

BART's stations in El Cerrito required the demolition of homes, apartments and businesses, including five houses on Fairmount Avenue, nine on Central, 10 other homes, one four-plex on Liberty, one medical building, two duplexes and more. 62 buildings were removed to make way for the Plaza station alone.

For the Del Norte station, among the businesses to disappear or be displaced were Golden Jersey Dairy, Atlas Bait & Liquor, and the House of Pancakes.

Throughout the BART system many stations include public art. But only rarely do plaques recognize the artists behind art from the earliest days. (More recent art generally does have plaques listing the creators.)

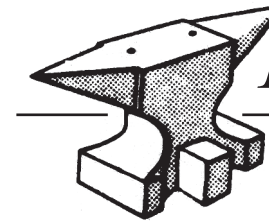
Public art, once planned for every station, was relegated to only about 15 of the original 32 stations. (We say "about" because it depends how you define "art.") Because of funding issues and work rules, rather than hiring artists for some stations the architects sometimes designed their own art instead.

And, despite much initial attention to the art and the artists, BART never installed signs crediting the artists by name. As a result few people today know who created most of the original art on BART artworks – even BART officials.

In fact, over the years several art pieces have disappeared – either being painted over, as at the Coliseum station, or simply vanishing without a trace, as at Concord. And the work that disappeared at Concord, a ceramic fountain, was created by perhaps the most famous artist to do work for BART in the early days, Stephen de Staebler.

De Staebler's art has suffered another indignity in the BART system. He created an immense, 37-foot tall ceramic mural in the Embarcadero Station that almost no one knows about and is very hard to see – because it hides behind a stairway.

Art may have had an up and down ride on BART. But any attentive BART rider can find beautiful pieces both old and new in many of the stations – if they know where to look. After this talk you will never look at BART in the same way again. Enjoy your ride.



## ***El Cerrito Historical Society***

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### ***When Architects and Artists had Big Dreams for BART, 7 PM Wednesday, August 24 El Cerrito Community Center 7007 Moeser Lane***

At our next meeting long-time journalist and Historical Society vice president Dave Weinstein will discuss the early days of BART, focusing on its architecture and art. The program, 'When Architects and Artists Had Big Dreams for BART,' will take place on Wednesday, August 24 at 7 p.m., at the Community Center (7007 Moeser Lane.) You are sure to enjoy this event and learn a lot. The event is free and light refreshments will be served.

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a volunteer, non-political, non-profit corporation that has as its purpose the preservation and appreciation of the history of El Cerrito. It does this by providing educational and research opportunities; by collecting of historic photographs, documents, artifacts and cultural objects; by advocating the preservation of historic resources in the city; and by encouraging others to help further these aims. Anyone may join; dues are \$25 (Household member), \$60 (Sponsoring member), and \$300 (Life member).

# *When Architects and Artists Had Big Dreams for BART*

*by Dave Weinstein*

The BART system that we know so well today is far different from the system that was originally envisioned. That system would have circled the bay, with stations not only in the East Bay and San Francisco (with some added, many years later, in San Mateo County), but also in such far off locales as Napa, Fairfield, Santa Rosa, Brentwood, Livermore, Campbell, San Jose and Los Altos.

It also would have been a far more artistic system, with large pieces of public art – murals, hanging sculptures, free-standing sculptures, and more, in every station.

“Our objective,” the father of BART, board president Adrian Falk wrote in 1966, “is to produce for the Bay Area not only the best system in the world from a standpoint of operating efficiency but the finest from a standpoint of aesthetic design.”

And on top of that, some of the visionary, even utopian architects who had been hired to design the BART stations wanted to do more than design stations. They wanted to redesign the entire Bay Area, deciding where to place stations with the idea that a new way of getting around in the region would affect people’s lives, how they worked, where they lived, and more. Several saw BART as the beginning, not just of regional transit, but of regional government.

On August 24 Dave Weinstein will present a program focused on the early days of BART, in particular its architecture and art. Dave’s talk will be based in part on an article he wrote for *CA-Modern* magazine on the subject. The idea for Dave’s article and talk came about because for years, Dave has exited and entered the 16th and 24th Street stations in San Francisco wondering, “who created those striking concrete reliefs that fill the walls along the elevators?”

Clearly it was an artist, and a talented one. But who? Also speaking briefly

will be Jennifer Easton, BART’s art program manager. BART is currently increasing its focus on art – including bringing more public art into an expanded El Cerrito del Norte station.

One focus of Dave’s talk will be the two El Cerrito stations, which won early design awards for their landscaping.

The artist who designed the abstract mosaic murals near the elevators in both stations is Alfonso Pardiñas and he is the artist who created more artwork throughout the BART system than any other artist – both to his own design, and to designs of others. Several stations are in effect bathed in Pardiñas mosaic tile. BART opened in 1972.



*El Cerrito Plaza BART station, mosaic tile by Alfonso Pardiñas - Dave Weinstein photo*