

Sparks March 2018

Attend historical programs at the 5th annual Hillside Festival in May. Four programs dealing with El Cerrito history – including its deeper history – take place early this May as part of the festival, which is spearheaded by El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and the city’s Environmental Quality Committee.

The Historical Society is one of several organizations that co-sponsor events. The festival is a series of hikes and other events over three days, Friday May 4-Sunday May 7, in and around the Hillside Natural Area. Events are free. A map and full schedule is on the Trail Trekkers website. Historic events include:

Friday, May 4, Noon to 2 p.m. Introduction to the Hillside Nature Area, its history and natural history. Dave Weinstein and Mark Miner. Co-sponsored by the Historical Society. Learn about the quarries, the quarry railroad, the Great Western Power Co., the history of the recycling center, and more. Meet at the **Motorcycle Hill trailhead, where Navellier meets Blake Street.**

Saturday, May 5, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Hillside Natural Area Geology Walk. Co-sponsored by the Northern California Geological Society, leaders Mark Petrofsky and Bill Motzer. Learn about the geological setting of El Cerrito and about the rocks in our city – metamorphic rocks, the Franciscan formation, and faults and landslides. This moderate to strenuous walk will have steep sections. Location Six, Schmidt Lane trailhead.

Saturday, May 5, 2 p.m. Early California Indian Life in the El Cerrito area. Berkeley’s well known historian and author and publisher of RSB books Richard Schwartz will discuss life in El Cerrito before the arrival of Spanish colonists, and about rancho life of the Californios. Meet at the “crossroads,” a spot with breathtaking views. From Location Four, the first, southernmost, trailhead on Regency Court, walk downhill a quarter mile. Signs will direct you.

Sunday, May 6, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. How El Cerrito Saved the Madera Open Space. A hike led by Dave Weinstein, focusing on how Trail Trekkers, the El Cerrito High Mountain Biking Team, and others united several years ago to successfully preserve this beautiful 8-acre addition to the Hillside Natural Area. Meet at Location Three, Madera Open Space, at the bottom of the stairs between house numbers 1540 and 1560 Madera Circle.

The historical society mourns the loss of two longtime members. Lucille Irish, one of the founders of the society and a former, longtime city clerk in El Cerrito (and later in Orinda), has passed away.

Rich Bartke, society founder and our immediate past president, knew Lucille well, and contributes the following, which is continued on our website:

LUCILLE IRISH – El Cerrito’s “Go To Gal”.

By Rich Bartke

Rich Bartke, a founder of the Historical Society and former councilman and mayor, recalls Lucille Irish, who passed away in February at age 89.

There was a time when if you wanted something done in El Cerrito, or information about the community, you contacted Lucille Irish. Lucille served in the City Clerk’s office for 40 years, the last 20 as City Clerk. She was the “go-to” person in the community for many of those years. It didn’t matter who was Mayor or who was City Manager, Lucille was the keystone, the axis around which everything turned.

Lucille also served the community as President of the Historical Society, of which she was a founding member. Her terms were in 1976 and 1985, and she was on the Society Board for 36 years, 1974 to 2010. One of her personal accomplishments was to get the boundary plaque re-installed on San Pablo Avenue where the Castro land grant met the Peralta land grant to the south. She also served on the Board and as President of the County Historical Society.

[LINK HERE TO THE FULL ARTICLE, WITH PHOTO OF LUCILLE, ON WEBSITE.](#)

Paul Grunland – an appreciation
By Dave Weinstein

Paul Grunland, a longtime member who [died in February](#) at age 93, never lived in El Cerrito but there was no bigger fan of the town.

He consistently spoke about how friendly El Cerrito was – and how well governed. He loved eating at Fatapples with his wife Peggy and friends, and shopping at Pastime hardware. He appreciated El Cerrito as a place where people who wanted to get something good done could often get it done. Over the years Paul got much good done.

Paul was involved with several El Cerrito Historical Society endeavors, speaking at programs, helping lead tours, suggesting many good ideas, creating awards plaques with his friend John Aronovici, and more.

Paul was also a founding member of El Cerrito Trail Trekkers, providing valuable advice about how to structure the organization financially. He co-led a hike in Kensington that took in the Unitarian Church, and was a frequent hike attendee.

[LINK HERE TO THE FULL ARTICLE, WITH PHOTO OF PAUL, ON WEBSITE.](#)

Board revises its bylaws to allow for additional board members. At our February program and meeting, members approved a board plan to increase the allowable number of members on the board from seven to nine. The vote was unanimous.

Since all board members do much for the society besides attending meetings, that means with more members we can get more done. Board members are not paid, and the society has no paid employees.

In addition, the old bylaws restricted membership to people who live or work in El Cerrito. The new bylaws dropped that requirement as serving no purpose. We already have members who do not live or work in the city, and we welcome more.

CAN WE LINK TO OUR BYLAWS, ???

Great program on Native Americans. Beverly Ortiz, the East Bay Regional Park District's cultural services coordinator and an expert in Native American culture in the East Bay and beyond, put on a superb presentation for our March program. Close to a full house attended, and "everyone was captured by her program and question answers," our vice president Chris Horn reports. Thank you, Bev!

Public art to be installed at El Cerrito del Norte BART benefited by Historical Society research. Before submitting what turned out to be the successful bid for [porcelain mosaic murals to be installed at the BART station](#) as part of general improvements there, artist Kyungmi Shin

consulted with Tom Panas and Dave Weinstein of the historical society to learn more about the town she would be celebrating with her art.

We are pleased that the material in our archive was of use in efforts to beautify our city in a way that is historically true.

Recent additions to our archive. Great thanks go to the **El Cerrito Democratic Club** for the donation of its archive to the Historical Society. The club has been a political force in our city for six decades, and the material offers much insight into its operations and to the people behind this still active group.

Marlene Keller, one of the members, systematically organized this material before giving it to the society.

“Established in 1952, the club is one of the oldest in the Bay Area and its documents reflect a vibrant and diverse El Cerrito,” Keller told us when making the donation.

“The collection includes correspondence to/from local, state and national elected officials, club resolutions (on public policy issues), club endorsements for elections, the ECDC Newsletter before it went online (that contains a wealth of information about civic life -- and contemporary politics), etc.,” she wrote.

Our archivist, Barbara Hill, reported on another donation that came to the society: “It was a **resolution from the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors in favor of El Cerrito's incorporation**, and was dated August 20, 1917.” **Tom, I believe you know the donor?**

The society also took possession of the second half of the archive of the **El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce**. The first half came to us in 2017. The material includes photos, scrapbooks and much more, that helps document the active Chamber over the past decades, as well as the large city business community.

In addition, **Dan Holzner**, a videographer who has created wonderful videos for the society, donated two DVDs of videos he had done on his own that have historic value: “Recycling Timelapse,” a time lapse video showing the current construction of the Recycling Center over the months it took to build, and “Green Bin Alchemy,” another historical film about the center.

Friends of the Cerrito Theater donated several items of ephemera that were tied to the early 2000s’ campaign to preserve and restore the theater. Items included Friends T-shirts with the original logo designed by Rodney Hiram, and event and promotional cards and flyers.

In addition, we received in the mail a most unusual and tantalizing item, a large banner from the El Cerrito branch of the **Order of the Owls**, a 20th century club. We are reaching out to the donor to learn more about its history.

Do you want to own a piece of Portola Junior High history? The El Cerrito Archiving Group has worked to preserve elements of the old Portola Junior High (Middle School), which was torn down for seismic reasons.

Many items are being collected as historic artifacts. But in some cases there are items that were part of the school that the Archiving Group has no need for. These include several attractive mid-century modern lighting fixtures.

These vintage mid-century light fixtures, rescued from Portola Jr. High School, are available for \$100 each, Proceeds benefit El Cerrito archiving group. To have one delivered to your door call Marnie Fricke Mufti 510-410-5028 Photo is in El Cerrito Historical Society – Portola Junior High.

News from other area historical associations:

Rosie the Riveter Trust Benefit and Silent Auction is April 7.

The Rosie the Riveter Trust will hold its annual dinner benefit and silent auction on Saturday, April 7, at El Cerrito's Berkeley Country Club, 7901 Cutting Blvd.

Cocktails and appetizers will be served at 5:30 p.m., followed by a dinner program.

Jerry Anne DiVecchio, former food editor for Sunset Magazine and dozens of Sunset cookbooks, will discuss the evolution of American food culture from growing and consuming food from victory gardens, through expansion of commercial farming and use of pesticides, to today's support for farm-to-table sustainable agriculture.

A special pre-event reception is available. Tickets are \$180 and should be purchased in advance (those purchased after March 19 are \$190). Proceeds benefit the Rosie the Riveter Trust and its programs in support of the Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park. Call 510-507-2276 or visit www.rosietheriveter.org for more information.

San Pablo Historical Society needs active members. Janet Pottier, president of this venerable organization, reports that new blood is needed:

"We currently only have five active members and all our energy has gone to maintaining and periodically opening the Museum," she writes. "We do not currently have someone to produce a quarterly newsletter."

"The society is working with the city to maintain the Alvarado Adobe and other historic structures while the city prepares to tear down and replace the existing civic center.

"When I wrote you last year the City was planning to move the Blume House, Bunk House and Teixeira House closer to the Adobe. Although the plan is still to tear down the existing City Hall Complex, including Maple Hall,

"The Historical Buildings will remain where they are to form an L-shaped park," Pottier writes. "We will be working with the City to design the park, decide what will be saved to include in the park, and to continue to make the museums accessible to the community.

"The Historical Society will continue to maintain the collection, provide tours of the buildings, and be a resource on the history of the city."

"However, to survive we also need more members who can take an active role in supporting the Historical Society. If you know anyone who has an interest in supporting a local nonprofit organization, please ask them to contact us. Any amount of time and skills they can provide us will be greatly appreciated." To contact the San Pablo Historical society, (510) 215-0000.