic.

Indeed, within a few short years, the northern portion of the western waterfront was home to many commercial enterprises, including the Standard Oil Long Wharf, a whale oil processing plant, an oil can factory (owned by Standard Oil) at Point Orient, a brick factory (Central Brick, just beyond Point San Pablo), two rock quarries (Blake Bros. and Healey & Tibbetts), a large winery complete with worker housing, a hotel, and a school (Winehaven), and, at Point San Pablo, a ship terminal to handle the cargo that was destined for ports around the world. In 1915, the area became even busier, with the opening, at Point Castro, of the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry system. It seemed that the early predictions of economic boom were to be proved correct.

But by 1920, the summit had already been reached, and a slow commercial decline set in, which has continued to the present day. Prohibition was the death blow to the winery, which struggled along for a

few years in the 1920s, selling grape juice and sacramental wine. At the same time, the Healey & Tibbetts quarry, near Point Molate, went under, as did the Central Brick Company.

The can company at Point Orient was never very successful, and was moved onto the refinery. Things picked up in the early 1940s, when the Navy acquired Winehaven, and set up a fuel depot, using the old winery housing for naval families. Around 1930, Captain Clark, who had begun the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry, strung some old hulks together, and created the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, just beyond Point San Pablo. Between the Point and the harbor there sprang up some fish-processing plants, to handle the tons of sardines brought in by Italian (and other) fishermen. The failure of the sardine run killed this industry, and in its place, in 1956, a whale-rendering plant was erected. In business for 15 years, it closed in 1971, when whaling in the United States was banned.



Image courtesy Richmond Museum of History

In 1956, with the completion of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, car-ferry service on San Francisco Bay came to an end. For many years thereafter, the old ferry pier was used for recreational fishing, but by the 1980s, the pier was no longer safe.

For a time, people were attracted to the peninsula by the operation of steam trains and cars, run by a group

of train buffs, using part of the old belt line railway. But the club moved their equipment to Niles, and by the late 1980s, local residents had little reason to venture out on Western Drive (now Stenmark Drive). Even the Navy was leaving, and by 1995, the last family had moved out. By 2000, about the only draw was Point San Pablo Harbor, which was (and still is) in operation, and which provides boat access to the East Brother Light Station, a bed and breakfast facility on the National Register of Historic Places. Point Molate Beach, once the site of a Chinese shrimp camp (which operated until about 1912), had been turned into a city park, but, due to lack of maintenance funding, was closed for years (but has since been re-opened).



Thankfully, the winery building will be preserved as part of an “adaptive reuse” plan. The worker housing, which was used by the winery workers and Navy families, will be preserved as well.



Some of the housing can be seen in this image, to the right of one of the winery buildings.

The Bay Trail will be very much a part of the rebirth of Richmond’s western shoreline. The first section to be completed will likely be the trail from Pt. Richmond to Pt. Molate Beach. While the beach park is owned by the City of Richmond, the trail will be constructed under the control and direction of the East Bay Regional Park District. From there to the Winehaven area, the trail will likely be constructed in sections, as development grows. As part of Richmond’s General Plan, each developer is responsible for the construction of any section of Bay Trail within the limits of its development.

The re-awakening of Richmond’s western shore has been a long process, and many more years may pass before the area fully comes alive. With care and patience, and with a proper appreciation for its natural beauty and its unique history, it will become one of the jewels of Contra Costa County.

(Photos this page by author).



The re-opening of the Pt. Molate Beach Park has re-awakened awareness



of Richmond’s forgotten shore. Its sandy beach and shallow water are especially inviting to the young, and the views are spectacular. Evidence of the past is clearly visible, as here we see the tracks of the old belt line railway heading north to Pt. San Pablo. But it is the old winery that commands the greatest interest. Built like a castle, the red brick structure is easily visible to motorists heading east on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

“A TEPCO Teaser”

New Exhibit to Open at the HC *Editor*



On Saturday, September 15th of this year, the CCCHS will open its latest exhibit, featuring the TEPCO pottery collection of board member (and treasurer) Steve James, and his wife, Priscilla. Steve and Priscilla have a special fondness for the robust china ware made by the Technical Porcelain and China Ware Company, which was in business for 50 years, and located, for most of that time, in El Cerrito.

Founded in 1918 by Italian immigrant John Pagliero, TEPCO was a major west coast producer of table ware for the restaurant and hotel market, the military (especially the Navy), and for institutions such as churches and other civic groups. At one time they were the largest employer in El Cerrito, employing around 200 workers. Their products were unusually robust, and millions of pieces still exist. Some local restaurants still use their ware. Highly prized by a growing army of collectors, prices are still affordable for all but the rarest examples.



The TEPCO factory was located about where the El Cerrito DMV office is located today. The factory closed in 1968, and the buildings were torn down two years later.

Whether or not you are familiar with this brand of pottery, the exhibit promises to be a treat. While made for a commercial market, and very utilitarian, most TEPCO pieces are colorful, attractive, and unique. The patterns are endless, and one can collect this brand and never exhaust the variety to be found. So join us in September for this fun display of the offerings of one of Contra Costa County's unique businesses.

Highway 21

The Farm Road That Became An Interstate

Author in the Archives Event Draws a Crowd

Editor



The Campbell Theater in Martinez was the venue for our latest A in the A talk, on Saturday, June 16. This was the first time that one of our events was held in the old theater, and it was fortunate that we had such a large and attractive space available

to us. The turnout was spectacular, and virtually every one of the hundred seats in the building was occupied. And some folks were standing or sitting on the stairways leading to the seats. Who knew that a



talk about a road would bring out the crowd?

Local historians

John Mercurio (left) and Steve Minniear put together a fascinating slide show presentation of old Highway 21, based on a book that they put together a few years ago.

Highway 21, which had many names over the years, was for many decades the only route between central county and the city of San Jose. By 1964, the old road was replaced by the newly-constructed Interstate 680. Many of the locals in the audience remembered features and sites along the old route, which were part of the show.

The talk was long enough to require an intermission, and this also accommodated the separate deliveries of each historian.

The Campbell Theater, at 636 Ward Street, is a Community Theater providing live entertainment at very affordable pricing for the benefit of theater lovers everywhere. Featuring new works by local writers, actors, dancers, as well as internationally known performers, the Campbell is staffed by



Here we see board member and former president John Burgh with Mark Hinds, manager of the Campbell. Like everyone there, he is an unpaid volunteer.

volunteers and operated by Onstage Repertory Theatre Co., a 501(3)C non profit corporation.

It is our hope that we can continue to work with this wonderful volunteer organization to showcase our historical presentations and to help make downtown Martinez a vibrant place for the celebration of the arts and our cultural heritage.

A Major Move for the Martinez Historical Society

Images provided by John Curtis of the Martinez HS

In our last issue, we covered the acquisition, by the Martinez Historical Society, of a 1901 Executive train car, which was located in Walnut Creek and donated by restaurant owner John Herrington. The first objective was to get the 90 ton package delivered to Martinez, where it will undergo extensive restoration. That obstacle was overcome on Saturday, June 2, when the car was picked up by the boys from the Taylor Heavy Haul Company and moved to Martinez.

Here we see the car being lifted off its rear triple axle truck (wheel carriage), in



preparation for its placement on the truck bed.

The moving crew from Taylor Heavy Haul.



Stay tuned for updates from the Martinez HS regarding progress on their largest single artifact.

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Your membership renewal date can be determined by checking the address label on this newsletter. If you receive your newsletter via e-mail please call the History Center at: 925-229-1042, or e-mail info@cocohistory.com to renew.

Please consider CCCHS in your estate planning. It is simple, and any gift is tax deductible. We have a Schwab account that makes it easier for members and others to donate shares of stock to the Society, a good way to make a year-end or other contribution.



Join the Hunt! *Tara Weber*

The Contra Costa County History Society and the Martinez Historical Society are co-hosting the first Martinez Archives

Crawl on **September 29, 2018** in celebration of American Archives Month (which is in October). Attendees or “Crawlers” will tour among four host archives in Martinez, gathering stamps in their passports as they learn to research, visit with archivists, and go on special behind-the-scenes tours.

The Crawl will be offering a scavenger hunt for students grades K-6 and 7-12 as well as adults. Scavenger participants will answer archive and history related questions for their age group at each location. Each participant with the correct answers will be entered into a drawing to win either an iPad or iPad Mini.

The starting location is at Veterans Memorial Hall in downtown Martinez, where Crawlers will pick up their passports and maps. All locations are within walking distance from one another, making this an easy and fun day for all ages!

Participating archives:

- Contra Costa County History Center** (724 Escobar Street);
- County Clerk Recorder’s Office** (555 Escobar St.);
- Martinez History Museum** (1005 Escobar St.);
- Martinez Public Library** (740 Court Street)

(Bonus locations will be announced at a later date)

The Martinez Archives Crawl is made possible through a \$2000 grant from the Martinez Community Foundation, a \$500 donation from each co-sponsor (CCCHS & MHS), and in-kind donations from Chevron Federal Credit Union and several downtown Martinez businesses.

Crawl Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A Celebration of the History Center and a 90th Birthday *Priscilla Couden*

On Saturday, July 7, a good time was had by all, as we



watched an oral history about the founding of the History Center and celebrated Betty Maffei’s 90th birthday.

(Betty is in the lower right in the photo above).

In the video, Betty, the History Center’s Executive Director for 25 years, is interviewed by long-term member and former Board Member Traci Parent. Betty has an incredible memory, full of anecdotes that led all attending to an increased understanding of the growth of the History Center. Betty and Traci were joined on Saturday by Soila Crystal Jimenez, an employee of the East Bay Regional Parks District, who had created a transcript of the oral history, complete with additional information and photographs. Also present to answer questions were Mary-Ellen Jones and Bill Larkins, early volunteers at the History Center. Executive Director Priscilla Couden and Board President John Mercurio welcomed everyone.



(Betty is sitting next to Mary-Ellen Jones, who is in red)

Following the showing of the CD, birthday cake and strawberries topped off the celebration of a special day for our special members.

From the Executive Director



Dear Friends,
Another three months have come and gone, with good news practically every day. Our Finding Aid is progressing and within the next year will be available on the Online Archive of California. Our Fire Detection System is now fully operable. The oral history and transcription of Betty Maffei's remembrances of the origins of the History Center are now complete and available for sale (transcript - \$19.95; CD - \$9.95). The conversion to the PastPerfect database is moving along. The Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development staff has agreed to work with us on refining the historic value of the maps they have given us over the years. And more good news awaits us during the coming months.

I am so thankful for your contributions. We have reached out by phone to let you know how appreciative we are. I also want to acknowledge the in-kind donations we have received over the years, beginning with the Chevron Federal Credit Union's help with our printing costs, the Waters Moving Company's willingness to help us with our moves, big and small, the ongoing contributions of ice cream for our Ice Cream Socials from Main Street Sweets, and contributions to our various meetings from both the Viano and the Bray Vineyards. In-kind donations make a big dent in our costs, and for that we thank each and every one of our generous donors.

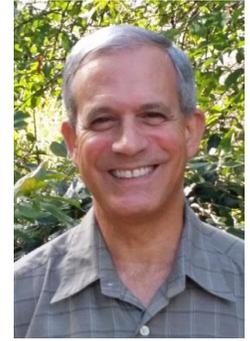
You will have noticed from our President's letter that we are embarking on a plan for an endowment fund. Toward this end, I have devoted both the gifts that came in at Betty's celebration and other gifts that have been received in her name as seed money for the endowment. I hope you will generously enlarge this fund with your gifts over the next few months.

As always, please let me know how we can be of further service to you. Remember to drop by for our Ice Cream Social on July 21st!

Priscilla

From the President

Most board members of the Contra Costa County Historical Society have little trouble finding "something to do" in the support of our mission. For instance, many volunteer at the history Center. As president, I have discovered another side of involvement as I have chosen to pursue strategic projects that will bolster the stability of the society. Earlier this year we developed a strategic plan and a strategy for fund raising by each board member. And as I write this, we are working toward developing an endowment fund to provide an extra margin of fiscal resources, in case of unforeseen hits to our usual funding sources or perhaps to enable us to take advantage of some opportunity in the future requiring additional funding.



The other day I realized that 75 percent of my term as president has already passed, and yet there are still new initiatives to pursue. When the work to establish our endowment fund is complete, I have informed the board that I would like to jump right into another project. Before the year is out, I am hoping that we will complete development of a planned giving program. This would provide members with a way to include the Contra Costa County Historical Society in their estate planning. Stay tuned, as we will be providing details of these as they are rolled out.

All these projects have required a healthy dose of brainpower as well as time. We utilize a combination of board member knowledge and board contacts in the community. This work can be tough, but it is also rewarding. And when we have implemented these programs, maybe we can sit back and rest a bit, knowing that what we have done has set us on a firmer footing than we enjoyed before. But this rest must be short. After all, we have a growing archive to catalog and support.

John Mercurio

