

# Sparks from the Anvil

March 18, 2020

**Historical Society programs in the time of coronavirus.** We are living through historical times, friends. We here with the Historical Society wish you all well.

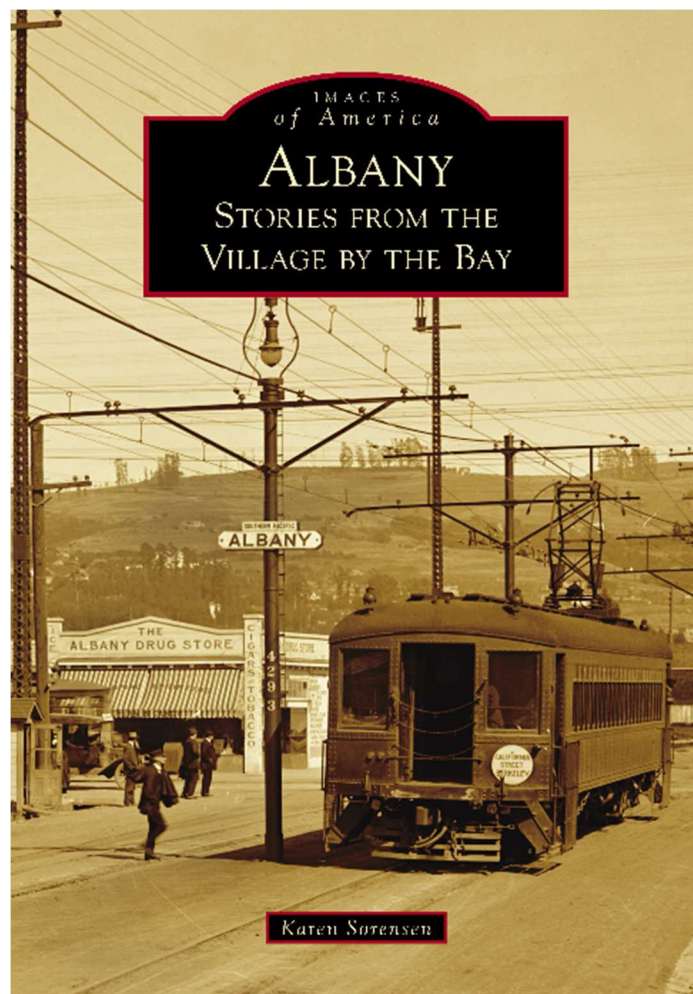
The El Cerrito Historical Society has **cancelled** Tom Panas's talk on the **Japanese-American Flower Growers of El Cerrito and Richmond** that was to have occurred April 15.

However we are keeping our other upcoming programs on the schedule, with the understanding that they too may have to be cancelled.

We will announce cancellations as and if they occur. Also please watch our [website](#) and our [Facebook page](#). All programs will be rescheduled when events allow.

## Upcoming historical programs:

All events are free.



Albany, Stories from the Village by the Bay,' is a lively little history by Karen Sorensen.

**Albany: A Small Town with a Big Past.** An illustrated talk by author **Karen Sorensen**. Albany's history is filled with interesting stories, many related to larger issues of the early 20th century, from notorious dynamite factory explosions to an early 1900s plague scare.

Explore these stories with Karen Sorensen, author of the new book, *Albany – Stories from the Village by the Bay*. The book includes little known details about Charles MacGregor, the man who built many Albany and East Bay homes; the history of Albany Hill – El Cerrito it was called! -- and how extensive electric train systems linked residents to the rest of the Bay Area.

Karen, an Albany writer, historian, and fifth-generation Californian, wrote the book, *Images of America, Albany*, and has authored numerous articles on Albany history.

**7 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at the Arlington Clubhouse, 1120 Arlington Blvd., El Cerrito. Free**

**The Hillside Natural Area: Past, Present and Future.** Dave Weinstein leads this often steep hike throughout the hillside as we learn about how the Hillside has changed over the years and what we hope lays in store. This hike lasts about two hours. Wear walking or hiking shoes with treads and bring water. This event is part of the [Seventh Annual Hillside Festival](#), which is sponsored by El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and the city of El Cerrito's Environmental Quality Committee. **5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday May 1, 2020, Motorcycle Hill Trailhead**, where Navellier and Blake streets meet.



Earl Smith, flanked by brothers Rae and Henry, looks over a scale model of one of his company's flat-tops, 1954. Courtesy of the Smith Archive

**Modernism for the Masses: Master Builder Early 'Flat Top' Smith.** Right after World War II Earl Smith began building modern flat topped houses in El Cerrito and was soon building these low cost homes statewide, though he remained based in our city. He won national fame for his houses and as a proponent of housing for all – including African-Americans. [Flat Top Smith](#) built Parchester Village for the black community in unincorporated Richmond. Learn Smith's story from author **Dave Weinstein** and his children, **Duncan Smith**, **Geoff Smith**, and **Noel Schuurman**. Co-sponsored by the **Richmond Museum of History**. **2 p.m. Sunday, July 12, 2020** at the El Cerrito Community Center, 7007 Moeser Lane, El Cerrito.

**Have you read the latest Forge newsletter?** You have if you are a member of the Historical Society. We put it in the mail to our members – and in some cases, hand delivered it – last week. The Forge is a perk of belonging to the society. The hard copy goes only to members, though we also distribute a few at choice locations and at our meetings. Anyone can read it [online](#).

It's worth reading too. The latest copy has a fascinating story about the wonderful old Mayfair Market, which was a trendsetting modern supermarket when it opened in El Cerrito in 1934 as the Andrews William Store.

The site has long been vacant and is in the news today as the "Mayfair Block" is finally being developed with transit-oriented, residential and mixed uses.

Writer and historical society vice president Chris Treadway tells the tale well – a sharp looking Art Deco building with a tower, fierce competition, a new way of selling groceries, labor strife, and the tale of Doris 'Peggy' Williams, Andrew's wife and business partner, whose acumen added much to the business's success.

Chris Treadway also edits Forge, which has grown bigger and better – and is now in color! Would you like to get one at home? [Join the society!](#)

*The El Cerrito Historical Society produces two publications, the Forge, which is a print publication, which we aim to produce four times a year, and Sparks (from the Anvil), an email publication which we aim to produce monthly. Both hark back to one of El Cerrito's original settlers, William Rust, a blacksmith who worked at his anvil producing, among other things, sparks.*

