

SPARKS FROM THE ANVIL

Sparks from the Anvil is El Cerrito Historical Society's March 2013 announcements

Alvarado Adobe Tour

On Sunday, March 24 the San Pablo Historical Society will host a special tour of the Alvarado Adobe and the Blume House for us. Reservations are required and priority will be given to El Cerrito Historical Society members. If you wish to join us for this activity at 2 PM on that Sunday please call Dave Weinstein at (510) 524-1737 or send him an email at davidsweinstein@yahoo.com.

Lincoln Highway

A couple of dozen interested parties met on San Pablo Avenue at Lincoln Avenue in January for the unveiling of signs designating our Avenue as part of the first official transcontinental route. Barbara Hill worked with the City to organize the event. Speakers included Michael Kaelin from the Lincoln Highway Association and El Cerrito Mayor Greg Lyman. Our President Rich Bartke was Emcee. The Lincoln Highway was laid out in 1913; the first cars that traveled it covered over 3,000 miles and arrived in Oakland July 28, 1913.

The route originally reached San Francisco via Livermore, Sunol, Hayward, and Oakland. But when the Carquinez Bridge was completed in 1927 the route was changed so that it ran over the Carquinez Bridge and then down San Pablo Avenue to the Berkeley ferry. The Lincoln Highway became U.S. 40 when a nationwide numbering scheme for major routes was adopted. Thanks to the donors of signs: Joann Steck-Bayat, Mae and Richard Ritz, and Barbara and Curtis Hill. Four signs have been erected, one in each direction near the south end of town and one in each direction further north.

The Historic Navellier Home

The most recent owner of this well-known building died several months back and the probate estate is selling the house and property. The home boasts over 3,000 square feet on almost two acres of hillside property. Ernest Navellier, the original owner, was from France. He operated a laundry and also raised poultry on his property. Ernest was on the Stege School Board for three years and on the first Stege Sanitary Commission. His son Louis was a prominent city official and was part of the group of men who in 1942 founded the Cerrito City Club. (This charitable organization is still active in town.) The house, built in 1898, is one of the oldest in El Cerrito. It is located on the east side of Navellier Street between Manila and Donal. The realtor reported that there were ten bids on the property.

Thank You

Thank you to Harry Kiefer, retired local businessman, who regaled us at our January meeting with detailed descriptions of the businesses at the south end of town in 1940.

Annual Meeting

Twenty nine members and 52 guests attended our Annual Meeting in January, where progress reports were given by various Board members. A Proclamation was presented to

Kathleen McKinley who retired from the Board after three years of faithful service to our Society. Without dissent the following were elected to the Board for 2013:

Debbie Weeks, web site master

Joanne Rubio, Historical Researcher

Barbara Hill, Curator of the Shadi Room

Tom Panas, Treasurer

Joann Steck-Bayat, Secretary

David Weinstein, Vice President and Program Chairman

Rich Bartke, President

Dues

Dues have not changed for several years and the Board proposed an increase at the Annual Meeting. By motion made and adopted without dissent the members increased the dues to \$25 for a Household membership, \$60 for a Sustaining membership, and \$300 for a Lifetime membership. Still a bargain!

Library Centennial

The Contra Costa County Library System was created in 1913. Alice G. Whitbeck was appointed County Librarian in August and she started work on October 1 of that year. Mrs. Whitbeck attended a "Teacher's Institute" meeting and asked the teachers to consider starting a library in their towns. Fay Breneman volunteered to start a library in Rust. She got the permission of the Postmaster, Mr. Barber, to put a case of 50 books in the Post Office. In 1915, the Library was moved to the Breneman home, where it remained for the next ten years. In 1925, the library moved into a house that been renovated by the El Cerrito Improvement Association. As part of the Centennial the West County library branches have arranged to have a special historical program at the El Sobrante library on March 26. Our board member Tom Panas is one of several who have been asked to speak at the event. A special Centennial event is also being planned for El Cerrito. Our Society has accepted an invitation co-sponsor the event along with Friends of the El Cerrito Library and the El Cerrito New Library Campaign Committee. Watch for a formal announcement.

Historic Resources

An important role of our Society is to identify and preserve El Cerrito's Historic Resources. As most of you are aware El Cerrito is preparing a Strategic Plan. The City Council made a number of decisions at the Strategic Plan study session on January 26th. Among these was a decision that the strategies used to implement the goals of the Strategic Plan should include: i) El Cerrito will adopt a Historic Resources Ordinance, and ii) El Cerrito will perform a survey of the town to identify the most likely historic resources. On a related topic Tom Panas has submitted National Register nominations for the former Chung Mei Home site, the former Rodini property, and the former Contra Costa Florist building. Regarding this last site, we were encouraged to see that the revised plans submitted by Eden Housing several months ago for the Tradeway project retained the front (retail) portion of the former Contra Costa Florist building although not the rear (residential) portion. This is a significant step in the right direction but it still falls short of the Society's vision for this site.

Independence Day

The Society will again sponsor a booth at the City's Fourth of July event. We are preparing a new brochure on the City's History and plan to have it ready for the event. We will also have a quiz ready for those who wish to test their knowledge of our city. See you there!