

Richmond Museum features TEPCO

After months of planning and preparation, Don Bastin, the Director of the Richmond Museum of History, has announced that on April 22nd the Museum will unveil its long-awaited exhibition on El Cerrito's own *Technical Porcelain and Chinaware Company*, or "TEPCO". There is a reception on the 22nd at 2PM; the price is \$7.50 (\$5.00 for museum members). Sandi and Lynn Genser-Maack, two well-known local collectors, have generously supplied almost all of the items used in the exhibition. Our Society contributed a few items but (sad to say) we had very little to loan. The exhibition is sure to stir pleasant memories for anyone who knew the plant, the family, or the products.

John Pagliero came here from Italy having already worked in a pottery plant in his native country. He started working for the Pacific Sanitary Company, which produced ceramic plumbing supplies at its plant in Richmond. John soon became a superintendent there. Sensing an opportunity, he opened up his own plant on Kains Avenue in Albany, just south of the county line, and hired a few workers. About 1918 he quit working for the Sanitary Company to give his full attention to his own business.

In 1930 the Paglieros built a new plant in the city of El Cerrito, at the southeast corner of Kearney Street and Manila Avenue (where the Department of Motor Vehicles is now located). They manufactured dishes for restaurants and hotels on the west coast and also received contracts to furnish dishes for the government. For a time the company ran shifts around the clock to keep up with demand.



A plate from Louie's Club, the famous El Cerrito bar & restaurant run by Lou Favero and Louie Nicoli.

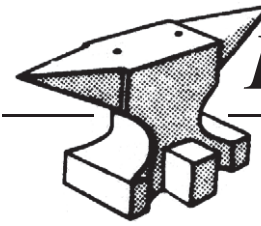


A plate from the Cerrito City Club, an institution in town for many years.

At one time the number of men and women working at the plant was estimated to be close to two hundred. TEPCO was for years the biggest employer in El Cerrito.

The Pagliero family's plant produced a broad range of high quality, industrial strength dishes, cups, pitchers and other products for a wide variety of customers. TEPCO products could be found from the Cerrito City Club and Louie's Club here in town to Navy battleships around the world, plus in many places in between. Of course, there was plenty of TEPCO china to be found in the kitchens and dining rooms of El Cerrito homes.

John Pagliero was an artist at his trade. He was very well liked and he was always donating sets of dishes to various clubs and organizations in the city and to those who could not afford to purchase the pottery. There are a number of active collectors and traders of TEPCO today. In the "El Cerrito in print" section of the Historical Society's web site (www.elcerritowire.com/history), there is an excellent article about TEPCO that originally appeared in the highly regarded *American Craft* magazine. The Richmond Museum of History is located in the old Carnegie Library building at 4th and Nevin in downtown Richmond. It is open from 1-4 PM in the afternoon, Wednesday through Sunday. The phone number at the Museum is (510) 235-7387. Or look online at www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org.



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**OUR NEXT MEETING: SUNDAR SHADI VIDEO
1 PM SUNDAY, APRIL 29TH AT THE SENIOR CENTER**

President's Message

At our next meeting we will feature a DVD that was made by El Cerrito resident Tom Nixon. Over the years Mr. Nixon came to know Sundar Shadi and in 1994 he told Mr. Shadi that he wanted to film him in his home and garden as Mr. Shadi talked about his flowers and annual exhibits. The DVD we will watch was originally shot on 8 mm movie film but Mr. Nixon subsequently had the 8 mm film converted to a DVD. Mr. Nixon graciously offered to donate a copy of the video to the Historical Society and we of course accepted. Mr. Shadi was a legend in our town and his picture hangs on the Wall of Fame in the El Cerrito City Council chambers. While the video is not of professional quality, it is very viewable. I think you will all enjoy it.

At our last meeting we had a terrific presentation by retired Superior Court Judge Wayne Westover. Judge Westover spoke about the development of the court system in Contra Costa County, starting with the Spanish era and concluding with the system that is in place today. Judge Westover was a wonderfully entertaining speaker and I left the meeting knowing a lot more about our local legal system than I did when I walked in. Many others made the same comments to me. Judge Westover also very generously donated a copy of his book *The Bench and Bar of Contra Costa County* to the Historical Society. We are grateful for this donation and it is a great addition to our collection. More than one Society member has since asked me how to contact Judge Westover so that they could acquire a copy of the book. At our last meeting we also held our annual elections. Our officers for 2007 are as follows: President: Tom Panas; Vice President: Grace MacNeill; Secretary: Lucille Irish; Treasurer: Ruth Kibby; and Director at Large: Verne Odlin. I would like to thank the Society for the vote of approval given to these individuals and thank these individuals for their willingness to serve the Society. ~ Tom Panas

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a non-political, non-profit organization and has one agenda: to locate and preserve our local history. Anyone may join; dues are \$20 (Household member), \$50 (Sponsoring member), and \$250 (Life member).

Ninety Years Ago - El Cerrito is Incorporated

In 2007 El Cerrito celebrates its 90th birthday. Our town's name springs from the name that the first Spanish explorers gave to the promontory that we now call Albany Hill. In the spring of 1772 Pedro Fages, who had been assigned to govern California, set out with Father Juan Crespi and twelve soldiers to explore the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay. On March 27, 1772, they camped on the bank of a creek next to a prominent hill opposite the Golden Gate. They named the hill "Serrito (sic) de San Antonio de Padua" (Cerrito is Spanish for "little hill").

The Fages exploration marked the start of the colonization of California by the Spanish; for El Cerritans it also christened the namesake for our city. The name Cerrito was in common use in the area before 1900. The name "Cerrito Creek" appears on the 1895 USGS topographic map of the area; Victor Castro named one of the streets in his 1896 *New Berkeley* subdivision "Cerrito Street" (Cougar Field was later built on top of the part of this subdivision that included Cerrito Street); and the lower part of Kensington's Coventry Road was named "Cerrito Avenue" when it was first laid out in 1911. The name of the "Rust" post office was changed to "El Cerrito" in August of 1916.

Over time as people came to the area, there was increasing sentiment that a city should be formed out of the unincorporated area north of the County line. In addition to providing local control, it was felt that incorporation would facilitate the paving and lighting of streets, the delivery of utilities, and would make the area more desirable in general. Another comment sentiment was that the citizens would rather have their own city than be annexed to Richmond. It has been written that George Barber and Frank Butterfield were particularly strong advocates of incorporation. Since both of them were building contractors, it is possible that they were hoping that incorporation might provide additional business for their enterprises.

The boundaries of the El Cerrito as originally proposed were quite similar to what we see today. It is interesting to note that the boundaries of the city as originally laid out followed in most cases the boundaries of the tracts of land (or lines drawn from direct extensions of those boundaries) that were identified by the Court in the partition of 1894. This partition was the ruling made by the court as to which individuals had valid title to what parcels of land in the Rancho San Pablo land grant originally

owned by the Castro family. This ruling ended more than 40 years of squabbling and uncertainty. As originally proposed, El Cerrito included most of the Richmond Annex and all of Kensington as well as what is inside El Cerrito's borders today.

The primary opposition to the incorporation movement came from four sources. The owners of and workers at the two large quarries in town feared that incorporation would lead the city to expand and cause the quarries to close (they were correct). Dairymen didn't want to pay taxes for services, streets, and lights that they wouldn't use and they feared that their herds would no longer be welcome (they were right). Some area residents felt that they didn't need to be paying money to pave streets and have services delivered that didn't currently exist and weren't being missed. Saloon owners were concerned that the city would impose new taxes on them (this came true almost immediately, perhaps due to their strident opposition to the incorporation).

The County Supervisors had to decide what property would be inside and what property would be outside the proposed new city. They visited the area on June 14, 1917. A few individuals petitioned the County Supervisors to be excluded from the proposed new city. But in most cases groups of residents and landowners petitioned the County Supervisors for exclusion.

The Du Pont Company (the owners of the Judson Powder Company at the foot of Albany Hill) asked to be removed from the proposed city, as did the residents of the Richmond Annex. (When territory was removed from the proposed city, the removal also generally followed lot lines set up by the 1894 partition.) In removing these two areas, the County Supervisors excluded any direct access to San Francisco Bay for the proposed

new city. This was a major disappointment for the supporters of incorporation.

There was not much enthusiasm for the incorporation in the part of Contra Costa County that we now call Kensington. That area was very sparsely populated in 1917. When the residents of the Kensington Park and the Berkeley Highlands subdivisions, as well as a few others, requested removal, it was a simple matter for the County Supervisors to, for example, remove Lot 1 of Rancho San Pablo from the proposed area of the new city. The owners of the Sunset View Cemetery also requested and were granted exclusion from the proposed new city. A review of the incorporation records indicates that the only request for exclusion that was not granted appears to be one from John Balra, a local dairyman who did not want his farm included in the

new city. Although Kensington now includes land just beyond the boundaries of Rancho San Pablo, the "definition" of Kensington was originally just the parts of the southeast corner of Rancho San Pablo that requested exclusion from the proposed new city of El Cerrito.

An election was held on August 16, 1917 to decide whether to incorporate El Cerrito as a sixth-class city. The vote was 158 in favor and 131 opposed. The County Supervisors declared the City of El Cerrito duly incorporated on August 20th, 1917. August 23, 1917 is the day the city was actually chartered. While the proponents

of incorporation had bemoaned the loss of some of the lands included in the original definition of the proposed new city, either the proponents of incorporation were amazingly lucky or the County Supervisors displayed amazing foresight and wisdom since including any of those excluded areas might have tilted the vote in the other direction.

FRED S. NEWSOM, of said County, being duly sworn deposes and says: at all times hereinafter mentioned he was a citizen of the U.S. That ~~he~~, over the age of ~~eighteen~~ years, and not interested in the above entitled matter and is not a party thereto; that on the 25th day of July 1917, he posted four notices, of which a copy is hereto attached and made a part hereof, in four of the most public places within the boundaries of said district proposed to be incorporated herein, to wit, one of said notices he posted on a telegraph pole at the corner of Fairmount Ave., and San Pablo Ave., in said district, one at Davis Hall on San Pablo Ave., one at and on a telegraph pole at the northeast corner of Patrons and San Pablo Avenues, and one on a fence corner at the northeast side of Blake Street between ~~San Pablo Ave.~~ and Allen street, all of said places of posting being within the boundaries of the territory proposed to be incorporated as the "City of El Cerrito."

Where the four required Notices of Election were posted. The "fence post" location seems almost laughable today. (Allen Street is now Lexington Avenue.)