



## Guild Loses Its Oldest Member

Margaret Keena McNern passed away on April 5. She was 103 years of age. The mother of Novato History Guild President Jim McNern and his brother Joe, was a charter member of the Guild. Mrs. McNern was born in San Francisco in 1904 and was a survivor of the 1906 earthquake.



*Margaret Keena McNern*

The Keena family moved to McClay Road in Novato in 1919 where she still resided at the time of her death. Margaret married James McNern in 1937. Mr McNern died in 1948. Mrs. McNern was a 90 year member of Our Lady of Loretto

## 1958 Marion School Graduates to be Featured At Old Timers' Day Meeting

The Novato Historical Guild will host the annual Old Timers' Day meeting on Saturday, May 31 at noon in the Druid's Hall. This meeting will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1958 8th grade graduating class from Marion School.

The May 31 meeting will start at noon with a light lunch. Graduates will receive their lunch free of charge. Other attendees will be asked for a \$5.00 contribution. After lunch, the 1958 graduates will be introduced to share their school and Novato memories.

Church. Funeral services were held on April 10 with burial at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in San Rafael.

Margaret was a delightful lady who will be sadly missed by everyone who knew her.

Six members of the 1958 8th grade class are known to be deceased: Gary Clementino, Mary Louise Del Priore, Ronald Green, Jr., Ed Salmina, Sandra Thomas and Dick Wright.

Many present and former Novato residents enjoy the opportunity to visit with old friends at Old Timers' Day. Guild members, guests and prospective members are invited to attend.

## Coming Events!

**Saturday, May 31, NOON**  
*Old Timers' Day*

Druids Hall on Grant Avenue

**Monday, June 9, 1 p.m.**

*Board Meeting*

Police Department Training Room

**Friday, July 4, 10 a.m.**

*Fourth of July Parade*

Grant Avenue

**Monday, July 14, 1 p.m.**

*Board Meeting*

Police Department Training Room

**Monday, August 11, 1 p.m.**

*Board Meeting*

Police Department Training Room

**Monday, September 8, 1 p.m.**

*Board Meeting*

Police Department Training Room



*Volunteer docent meeting at Druids Hall March 4. Docents at the table are Joe Giari, Anna Morrison, Ann Ramsey, Nick Hess, Phoebe Aby, and Margaret Bingelli.*

**The Novato Historian**

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**Guild Mission Statement**

Our Mission is to collect, preserve, and make reasonably available to the public, exhibits and information related to the historical and social development of the Novato valley, Hamilton Field, and the adjacent North Marin area.

**Novato Historical Guild 2008 Officers**

- President** Jim McNern
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**Typography, Composition, Layout**

Mike Clancy

**City of Novato Staff**

Community Services Division Manager  
Kathy Graves

**Museum Curator**

Samantha Kimpel

Original articles and photographs related to Novato history are welcomed!

**Deadline for Sept. issue is Aug. 1.**

**Address Changes**

The Novato Historian is mailed by bulk mail and will **not** be forwarded by the Postal Service. Please notify us promptly of your address change, at Novato Historical Guild, 75 Rowland Way, Suite 200, Novato, CA 94945.



**President's Corner**

by Jim McNern

President, Novato Historical Guild

It has been a busy spring at the museum. We have had 23 third grade classes come to visit the museum exhibits, take the walking tour downtown, and learn about the early pioneers and the history of Novato. A number of "old timers" have been by to visit and reminisce about their days of growing up in this community. Four grandchildren of Val and Anna Clark visited in April. The Clark family lived in the Postmaster's House when it was at its old location on South Novato Boulevard and Yukon Way.

Work has restarted on the historic Hamilton firehouse by Page Construction Co., and we hope they will be finished sometime in October. After that, there will be many tenant improvements to be completed by Guild volunteers, under the direction of Ray Dwelly, project manager. We are very anxious to get the Hamilton Museum opened.

A number of dedicated Guild members have been laboring on the Hamilton Field book since the beginning of the year. They have selected the images of Hamilton and written the text that is now in the hands of Arcadia Press. We think the book will be published and on the sale racks sometime in early 2009.

The film crew from KPIX's "Eye on the Bay" were at the museum interviewing Ray Dwelly, Bill Palmer and Samantha Kimpel for a segment they were filming on Hamilton Field.

The Guild is planning to have an entry in Novato's 4th of July parade. This year's theme is "Best of Novato."

We hope to see many members and guests at the May 31 General Meeting and Old Timers' Day at the Druid's Hall. We are honoring the 1958 8th grade graduating class from Marion School on their 50th anniversary.

**Interesting Talk at the March Meeting**



At the NHG March meeting Fred Codoni, from Fairfax, gave a talk about the Northwestern Pacific Railroad and its impact on Marin County. Mr. Codoni showed old photographs of the railroad and Marin during his interesting and informative talk.





# Novato—50 Years Ago (April, May, June 1958)

by Bill Almeida and Pat Willat

*“Novato—50 Years Ago” is a collection of items culled by Bill Almeida from the April, May, and June issues of the Novato Advance newspapers in the collection of the Novato History Museum and Microfilm at the Novato Library. We hope you enjoy reading the names and happenings of 1958.*

- Students were dismissed from San Rafael High School in honor of Baptiste J. Simontacchi who died on April 3 at a San Francisco hospital. Services were held on April 7 at St. Raphael’s Church in San Rafael. Simontacchi was a teacher and coach at San Rafael High.

- Sharon Smith of 794 Storybook Court in Novato was one of nine candidates in a District 3 contest of the American Dairy Association to select a state princess. The princess selected from California will then vie for the American Dairy Association Dairy Queen title.

- Robert Patterson was named principal of the Hill Intermediate School and Ray Monson principal of

the new Lu Sutton elementary school to be built on Center Road. Charles Lavaroni is replacing Miss Lulu Sutton at Olive School with the retirement of Miss Sutton.

- A daughter was born April 18 at Marin General Hospital to Mr. and Mrs. Marett Boissevain of Novato. The baby was greeted at home by sister Libby, 10, and brother Eddie, 6.

- Louise Gness and Sandy Glass recently returned from their two-week vacation trip to Hawaii. They are making plans for another trip next year. A highlight of the trip on the Lurline was when Miss Gness was selected as “Miss Lurline” and Miss Glass was chosen as runner-up. The “Miss Lurline” contest was held in the form of a fashion show, with contestants judged on appearance, personality, and modeling.

- Announcement was recently made of the engagement of Phyllis Jean Bennett of Petaluma to James Baxter Hovis of Novato. The bride-elect is an employee of California

Pacific Title Insurance Co. in San Francisco. The prospective groom is now employed by Pini Hardware Company.

- A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. William Melson on April 12 at Marin General Hospital.

- A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. John Giari on April 6 at Marin General Hospital.

- Novato is losing three of its best beloved teachers this year with the retirement of Miss Lulu Sutton, principal of Olive School, Mrs. Katherine Steele, fifth grade teacher at Olive School, and Katherine Hulme, primary teacher at Hill School.

- The Novato Sanitary District board extended the garbage collecting franchise of Louis Garaventa to 1968. They also announced that garbage rates will henceforth be \$1.50 per 30 gallon can per week, effective June 1. Heretofore, Garaventa has been charging \$1 a month per home for weekly scavenger service plus 20 cents per month which is paid to the Smith Bros. dump.

- Robert W. Mayo is one of 178 medical school graduates who have been selected for internship at Army hospitals throughout the United States this year. Mayo, who graduates from the University of California medical school in June, has been assigned to the U. S. Hospital at Ft. Benning, Ga., for a year of internship.

- Sophomore Ron Manzoni, short-stop on the Novato High School baseball team, was “Hornet Ace” of the week in mid-May. Ron, who is 5’10” tall and weighs 145 pounds, is active in sports the year round. Baseball is his favorite sport. “He very rarely misses a grounder and his

## New Guild Board Members



New Novato Historical Guild Board Members introduced at the March General meeting are: Diane Campbell, Cindy Motsinger, and Stephen Schwindt.

Continued on Page N-6

# Historical Guild Board Highlights

by Pat Johnstone

## February 2008

*Financial Investments* – Gary Bramon of Alders Financial Group presented the board with an update on the Guild’s portfolio performance from 2/1/07 through 2/7/08. The annualized return was <2.08%>. He suggested coming back to address the board again in 3 months for another update.

*New Business* – Cindy Motsinger reported that 6 out of 9 schools already signed up their 3rd grade classes for tours of the Museum and Old Town.

A request for financial support was

received from Olompali. A motion was made to donate \$50.00 to their membership fund. The motion was passed.

*Hamilton Book* – Samantha Kimpel reported that the Hamilton Book Committee has put in many hours pulling photos from the museum’s collection, researching data and writing text. Committee members are: Pat Johnstone, Samantha Kimpel, Edna Manzoni, Jim McNern, Elayne Miller, Mike Read, Ron Vela, and Iva Young.

*Curator’s Report* – On March 4 a meeting will be held at Druid’s Hall at 10 a.m. to recognize Guild Volunteers for their service and to recruit new volunteers. Samantha Kimpel also reported that she is planning to hire someone part-time to assist with archive and collection

work. She submitted a work order to the City for repair or replacement of the railroad ties in front of the museum. Dick Altman commented that the quality of the replacement hatch cover installed recently at the museum was unacceptable. Ms. Kimpel agreed and said this is being addressed.

*Hamilton Museum* – Ray Dwelly reported that Bates Construction has been selected by the City to handle the abatement report but the City has not given them instructions so they cannot start the project. Sidewalks have been approved but no specs have been forthcoming from the City so Page Construction cannot begin work. Dick Altman recapped the long process it has been trying to work with the City to get the Hamilton Museum opened.

## March 2008

*New Business* – Dick Altman suggested that yellow safety stripes be painted on the stairs leading up to the museum. Ray Dwelly said that he had the type of paint required by the City. Kathy Graves will check with the City to see if we need their approval.

Kathy Graves also informed the Board that Samantha Kimpel’s hours will increase to 40 hours per week. The additional 10 hours are for Cultural Art Programs for the City.

A third grade docent suggested that we install a bench along the path, behind the museum, for the children on the tour to sit on instead of sitting on the wet grass. Kathy Graves said that the City has a couple of styles of benches they prefer and she will check to see how much they cost. The Guild Treasurer will check to see if we can use money in the Memorial Fund to purchase the bench.

*Hamilton Book* – A cover was chosen for the book and a sample was

*Continued on Page N-7*

## MEMORIAL PLAQUE ADDITIONS

You may honor a friend or loved one by having his or her name engraved on an individual brass plate on the Memorial Plaque in the History Museum. Please call the Museum at 897-4320. All contributions are tax deductible.

## MEMORIAL GIFTS

You may make a gift of appreciated securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) to the Novato Historical Guild. Your gift is not only tax-deductible, but if you have held the shares for more than one year, your tax deduction will equal the full value of the securities on the date of the gift. By donating appreciated stock investments, you will:

- avoid capital gains taxes,
- receive a sizeable charitable deduction, and
- support the Guild in “preserving Novato’s history.”

Plaques cost \$250 per person named.

## In Memoriam

The Guild mourns the loss of the following members:

- Walter Halkovich**
- Lorena Kaehler**
- Gloria Masters**
- Margaret Keena McNern**
- Charlie Nerviani**
- Louise Pariani**

## The Guild Extends Sympathy to

**Michael Halkovich** on the death of his father, Walter

The family of **Lorena Kaehler**

The family of **Gloria Masters**

**Jim and Joe McNern** on the death of their mother, Margaret

**Phyllis Nerviani** on the death of her husband, Charlie

**Al Pariani** on the death of his wife, Louise

# Novato Memories

by Jim McNern



John Azevedo

John Azevedo, the son of Manuel and Marian Azevedo, was born in 1924 at the Cottage Hospital in San Rafael. His mother died when he was an infant. He was taken care of by Mrs. Newsom on Railroad Avenue until he was two years old. John says he pretty much grew up on his own with his nine older siblings while his father worked on a ranch in West Marin. He shares his Novato memories in this June edition of the Novato Historian. John remembers:

- Living on the F Ranch at the end of Vineyard Road until 1930 with his nine siblings: Mary, Rose, Emily, Eva, Manuel, Joseph, Frank, Tony and George.
- Starting first grade at the one-room Burdell School, located on property now flooded by Stafford Lake, and having Miss Gertrude Lane as his teacher. His classmates were children from the Corda, Grossi, and Leveroni ranches.
- Getting a shot in the arm for something at Burdell School.
- The children at Burdell School all dressing in black to celebrate Halloween.
- Moving with his family to a



## From the Staff Desk

by Samantha Kimpel  
Museum Curator

### Developing the Hamilton Collection

We are happy to report that there has been significant progress this spring on the build-out of the Hamilton Field History Museum at the Firehouse. This is an exciting time and a wonderful opportunity to preserve the history of Hamilton Field and to explore the stories of people who served, worked and lived there.

There are already a number of objects in the Novato History Museum collection that relate to Hamilton, either as donations from individuals with ties to the base, or items, photographs, and archives preserved from base operations after its closure.

In the coming months, we will be exploring ideas of what we all envision that the Hamilton Collection will contain (such as artifacts and archives), as well as how the collec-

tion will grow. As staff reviews items for potential addition to the collection, we will be looking at their significance to life at Hamilton, with emphasis on objects that were used, worn, or made at the base.

An important part of the Hamilton Collection will be an oral history project. Since Hamilton is interwoven into Novato life, we do have a number of oral histories in the Novato History Museum Collection that touch on or concern different eras at the base. In addition to collecting the stories of our local community, it will be important to collect as many stories as possible with national and international perspectives of Hamilton as well.

For example, the daughter of one of the pilots who was stationed at the

*Continued on Page N-7*

house on nine acres on Simmons Lane.

- Transferring to Novato Grammar School and having Miss McGowan, Miss Reese, Miss Clark, Mrs. Steele and Miss Sutton as his teachers.
- Getting disciplined by Miss Sutton with a hard whack by a ruler across his hand and then having to go to Dr. Weseman to have a fingernail removed because it festered.
- Miss Sutton was a great teacher—but we didn't know it at the time. You could be a "blockhead," but you knew plenty when you left her class.
- His classmates and friends: Anna Anderson, Joe Giari, Thelma Johnson, Robert and William Cantua, Jane Ruhlman, Barbara Cardoza, Kenneth Hardman, Arthur Hughes, Verna Kidder, Frank

Paladini, Calvin Probasco, Lorraine Robertson, Manuel Silva, Manuel Souza, Wayne Westcott and Glenn Westlund.

- Miss Edna Baccaglio playing the piano and leading singing in the auditorium at Novato Grammar School.
- Checking out books in the library in the upstairs of the Community House where Elsie Andersen was the librarian.
- Having fun on the slide and merry-go-round, and playing baseball on the upper playground on the hill at Novato Grammar School.
- Dr. Weseman was well respected by everyone in town, and he had a great "bedside manner."
- The day his brother, George, hit him in the eye with a hatchet by acci-

*Continued on Page N-10*

# Novato—50 Years Ago

*Continued from Page N-3*

pegs are always perfect,” commented fellow player Jack Sparrow.

- Oscar Houge, a resident of Virginia Avenue, complained to the county sheriff’s office that Novato’s old cemetery at Simmons Lane and Virginia Avenue was being desecrated by vandals. Graves have been trampled, head stones and grave markers knocked down and garbage dumped in the cemetery.

- Peter Nave, 94, patriarch of a well-known Marin County family, died the end of May in a San Rafael hospital. (He was the father of William Nave of San Rafael, Louis Nave, the late Fred Nave, Mrs. Frank Scott, all of Novato, and Catherine Sheldon of San Francisco). Mr. Nave

came to Novato in 1896 to establish a large produce farm know as the “Cabbage Patch” on the site of the present Nave Shopping Center. His well-known Novato produce farm supplied fresh vegetables throughout Marin County for many years. Mr. Nave was born in Italy.

- Harold L. Wingate, seaman apprentice, U. S. Navy, graduated from Nuclear Weapons School, April 25, at the Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois.

- A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Owen Haight on May 24 at San Rafael General Hospital.

- Men and equipment are to be shifted June 16 to the new No. 2 Novato Fire Station on South Novato

Boulevard and the station placed in operation. A fire truck and a jeep will be moved from the Grant Avenue fire station. In 3 months a brand new fire truck will be delivered to the district.

The last class of Novatans graduated from San Rafael High School on June 13. The future Novato seniors will be graduating from Novato High School. Sixty-five Novato students of the 287 student class of 1958 graduated on the San Rafael High athletic field.

- Joan Smith will become the bride of Karl Olson on June 29 at the Presbyterian Church in Novato.

- Mrs. Earl Siegal, wife of a Novato Pediatrician, started her car and found it was not in tip-top working order. The horn would not work so Mrs. Siegal went to Smith and Sjoblom service station. When Charlie Smith lifted the hood he found 4 young kittens not more than a day old. They were returned to the Siegal home on 4th Street to be united with the mother cat.

- Postmaster James M. Morris asked “How would you like to pay 8 cents to send a letter to San Francisco?” That may sound fantastic, especially when we are able to mail any letter from Novato to any city in North America for only 3 cents an ounce: for 3 cents an ounce more you can send it air mail. Our early postal service did charge the 8 cents for a short trip of 30 miles, and the rates were based on the number of sheets of paper in the letter. Weight of the letter had nothing to do with the cost.

- Emil Adams was scheduled to come before the Marin County Planning Commission on April 21 to seek a use permit to construct a service station on the Northwest corner of Fifth and Grant. The proposed service station site is across the street from the Town and Country Shopping Center and the Episcopal Church.

## Novato's Treasures

### D. L. HAYDEN HOME



c. 1900

*The original building. The front of the building is now the side—the best view.*



*March 2008. Now the Hilltop Restaurant. Additions completely surround the original building.*

*This home, built by Daniel Leonard Hayden, was completed in the Spring of 1892. The Sausalito News reported on January 15, 1892 “The houses and cottages being erected by Hon. J.W. Atherton, D.L. Hayden, Joe Guibbini and G.H. Albers are fast nearing completion.” It was begun, again according to the News, in October 1891. Mrs. Hayden (Charlotte Cornelia Haven) may have only lived in the home for a couple of months. The News reported on May 20, 1892 that she had died at the age of 41 years, 6 months and 20 days. Mr. Hayden was a school trustee in 1889 and represented Novato at the County Republican Convention in 1890. Dr. and Mrs. Hermann Conradt are known to have lived in the home in the early 1900’s. Dr. Conradt, a dentist, was a Justice of the Peace. The home has had many, many uses including the Maison Marin and Little Sweden Restaurants. Today (1975) it is occupied by the Moose Lodge. Advance Photo. Reprint Stewart’s Novato Photo. Editor’s Note: Today we know the house as the Hilltop Restaurant.*

## Welcome New Guild Members

*Through March 31, 2008*

Jack Burgi  
Catherine Anne Tait

### **Upgraded to Life Membership:**

Adair Rogers  
Michael Sandbach

### **Please support our Guild business members:**

Acme Digital and  
Screen Graphics\*  
Bank of Marin\*  
House of Daniels, Inc.  
Kelly Associates  
Architects, AIA  
Kitchen at 868 Grant  
Marin Landscape Materials\*  
McIsaac Dairy\*  
Novato Horsemen\*  
Now and Then Antiques\*  
Pini Hardware  
Suburban Alternatives  
Land Trust\*  
The Wright Salon\*  
Zenith Instant Printing\*  
*\*Thank you to our business  
members who have renewed  
for 2008.*

**If you have questions about  
membership call Edna  
Manzoni, Membership  
Chairman, 415-892-9603.**

*A gift membership always  
meets the need for that person  
who has everything.*

## Memorial Plaques

Frances (Lopus) and  
Frank Manzoni



## From the Staff Desk

*Continued from Page N-5*

base in the 1960s has arranged for a reunion of her father's squadron at Hamilton this summer. The men and their families will be coming from throughout the United States. In some history museums, stations are set up where visitors, such as in this group, can either videotape or record their personal histories.

In the future, the Hamilton Museum will be an important collection point

and repository for the stories of veterans, former workers, and former and current Novatans as they visit the base.

Please contact me at the museum if you would like to be involved in the collection of oral histories at Hamilton, or if you are interested in donating items to the Hamilton Collection.

### Volunteer Updates

On March 4, 2008, we recognized the contributions of our many wonderful volunteers and welcomed a few new volunteers (thank you Bobbie Kettler and Bob Wilkinson for signing on to work with the 3rd grade tours). Our amazing 3rd Grade Tour Docent Team convened at that time to sign up to lead this spring's 3rd grade tours that day, as well.

As mentioned above, I will be working more on developing the collection of oral histories, both for Hamilton and life in Novato. If you would like to tell your story, or would like to assist with the collection of stories, please let us know.

And, as always, thank you to all the wonderful Novato Historical Guild members and friends who contribute so much to keeping the guild and museum a vital part of Novato life.

## Board Highlights

*Continued from Page N-4*

passed around for the Board to review.

*Curator's Report* – The flagpole located in the front courtyard of the museum is in disrepair and needs to be removed. Ray Dwelly volunteered to remove the pole after we get City approval. Much discussion followed regarding what, if anything, will replace the flagpole.

*Hamilton Museum* – Ray Dwelly reported that he and two other committee members met with the new City Engineer, who is assigned to the Hamilton Museum Project, to get him "up to speed." The abatement work should begin in 2 to 3 weeks. To save money, committee members decided to change out the museum windows instead of salvaging them.



*Ann Lehan, Cindy Motsinger, and Janice Bazurto are in charge of the 3rd grade school tours.*



*Third Grade  
School  
Tours  
by Mike Clancy*

*Docent Susan Trumbull, wearing a period dress, conducts a tour of the interior of our museum during the weekly 3rd grade student tour. This week the students were from Lynwood School.*

*Teachers, parents and students all participate in our weekly 3rd grade museum tours and guided tours of old-town Novato. This event is obviously enjoyed by all--look at the smiles. Mrs. Francis is the teacher, Edna Manzoni our docent.*



*Docent Celinda Current (left) is shown conducting the walking tour. The class is divided into thirds and rotate through the various sections of the museum and old-town tours. This feature keeps the groups smaller and more manageable.*



# Growing Up in Novato, Circa 1950's

**By Pat Baseheart Vachini**

Our new house on Novato Blvd. was ready to move into in December of 1949. I was so excited because now I'd be able to go to school.

After Christmas vacation, I climbed the steep steps to Grant School to be registered as a kindergartener. But for some reason, I wasn't allowed to enroll and had to wait until September arrived to start first grade. Mrs. Olson was my teacher and the big, old classroom complete with cloakroom was filled with smiling faces—6 year old Novatans who would remain my friends for life!

After that first day, I came home disappointed because I didn't learn to read!

My real memories start with 2nd grade. Mrs. Estelle Moretti, who was in her second year of teaching, was my teacher. (Who could have foretold that 20 years later she would be my 3 son's teacher at another Grant Elementary School in Petaluma!!) She was such a teacher. I remember singing America the Beautiful and anxiously awaiting my turn to use the pointer to point to pictures of America hanging above the black-board in the front of the room. In the playground, we learned circle dances to the tunes of "Jolly is the Miller" and "O-Johnny-O" played on a little record player with a long extension cord.

We collected dimes for the Red Cross and brought a quarter a week for milk and graham crackers every day and another quarter for bank day.

Novato was growing. Grant School was closed and a brand new Marion Street School was opened for my 3rd grade year.

*Due to space constraints Pat's memories will be continued in our next issue.*

# Growing up in Novato

**By Sue Stafford Davis**

My earliest memories of Novato are living on Railroad Avenue and my father coming home from the war. It was Christmas and my brother and I both ran to turn on the tree lights - we tipped the tree over - Welcome home, Dad!

W.J.J.Smith and family lived close by, and I remember playing with Jan and Gwen on that great porch that surrounded their home. I remember, painfully, catching the mumps from Mr. Smith!

We lived in that house until I was five and then we moved to 1819 Novato Blvd. where my parents had built a home and veterinary hospital in the back. To me, the house was a mansion and I had my own bedroom. I also had the best backyard imaginable

for kids - creek at the back of the property, big field next door to ride our horses and a barn to play in with my friends. Robert and Andrina Ruzick became our playmates - the big brothers versus the little sisters!

Then the BIG day arrived - I got to go to school. My first day at school was not as scary for me as for others because I had my "big brother," Mike Stafford, to help me. I remember that after we climbed the large stone steps going up to school and were out-of-sight from our mother, he told me, "You're on your own!" Those words held true until we graduated from high school! I entered Mrs. Lockwood's kindergarten class with 35 other energetic five year olds. In

*Continued on Page N-10*



## *A Little Bird Told Me*

By Barbara Sparrow

**From the Friday, August 10, 1945 issue of the Novato Advance**

Major Meredith Wilson left last Thursday by plane for Manila, where he has been transferred. Major Wilson was stationed at Hamilton Field for a number of years and made his home in Novato where his wife and family will remain.

Dr. and Mrs. R. J. Weseman and daughter Fern returned home Sunday from a week's vacation spent at Lake Tahoe.

Stella Bacigalupi is visiting relatives in San Francisco this week.

Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Sheroni are spending a few days vacation at their home here on Novato Blvd. Mr. Sheroni is one of the proprietors of the "Wishing Well" tavern in San Francisco.

Ensign Bob Busher, Merchant Marine, arrived in San Francisco this week, and is visiting his mother, Mrs. W. H. Busher, while his ship is in port.

Miss Elizabeth Alberelli left Wednesday, August 1, for Syracuse, Kansas for a 30-day visit with friends.

Paul Rubenstein, 10-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Arturo Rubenstein, is visiting at the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Durbrow for a short while. Mrs. Durbrow recently attended the Hollywood Bowl Concert in Los Angeles, and when she returned she brought the young man with her.

Mrs. Eugene Threadgall and young son are visiting her parents in San Francisco for a week.

Miss Eileen Wilson was one of the guest artists at the San Francisco Stage Door Canteen last Thursday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. John Vanderhoof with their daughter, Mrs. A. A. Durpe and her young son, Michael John, are visiting at the Milch ranch at Black Point. The Vanderhoof home is in Shanghai, China, but they were stranded in the United States at the outset of the war.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sparrow were in San Francisco Wednesday evening, where with other members of the family and friends, they met Mrs. Sparrow's father, Lt. Col. A. N. Whitman who has just returned from many months duty in England.

## Novato Memories

*Continued from Page N-5*

dent, and then hid him under the stairs of the house.

- His neighbors: Fred Harnecke, Andy Anderson, Bill Johnson, Ramsey White and the Kidder family on Feliz Road, Dick Christie, and Bill Palmer on Novato Creek.

- The sound of the milk cans clanking together on the Borden's milk truck when it stopped at the stop light on the 101 next to Novato Grammar School.

- The Greyhound buses that would stop in Novato to pick up and drop off many passengers.

- Graduating from Novato Grammar School in June of 1940 in the Community House, and Miss Sutton saying we were the best class she ever had.

- Catching the San Rafael High School bus at the corner of Virginia and Simmons Lane.

- Shopping at H. Pini & Co., Fragosa's Dry Goods Store,

Rayburn's Market, D'Ambrogio's Market, Meyers and Torassa Bakeries and the little Balz Store on Simmons Lane.

- Meyers Bakery had the best doughnuts in town.

- Seeing Jid Baccaglio working at Henry Hess Lumber Co.

- The many chicken ranches all over Novato - including the Balz, Singleton, Anderson, Harnecke, and McIntosh ranches on Simmons Lane.

- Curly McIntosh was the road boss for Marin County and the county yard was at his place at the end of Simmons Lane.

- His job of cleaning three chicken houses using a homemade wheelbarrow for Fred Balz and earning fifty cents a house and lunch. He also cleaned out chicken houses for Andy Anderson and Bill Johnson.

- Swimming in Novato Creek in the swimming hole behind the Kidder and Frost properties on Feliz Road.

Novato boys also swam in the Wright-Owens slough north of town.

- Seeing the silent movies that were shown at night outside behind the firehouse on Grant Ave. during the summertime.

- The big grass fire on Mt. Burdell in the 1930's that burned for a week. It burned from the Leveroni Ranch all the way down to 7th Street in town.

- Marrying his wife, Lee Valim, in 1948 in Our Lady of Loretto Church on Grant Avenue.

- The nights when free dishes were given away to patrons at the Novato Theater.

- Picking pears on the Guth Ranch on Novato Boulevard and using a "ring" to size them as they were picked. He earned five cents a box and made \$7.00 in a week and bought his first bicycle with his pear picking money.

- Another job was stacking hay at Tubb's Island off Highway 37 for the Cardoza family.

- H. Pini & Company stored feed in the building where the Viking Bar is now located.

- Bill Johnson started his garage in a tin building on Grant Avenue and then moved to the site on the 101 where the Viking Bar now stands.

- Learning to drive using his dad's Model T Ford, and taking out half the vineyard in the process.

- Watching the Novato Horsemen and Portuguese parades march down Grant Avenue.

- Dancing the Chamarita in the I.D.E.S.I. Hall.

- Serving in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946.

- Hauling milk from the F. Ranch by horse and wagon to Rudolff's Cheese Factory.

- Started hauling hay for Julius Petersen in 1939, and then hauling milk cans from the Bull Tail Ranch in

*Continued on Page N-11*

## Sue's Memories

*Continued from Page N-9*

those days, the curriculum for kindergarten was to learn to stand in line, follow directions, take a nap on a mat and be quiet. (I still haven't mastered the last!) Recess was always fun - especially on the big metal merry-go-round. I remember the playground looked like a giant parking lot - no grass, just asphalt which was tough on little knees. I loved Mrs. Lockwood - she was young and always very understanding and patient. I thought her worthy to have one of my Pekingese puppies at the end of the year, because I had survived my first year of school with her, and I knew she could raise a puppy!

In first grade, I met my best friend, Patsy Basehart, and even today we are best friends. I can remember singing "America, the Beautiful" after the Pledge of Allegiance each day, and hoping I would get to be the

lucky one to hold the pointer to point at each picture above the blackboard. In those early years, I recall belonging to Brownies and meeting in the kitchen of the old firehouse on Grant and 101.

My "social life" revolved around playing with my classmates. On Friday nights my parents would take us to the Novato Theater. Saturday mornings my mom would drop us off for the Saturday matinee and if we were lucky, we got to go again on Sunday when the movie changed. Good thing the movies were only 25 cents back then! During Christmas, after the Saturday movies, we would go to the firehouse to see Santa and get a red mesh stocking full of candy and an orange.

*Due to space constraints Sue's memories will be continued in our next issue.*

# Novato Memories

Continued from Page N-10

Lucas Valley to Spreckles Dairy in San Francisco.

• Drove milk truck for Julius Petersen hauling 10 gallon cans of milk from numerous Marin and Sonoma dairies to Borden’s Dairy. He picked up milk from the Pacheco Ranch in Indian Valley and the

Ferrera Dairy on the F Ranch on Vineyard Road.

• Fred DeLucchi being Novato’s speed cop who ticketed many speeders going through town.

• Bruno Schultz waving his cane and calling out “You Hella Ba Devil!” to kids he thought were misbehaving.

• Old Novato families with the names: Torassa, Meyers, Silva, Valim, McPherson, Gnos, Manzoni, Carlisle, Baccaglio, Nave, D’Ambrogio, Simmons and Rayburn.

• The biggest change in Novato today is that are so many more people.

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Please mail checks to **Novato Historical Guild, 75 Rowland Way, Suite 200, Novato, CA 94945.**

Yes, I want to join the Novato Historical Guild and help preserve Novato history!  new  renewal

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## Novato Underground: Mining in Novato

By John A. Trumbull

### *Is there gold in them there hills?*

To anyone arriving in Novato in the past quarter century there doesn't appear to be much subterranean activity. Certainly the idea of seeking one's fortune by exporting our soil seems foreign to us. However, at various times in the past our residents felt differently.

Our earliest records in the valley relate to the late 1800's. Easterners began invading the Spanish land grants about 1850, and for the most part these new comers (and the residents they encountered) were attracted by the benign climate and fertile land. However, to the East in the Sierra Nevada mountains the attraction was gold, and San Francisco was a major port of entry for the hard rock miners. In 1863 something in Marin caught the attention – and imagination – of the gold seekers. Within two days (June 19, and June 20, 1863) no less than eight mining claims were recorded for the Novato area. [Marin County Records for 1863 pages 531 through 538]

The common denominator for these filings seems to be one G. F. Van Hollen, [1] who is listed as the "discoverer" of four of the veins and who owned shares in three others. It is interesting that Peter Smith (who partnered with our first postmaster, Henry Jones, in both a Deer Island cattle operation and in "Our House," Novato's earliest retail store and bar) was a player in this mining bubble. He was credited as the discoverer of the "Smith ledge" on Deer Island which was claimed by the *Smith Gold and Silver Mining Company's* 16 shareholders. Smith was one of the 16 shareholders in the *Black Canyon Silver and Copper Mining Company*, wherever in Novato township that was located. (Some notices do not specify the geographic location, they only refer to the location of the claim as being in the Novato Township, Marin County.) Smith's partner Henry Jones also partici-

pated in the Black Canyon venture as did J. G. Haven, another well known local. Smith held shares in the *Indian Valley Silver and Copper Mining Company*, as did one "Thomas Sweezer" and one "William Atherton" among 11 others. (We don't know whether these men were connected to the Novato pioneer families.) Finally Smith joined Van Hollen, Adolphus Scown and four others in the *Peacock Silver and Copper Company's* claim somewhere in the Novato township. Mr. Scown also invested in the *Schweisau Gold and Silver Mining Company*, along with 16 others to exploit a ledge of quartz discovered on Deer Island by Ernest Schweisau. The *Novato Gold and Silver Mining Company* only had six investors for their Deer Island vein, including Schweisau and Joseph Angolloni. [2] Mr. Schweisau did not participate in the *Deer Island Gold and Silver Mining Company*, but he was the person responsible for the recordation of these last three notices. The seventh company was the *Blue Ledge Gold and Silver Mining Company*, owned by 13 shareholders including V. D. Doub, John Sweetzer and Andrew Sweetzer, whose claim location is not geographically identified. The *Novato Gold and Silver Mining Company* had 5 shareholders including Schweisau and Joseph Angelloni.

The Marin County Journal of June 27, 1863, in its "Local and Miscellaneous" column on page 3 lists 15 mining claim recordations under this comment: "STILL THEY COME ! – The following mining claims have been recorded since our last issue:" In addition to the above companies the Journal lists the *Hog-eye* in which Peter Smith was an investor; the *Crosby* in which John Sweetzer and J. G. Haven held shares; the *Von* in which A. Sweetzer and A. Scown held shares and the *Store Oak* all of which were in the Novato area. These last three

claims were also part of Van Hollen's mining empire.

Novato was not the only area of speculation. Claims were being filed in Sausalito, in Bolinas, in San Rafael and on Mt. Tamalpais as well. Witness the optimism expressed by the Journal on May 30, 1863:

OUR MINES – The “San Rafael Gold and Silver Mining Company” have [sic] commenced work on their claim. During the past week they have shipped five tuns [sic] of rock to San Francisco to be crushed and worked as a further test of its quality. If this shipment proves as rich as that heretofore worked, the company will proceed immediately to the erection of the necessary machinery for crushing the rock on the ground. The prospects heretofore obtained by this company from their rock were from \$12 to \$17 ½ to the tun, [sic] in fine gold, worth \$21 to the ounce.

“Can any good come out of Nazareth?” was once said in derision of an obscure and unpretentious district in the land of Judea; yet its name became famed, and connected with the most important event in the history of our race. May not the capital of our obscure and unpretending little county yet become famed among her gorgeously gold and silver bespangled sister counties who flout their wealth and fame to the four corners of the earth.

A Journal follow up on August 1, 1863, reads:

SAN RAFAEL MINES – What has the San Rafael mine come to? We have heard no results of the labor that has been expended upon them, further than that five or six tunnels were being pushed into Tamalpais, one of which had reached the ledge and the rock was satisfactory. If they are as rich as all the specimens we have seen indicated, and one-tenth so much so as the San Francisco assayers made them to be they are certainly worthy [sic] the attentions of miners and capitalists. We would be glad to have some report of those who are working their claims.

Enthusiasm must have waned, however, because on November 7, 1863, the Journal reported on page 3:

OUR MINES – Some few months ago quite an excitement was manifested in our midst by the astounding intelligence that gold, silver and copper rock had been found in the hills adjacent to San Rafael. Claims were taken up and recorded, and for a short time the Recorder done [sic] a “land office business” in that line. But little work was done on the

claims taken up, and with unsatisfactory results. The whole matter, in our opinion, was the scheme of sharpers, which has resulted in a “grand fizzle.” That mineral does exist in our county, there is no question, but not in sufficient quantities to pay for the expense of obtaining it.

On February 6, 1864, notice was printed in the Journal that the Stock of the Cassiopeia Mining Company would be sold at auction on March 10 to pay assessments due thereon. Val Doub and J. Angelloni [2] are two of the named shareholders.

The interest was not over entirely, however. On June 11, 1864, the Journal reported:

COPPER MINES - We hear encouraging reports from the Bolinas and Novato mines. At the former place two companies are pushing forward their tunnels with vigor, and are sanguine of success. At Novato the company are [sic] sinking a shaft, and we are informed their prospects are highly flattering.

[Editor's note: If any of our readers can locate this shaft for the Guild's records, we would be both interested and grateful for your assistance.]

On July 2, 1864 the Journal confirmed Major Hughes was still hopeful:

SAN RAFAEL GOLD AND SILVER MINING COMPANY – On Tuesday last Major Hughes shipped a ton of rock, taken from the tunnel of the above named Company, to San Francisco, for the purpose of testing the value thereof. As yet no returns have been made.

There is evidence of continued tunnel mining in Nicasio in articles appearing in the Journal on March 28, October 31 and November 28 of 1878, and February 27, 1879, but interest in Novato's resources seems to have subsided.

#### The streets of San Francisco

This is not the end of the story, however. According to data developed by Al Pariani and Bill Palmer in an article published by the Guild in 1994 based on information from the California Journal of Mines and Geology, Mt. Burdell was the source of hundreds of thousands of hand shaped andesite paving blocks. Since paving blocks were often used for ballast on sailing ships, when next you admire a cobblestone street in Europe, check to see if there is a country of origin stamp crediting Novato as the source of the materials. Some of the retaining walls and foundations in San Francisco prior to the 1907 earthquake had their origin on Mt. Burdell. The blocks were brought down the mountain on the east side by horse drawn sleds and wagons to about where the Novato Motel is today. (The wagons had a heavy pole inserted through the rear wheels to prevent

their rotation and then they followed a zig-zag route down to retain control.) From there they were floated down Basalt Creek to Black John Slough for transfer to the schooners that plied the Petaluma River. The south side operation lowered the blocks by means of a funicular type railroad (gravity) to a point near the present Partridge Knolls area where they were loaded on wagons for the trip to the loading dock on Novato Creek that connected to San Pablo Bay.

Richard E. (Bud) Rush Jr, explains that the advantage of this mountain for cobble stone production lay in the fact that the hard blue rock was found in layers separated by water intruded clay material, rather like a stack of Oreos cookies. The layers could be peeled apart, washed clean and broken into cobble stones for transportation as above noted. The Bali Hai Motel complex is built on years of this rinse residue. Evidences of this quarrying operation are still visible to the energetic who walk the road to the microwave towers at the summit.

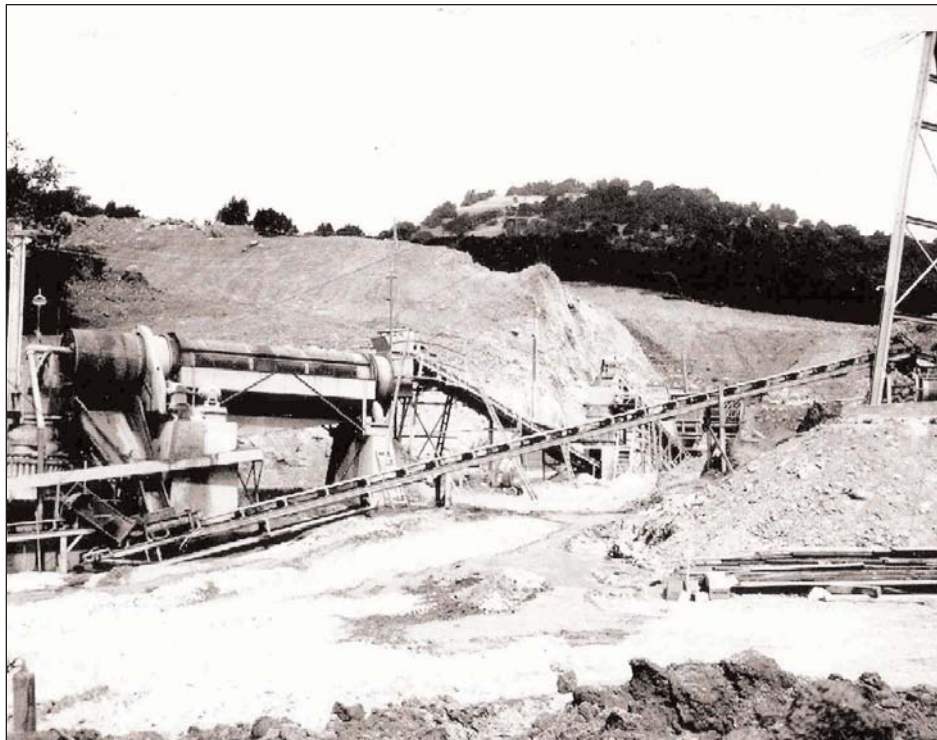
There were at least three other sources of paving blocks. The F.C. DeLong Quarry was on the land of the Novato Rancho, although its precise position was not revealed in the article. It was noted as being in operation as late as 1894. A certain John Taylor had a quarry which was employing from eight to ten men in April 1894, and it was near Novato. The Gallagher Quarry, three miles north of Novato reportedly produced 125,000 paving blocks during 1895, which was the last year in which this product was recorded.

#### The hole that Buck bought

In the 1950s, pursuant to a grandfathered permit, a San Rafael man was operating a quarry on Mt. Burdell where the Buck Institute now sits. In 1956, Richard E. Rush Sr. saw the potential of the quarry for supplying material for the Novato freeway bypass and its extension through the "Novato Narrows" to Petaluma. Rush had extensive experience providing base rock and asphalt

quarry material for construction projects in Washington state and throughout California. He had operated the crushing plant in Orinda used for the highway 80 extension from the Bay Bridge to Richmond, a commercial quarry at Rockaway Beach in Pacifica, a plant in Merced for runway renovation of Castle AFB, one in Riverside for the runway renovation of March AFB, and one in Marysville for the runway renovation at Beale AFB. Rush brought his family and several families of men who had moved with him to these various jobs to Novato, and with a partner formed the Marin Rock and Asphalt Company which purchased and expanded the marginally

economic Burdell operation. Under the management of Rush, extensive modern equipment was installed to produce crushed rock of all sizes and uses: drain rock, aggregate for concrete and asphalt, and roadway base rock. Production of base rock was increased from about 500 tons per day to a rate of between 2000 and 4000 tons per day, and asphalt production was increased from around 200 tons per day to 1000 or more tons per day.



*A view of the Burdell Quarry in the 1950's*

The Burdell Quarry became a significant source of construction aggregates for the road building industry. In 1960, the operation was sold to the Basalt Rock Company Inc. who presided over the gradual termination of activities there by 1964. It is ironic that the freeway projects for which Rush acquired the quarry were not even begun by the time the quarry was closed or even by the time of his death in 1965. In fact the Novato Narrows widening has not started as of the time of the writing of this article.

Bud Rush relates the story of a local tragedy that occurred during the most active period of the Marin Rock and Asphalt era at the quarry. One of the families that had traveled with the Rush family from project to project as friends and coworkers was the Culwell family, and they moved to Novato to work with Mr. Rush. Mike Culwell and "Bud" Rush were best friends. In August 1957 Bud was a sophomore and member of the first

class at Novato High School, Mike was a freshman and member of the Novato High football team. Both boys worked at the quarry part time. To make asphalt a series of metal hoppers or boxes containing various sizes of rock and the washed sand were lined up over a long conveyor belt. As the belt proceeded to the plant where the oil was added, the exit doors of the various hoppers were adjusted to provide the desired combination of ingredients. Since the sand had been washed prior to going into the hopper, there was a tendency for it to clump or stick to sides of the hopper bin. One of the jobs the boys performed was to stand at the top of the sand hopper with 20 foot long poles, and poke the damp sand to keep it from clumping on the sides of the feed funnel or from forming a block in the exit at the bottom of the funnel. In August 1957, while doing this job without using the restraining harness, Mike lost his balance and fell into the hopper. The downward sliding action of the damp sand sucked him into the pile at the bottom of the funnel, and he died of suffocation. This loss hit Novato hard because it was the first high school death here, and for the Rush family it was the first fatality in over 30 years of quarrying. This tragic loss was compounded when the following year Mike's father died by being crushed in a rollover accident while running a skip loader at the quarry. Rush says those were the only two fatalities during the thirty years his father managed quarrying operations.

Bud's brother-in-law, Len Genetin of Novato, was the last heavy equipment operator at the quarry when it was finally closed.

Other sources of construction aggregate and fill material from Novato during the go-go days of the 1950's and 60's were from the Palmer gravel pit on Novato Creek and the Pozzi Pit on San Antonio Creek. The Black Point Aggregates company worked a site in Black Point in the 1950's, and on the west side of Mt. Burdell there was a quarry that operated until the 1990's.

#### The mine at the top of the hill

There is one more mining operation of which I have some information that will be of interest to those of you who live in the vicinity of Hayes Street and Monroe Court. The flattened hilltop between Novato High school and Rancho School was during World War II (1942 – 45) the Knutte manganese mine, owned and operated by L.R. Knutte, husband to the late Teresa Knutte and father of Esther Knutte Berthinier. It was not a tunneling operation, but rather an "open pit" mine on what was then called Red Hill. The ore was taken to Tracy to be smelted.

[1] The name in the Marin County Journal is "Geo. Van Holland".

[2] This name may be "Angellotti"



*Another view of the Burdell Quarry in the 1950's*