

# The Novato Historian

The Quarterly Publication of the Novato Historical Guild, the Novato History Museum, and the Hamilton Field History Museum



## Preserving Novato's History News Section

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January - March 2016

The Novato Historian

Volume 40, Number 1

## The History of West Marin and Holiday Cheer



Author Dewey Livingston



Speaker Dewey Livingston at the General Membership Meeting on December 12th at Novato City Hall. Livingston, who has spent decades researching West Marin's past, recently finished more than 20 interviews with members of five of West Marin's oldest ranching families -- the Corda, Dolcini, Grossi, McDonald and Mclsaac families -- for a series of oral histories.

### Guild recognizes Bill Almeida for his work on The Novato Historian



Bill Almeida receiving a Certificate of Appreciation and a box of See's candy from Guild President Susan Magnone, in honor of his eighteen years of writing the "Novato -50 years Ago" column for the Historian.

### Novato Citizen of the Year also a volunteer at the Hamilton Field History Museum

Alan Dunham was named the Novato Citizen of the Year for 2015 at the annual Novato birthday party "Paint the Town Red" on January 22nd.

Alan moved to Novato in 1973 and has been active in the community ever since. His contributions to the local community and the world are exemplified in the many projects he spearheaded through Rotary such as leading a group of Rotary volunteers to build a patio at the Hamilton Military Museum.

Alan is currently a docent at the Hamilton Field History Museum. Alan is seen here getting the key to the city from another Historical Guild volunteer and docent, Pat Eklund, the mayor of Novato.



Alan Dunham, 2015 Novato Citizen of the Year, with Mayor Pat Eklund.

**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.*

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Secretary	Kathryn Hansen
Treasurer	Kathryn Hansen

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Bill Damon	Lonnie Karste
Ray Dwelly	Edna Manzoni

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Bill Almeida

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**Deadline for the June issue is May 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, P.O. Box 1296, Novato, CA 94948.*



**President's Corner**

**Susan Magnone**

**President, Novato Historical Guild**

In 1976, a small group of Novato citizens had a goal of preserving the history of their community and the surrounding area. They formed the Novato Historical Guild. This year, 2016, is the Fortieth Anniversary of the Novato Historical Guild. We've come a long way! Now we have over 350 members who contribute over 6,000 volunteer hours to operate the two City museums. It's time to celebrate all that has been accomplished over those years.

We have something else to celebrate. The Novato Historical Guild has received a very impressive honor, the Community Service Award from the Recreation, Culture and Community Services Commission of Novato. This award is given to "acknowledge a commitment to strengthening community identity and unity." In a letter to the Guild, the Commission stated, "The Novato Historical Guild is being recognized for their dedication and service to the community in preserving local history and partnering with the City to manage and operate our two City Museums through a volunteer workforce."

The award recognizes the work of the Guild over the past forty years, all the

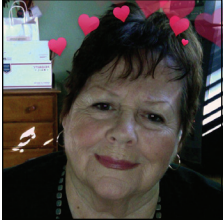
volunteers, all the board members and officers, and all the members who pay their dues every year have contributed to this award. What I value the most about the award is that it not only recognizes what the Guild has done but also the way it was accomplished, through Partnership with the City. Together, the City and the Guild have strengthened our community identity and unity.

Something else to celebrate, inserted in this issue of the *Historian* is the Guild's Annual Report for 2015 showing the number of museum visitors and guild support. The numbers in all areas are very impressive. The most exciting change in 2015 was the increase in third grade students. The word about visiting the museum and the great experience our docents provide has spread among the third grade teachers. Cindy Motsinger has been the coordinator of that program for the past nine years. This year, she passed the binder to Laurie O'Mara, who will continue the great job. All of the Third Grade Docents can be very proud of the community identity they have provided for the students.

Yes, we do have much to celebrate this year..



**Bob and Edna Manzoni working at the Guild's Booth at the 2015 Holiday Crafts Faire held at the Margaret Todd Senior Center.**



# Novato-50 Years Ago

## (January, February, and March 1966)

by Yvette Borloz Jackson

*After much begging & crying---from me, I told Bill Almeida that I would take over the "50 Years Ago" section of The Novato Historian. Bill has done such a stellar job over the last 18 years that I feel I can't even get close to what he accomplished, but I'll give it my best. I gleaned most of my information from the "Novato Advance" and the national history I "googled". This is my inaugural issue so I hope that you will enjoy it.*

- 36th President: Lyndon Baines Johnson
- Vice President Hubert Humphrey
- California Governor: Edmund G. (Pat) Brown
- Novato Mayor: Robert Carrow
- Judy Fonseca First Baby in 1966. Judy Fonseca arrived at Novato General Hospital On 01/01/1966 at 2:30 a.m. to apparently make her the winner of the "New Baby Contest" sponsored by the Novato Advance. The seven pound 14 ounce daughter of Mary and Frank Fonseca of Hayden Avenue is the fifth child for the parents who have lived in Novato for the past six years.
- When compared with the rest of the county, North Marin seems to have emerged with relatively few scars from the storm that raged yesterday and through the night. The fire department reports that 2.22 inches of rain landed on the city between 8 a.m. yesterday and 9 a.m. today. Hamilton Air Force Base reported 3.17 inches of rain during the 24-hour period ending at 4 a.m. today and added that winds of 37 miles an hour hit the Base throughout yesterday and today. (01/05/1966)
- The newest in cosmetics features the frosted look. This will add a glimmer of sheen to pale lips. Cheekbones will be highlighted with makeup and there will be a face gloss that will be applied after makeup. There will be a glow to the eyelids as well. Eyes, at least for the woman who follows fashion dictates to the letter, will be big dark blobs of multi-layered false eyelashes with eyebrows scarcely visible.
- Roger Wilco (Novak Square—Ignacio) offered a 2lb can of Folgers coffee for \$1.09 and 2lbs of bananas for \$0.29.
- Supervisor William A. Gness yesterday placed the name of Joseph W. Wright of Novato in nomination for one of two "at-large" positions on the county airport commission, which has been in the process of formation for the last four months.
- Frank Manzoni will be installed as 1966 president at the Novato Volunteer Fireman's Association annual dinner and dance this Saturday night, January 8. Close to 100 volunteers and friends are expected to attend the event at "Nero's" Nave Lanes. Robert Robertson will be installed as vice-president, Wilfred Lieb as secretary, George Gness as treasurer, Capt. George Hale as property manager and Leo Slowdownick as sergeant-at-arms.
- A girl on December 31 to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Edwards of Nancy Drive at Novato General Hospital.
- Three Novato youths have enlisted in the U.S. Navy. They are William G. Dougherty 20, son of Mr. & Mrs. William A. Dougherty; Michael Halkovich, 19, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Halkovich; and Michael T. Hook, 19, son of Lilah L. Hook. Dougherty and Halkovich, both graduates of Novato High School, enlisted under the Navy's "Buddy System" for a period of four years. Hook, also a graduate of Novato High School, enlisted for a period of three years. For the next eight weeks they will be in recruit training at the U.S Naval Training Center in San Diego.
- Dr. Wayne Leigh Campbell, a general practitioner will begin practice in Suite 14 at the Indian Valley Medical Center, 1615 Hill Rd., next Monday. Dr. Campbell 36, is a graduate of the University of Minnesota. He did his internship work at St. Luke's Hospital in Duluth and served with the Public Health Service at Los Angeles for several years. Dr. Campbell and his wife Marie reside in Novato with their four children, Robin 5, Angela 4, Wayne Jr. 3, and Michelle 20 months.
- The organizational phase for a Boys Club in Novato is commencing under the leadership of Joe Bonomolo owner of B&B Richfield Service on Diablo Ave.

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# 50 Years Ago

Continued from Page N-3

- Bonomolo has been contacted by 15 citizens who range from Novato's mayor to contractors to members of various churches that want to lay the foundation.
- Lee Bros. Value World had fryers for \$0.29 lb, and Campbell's Tomato Soup for \$0.10. (located on 7th St).
  - Ed Salmina, sports reporter for the Novato Advance for the past four years is being drafted by the U.S. Army. Salmina is a graduate from Novato High School and attended the College of Marin.
  - Apparently Bob Hachmyer isn't superstitious. Monday (2/7), for the second time in less than two years, he shot a hole in one on the 145-yard 13th hole at the Indian Valley Golf Club. On November 15, 1964 he fired an ace on the same hole with an eight iron. Monday it was an eight iron again.
  - Young Bros. (located at Hwy 101 at Olive) had a 21" color T.V. for \$309.95 and a 12 cubic ft. fully automatic Refrigerator-Freezer for \$168.
  - Wong- A boy on February 7 to Mr. & Mrs. Sui Wong, Pico Vista, at Novato General Hospital.
  - Granlee- A girl on January 25 to Mr. & Mrs. John Granlee of Orange Ave. at Novato General Hospital.
  - The engagement of their daughter Judith Ann McGinnis to Rene' Maurice Borloz of Novato has been announced by Mr. and Mrs. Richard McGinnis of Kansas City, Mo. Rene' is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Rene Borloz. Both are graduates of Novato High School. A late summer wedding is planned by the couple.
  - Western California Telephone Co. this week announced a new automobile telephone service for its customers called "improved mobile telephone service". It will see dial telephones installed in cars to update the present manually operated models that require calls to be placed by voice through a switchboard operator.
  - Marsha Baccaglio, 17, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Baccaglio is among the latest entrants in the annual dairy princess contests, prelude to the California Dairy Princess Coronation-pageant June 30 in Hollywood. Marsha is a senior at Novato High School and plans to attend the University of California at Davis.
  - An important discovery of Indian artifacts was found on the Gus Ravetz property at the base of a hill on Olive Avenue near the railroad tracks. The "excavated area was not what is commonly known as an Indian burial ground- it was a "village site" says John McBeath a math and anthropology teacher at Novato High School.
  - McGraw-Hill Book Company begins operations at its new headquarters located at 8171 Redwood Blvd. Architects of the project are John Savage Bolles & Associates.
  - Jolly Markets (Tresch Triangle) offered fresh crabs for \$0.39 per lb & grapefruit going for 8 lbs for \$0.49.
  - DINE OUT: Restaurants of the week. "Nero's Restaurant" Nave Lanes - Hwy 101, "Cloud 5" 1005 First St., "Spiro's Red Vest" Nave Shopping Center, "Sizzler" 980 Diablo Avenue.
  - Novato City Council candidates were: Wayne Hathaway, M.E. Babe Silva, Betty Machado, Harley McAskill, Helen Greving and Joseph Bonomolo. Results in the next issue.
- I found so many interesting articles that this first attempt took me some time. There were several articles about "low attendance" or people unable to participate in an event because of the "flu", I guess the Vaccine was not readily used.*
- Articles about the Vietnam war, taxes, improving roads, stores opening --- and closing. I found so many parallels to today that it seems that the "more it goes around the more it stays the same." I hope you enjoy this first try.*
- Yvette Borloz Jackson

# Novato Memories

by Jim McNern



## Mary Donohue Harris

*Mary Donohue Harris is the youngest daughter of the late Don Donohue, who was the owner of the Novato Theater. After graduating as an eighth grader from Hill School in 1960, Mary attended Marin Catholic High School and then Dominican University where she obtained her teaching credential. She taught in various Novato elementary schools for many years before her retirement. Mary shares her Novato memories in this March edition of the Novato Historian.*

My family moved from San Francisco to Novato in the fall of 1951. My dad, Don Donohue, owned the Novato Theater and my parents decided that the time had come to finally move the family. I remember the long drive up to Novato to check on the progress of our future home as it was being built on Hayden Drive. The lot was beside what was at that time Maison Marin, now the location of the Hilltop Restaurant. Our only neighbors were up the hill, the Heises and their daughter, Beatrice and Dr. and Mrs. Weseman and their daughter, Fern. The Wesemans had a swimming pool, perhaps the only swimming pool in town! That was a big deal. Later on Charlie Smith (partner in the Smith and Sjoblom Garage) and his family (wife Lorna and daughters, Joan and Susan) and George Hale, a Novato fireman (wife and children, Chick, Larry, Charlene and their grandmother, Ma White), built on the lots across from our home.

Midway up the hill on Hayden Drive was a reservoir. I'm not certain as to how many homes it served, but dur-

ing the very hot summer weather my mother would send my sisters, Christine and Leslie, and me up the hill to check the "flag." If the flag mounted at the top of the well was up, it meant that plenty of water was available and all of the residents on the hill could relax. If however the flag was down, that meant the water level was very low and it was our clue to fill every pot in the house with water including the bathtub just in case we ran out!

I started kindergarten at Trevitt Hall (the recreation room attached to the Presbyterian Church) located on DeLong Avenue. Having no nursery school experience before entering kindergarten (who did at that time?), I was very intimidated starting school. I remember running back home several times (and home was far away for a five year old) only to be taken back by my dad. At first he was quite sympathetic, but eventually he ran out of patience and told me in no uncertain terms that I was to go back into that classroom, sit down, pay attention, do as I was told, and not come home until school was over.

When I entered first grade, I attended Grant School on Grant Avenue directly across from the Novato Theater. My dad was not only the owner of the theater but the janitor as well. He cleaned every morning after the previous night's movie. He would wait for me to finish my day at school, cross Grant

Avenue, and meet him to help with the daily cleanup. My job was to crawl under the seats (I was a rather small six year old) and push out all the discarded popcorn boxes left on the floor. They were very difficult for him to reach with a wide, bulky broom. I remember having to go in to all sorts of contortions to reach some of those boxes!

My sisters and I all worked in var-



Mary Donohue with Santa Claus and friend

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# Novato Memories

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ious jobs at the theater while growing up. I started with the popcorn box endeavor, moved up to selling candy at the concession stand (once I was old enough to count money and make change), worked as an usherette, and finally had the plum job of working in the box office selling tickets to the movies being shown. My sisters and I worked all these positions in elementary school through high school and for me, college too!

One thing all three of us remember is working the Sunday matinees during the summer. Between the movie starting times things would get a little slow. We would sit in the box office which faced west - looking toward Redwood Blvd. (what was then Highway 101), and out of sheer boredom count red convertibles that might pass by on the way home from vacationing at the Russian River!



New owners of the Novato Theatre seem happy about taking over from Donald F. Donohue, right, who has operated the theatre for the past 22 years. The new buyers, known as B and C Enterprises, are Bernard "Barry" Carroll and Mrs. Peg Rogo. They've indicated they anticipate no changes in the policies established by Donohue who will retain his ownership of the Ignacia and Tiburon Theatres.

Selling tickets in those days was not an easy task. There were adult, junior, and child ticket prices and they were all over the place ending in odd amounts. A ticket wasn't an even dollar, oh no, it was perhaps 85 cents for an adult ticket, 45 cents for a junior, and 25 cents for a child. The prices were constantly changing over the years. When a family came up to the box office and ordered several of these tickets, all varying amounts, it really tested our ability to add it all up on the spot! No computers to tell you the total amount nor the amount of change due, let alone help in counting it back out to the customer, somewhat of a lost art!

I will forever remember the swirled patterned carpeting in the theater's lobby and stairs leading into the auditorium and the large mirror in the ladies' room. That room was packed during intermission between the double features on Friday and Saturday nights as all the teenage girls in town crammed their way to that mirror in order to check their makeup.

Saturday morning was always a "kiddy matinee." The yearly Christmas kiddy matinee was sponsored by the Novato Fire Department and free to all children in Novato. It was a big deal: Santa Claus was there and several prizes were raffled off including the grand prize of a bicycle! Each child was given a raffle ticket as they entered the theater. I could never, ever take a ticket because my dad was always worried about, "What if she wins?" It would look awful to the entire community if the theater owner's daughter won the big prize. Well, when I was about eight years old, I begged my dad to, for once, let me take a ticket. My sister, Leslie, stood up for me telling my dad that there were two hundred kids attending the matinee and there was no way I would win. As Santa Claus pulled out the winning ticket from the fishbowl hold-

ing all the tickets, he called out the number. My sister pushed my arm and said, "Mary, that's you!" She pushed me in to the aisle to go up to the stage and show my winning ticket. I couldn't tell whether my dad was mortified that I had actually won the bicycle or rather terrified that he would have to tell my mom what had happened. Needless to say, she was less than pleased. I was immediately perched up on that bicycle with Santa by my side so that the *Novato Advance* could take a picture!

Frequently these Saturday morning kiddy matinees were an all musical cartoon matinee which were so much fun for the kids! I fondly remember the magic of that bouncing white ball highlighting the musical lyrics on the screen enabling the children to chime in with the songs. My dad would walk down the aisle waving his arm like a symphony conductor encouraging the children to sing along. It always embarrassed me a little when he did this, but thinking back now I find it so endearing. He loved the young kids and wanted to make sure they were having a good time!

Things didn't always run smoothly for us. I remember the time when the movie distributor had made a mistake booking a movie. The film was scheduled to run both at the Novato Theater and the Tiburon Playhouse (both theaters owned by my dad) on the same weekend but only one copy of the film was provided. My sisters had to drive the multiple reels down to Tiburon, back and forth reel by reel relay-style, so the movie could be shown at both theaters! What a fiasco!

Occasionally we discovered seats which had been cut up with a razor blade after a Friday or Saturday night movie. Somehow my dad usually knew who the culprits were (I was

## Novato Memories

Continued from Page N-6

never able to figure out just how). His "sentence" was to have them work out what was owed to repair the seats by cleaning up the theater whether it be sweeping, polishing floors, mirrors, you name it. Most parents were totally supportive of this "sentence" while others not so much. In other words, "Not my kid!"

Novato was a great little town in which to grow up and looking back, I appreciate it more and more. I so enjoy the "Novato Memories" column in *The Novato Historian*. It brings back special times for me. I hope my contribution does the same for others who grew up in Novato way back then and gives new residents a peek back at the town which they now call home.



Don Donahue, owner of the Novato Theater for 22 years, relaxing at home.

## In Memoriam

Norma Jean Bellucci

### The Guild Extends Sympathy to

The Bellucci family on the loss of Norma Jean Bellucci.

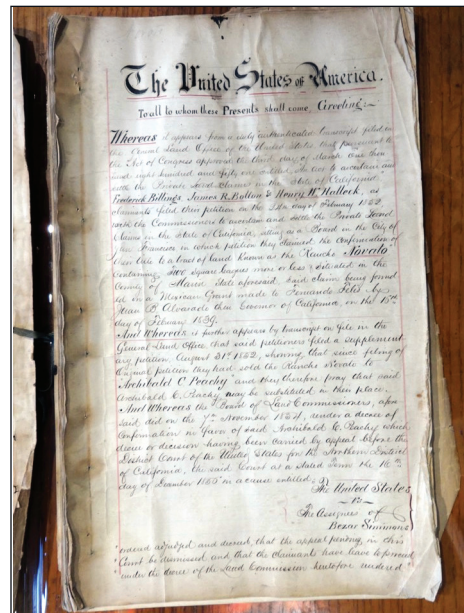
### MEMORIAL PLAQUE GIFTS

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. Plaques cost \$250 per person named.

### 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.

## Original Land Grant for Rancho Novato found at history museum



An eighteen page document signed by U.S. President Andrew Johnson was discovered in the archives. In 1866 the courts ruled that the Rancho Novato Land Grant was valid.

A discovery was made by docents at the downtown museum recently. Tucked away in a box, on a back shelf, was a 20 page document, hand written in cursive. It turned out to be the Land Grant Patent for Rancho Novato, probably one of the most important documents in Novato history.

Shortly after California became a state, the United States decided to challenge the Spanish and Mexican Land Grants by forming a commission to examine each one. Most cases were tied up in Court for many years and Rancho de Novato was no exception. However, it was finally confirmed in 1866. What the docents found is the document, signed by then President Andrew Johnson, which gave final approval to the original Land Grant.

Drop by the Novato History Museum or the Hamilton Field History Museum and see what other treasures we have!

## Contact Us

### Hamilton Field History Museum

Manager: Ray Dwelly  
Museum phone: 415-382-8614  
Email: [Hamilton\\_museum@att.net](mailto:Hamilton_museum@att.net)  
<https://www.facebook.com/Hamilton-FieldHistoryMuseum/>

### Novato History Museum

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Museum phone: 415-897-4320  
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<https://www.facebook.com/NovatoHistoryMuseum/>

### Novato Historical Guild

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Novato, CA 94948  
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Web Site: <http://www.novatohistory.org>

# Novato Historical Guild Board Highlights

by Kathryn Hansen

## November 2015

### New Business

*City Winter Event Dec. 13th* – Susan Magnone – Novato City is planning on a family event from 11AM-3PM with games and will close off the street.

### Old Business:

*Volunteer Appreciation* – Tom Keena – November 7th *Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon* was a success. All who attended were impressed with the list of duties that the volunteers perform, the interesting maps displayed, the delicious buffet and the lovely decorations.

*Open on Fridays* – Susan Magnone – there was a discussion of the museums being open on Friday instead of Wednesday in order to be on the same schedule as most of the other Novato Museums. It was decided to continue to stay open on Wednesdays because most visitors now come on Wednesday. Also it is more difficult to get docents for Friday.

*Oral Histories* – Susan Magnone – All of the oral histories have now been converted to CD/DVD. An alphabetized list of the over 100 oral histories was provided. The next step is to be able to provide an opportunity to listen to them or copy upon request.

### Committee Reports & Updates

*Public Outreach* – Jim Crumpler– 1) provided a copy of a new folded/color brochure that highlights the six Novato museums including a map. This is part of a plan to get people from out of town to visit Novato. 2) The Novato Museum Association has a website w/links to each museum. 3) The Soroptomists are putting together a video on each museum that will be shown on local TV. 4) QR Code.

*Hamilton Museum* –Ray Dwelly – 1) Saturday the Northern California Council of Girl Scouts had an event and seventy seven scouts and leaders visited. 2) The Coast Guard exhibit is in progress and they are waiting for a hazmat uniform.

*Downtown Museum* – Susan Magnone & Edna Manzoni – 1) Halloween day the museum got 97 visitors. The docents used the Druid's entry way to hand out tickets to the museum. 2) Wednesday night the museum will host a tour for the AAUW who are interested in antiques.

*Membership* – Edna Manzoni– as of 11/8/15 - 380 current paid members, 2 new business members one individual and two life memberships. One member passed away.

## December 2015

### New Business

*December Membership Meeting* – Susan Magnone – December 12th from 10AM to noon at the Novato City Hall. The business meeting will be the election of Guild Board members and the approval of the budget for 2016. The presentation will be by Dewey Livingston, an expert on the history of West Marin. Sheila requested baked goods for the event.

### Old Business:

No old business was discussed at this time.

### Committee Reports & Updates

*Public Outreach* – Jim Crumpler– Completed a video of each museum.

*Hamilton Museum* –Ray Dwelly – has given membership applications to all docents who are not members. Only one has been returned completed.

*Downtown Museum* – Susan Magnone– continued discussion on impact of parking places blocks and grading equipment in the area.

*Membership* – Edna Manzoni– as of 12/8/15 the are 382 paid members. 2016 Membership drive will be mailed in January.

*Museum Stores* – Pat Johnstone – the totals for both museum sales, donations and the proceeds from the Holiday Craft Faire were reported. There are plans for a new T Shirt with a B-17E on it.

## January 2016

### Unfinished Business:

*Report to Membership* – there was a discussion regarding what information would be useful in the newsletter – 2015 accomplishments and sources/uses of funds.

*Bill Almeida* – was unable to attend the General Meeting to receive recognition for his 18 years editing the "Historian". Susan presented him with a plaque and See's candy. Bill said he enjoyed reading the old issues of the *Novato Advance*.

### New Business:

*2016 Committees* – Susan Magnone – a list of Committees and Chairmen was distributed and discussed.

*Conflict of Interest* – Susan Magnone – policy and form to sign will be e-mailed to the Board. Action Item: Board to read, sign and date the form.

*Marin County Fair* – Bill Damon – this will be the 75th anniversary of the Marin County Fair. The first few years Novato was the location of the Fair. Bill is gathering pictures for a display at the 2016 Fair. He will talk with Bill Almeida and Jim McNern regarding the history. More information to follow.

### Committee Reports & Updates

*Public Outreach* – Jim Crumpler– Video of each museum will be shown on NPAT (local TV station). More videos are planned to show each museum in depth.

*Hamilton Museum* –Ray Dwelly – 2015 the Hamilton Museum had 2,460 visitors, 1,415 docent hours and 1,469 non-docent volunteer hours. Friday February 15th at 7PM will be the first of six fundraisers consisting of travel films.

*Downtown Museum* – Susan Magnone– history students have been coming in to do research. The construction next door is an interesting distraction...roof and wall off, only beams remain.

*Membership* – Edna Manzoni– Report on Guild membership totals.

*Museum Stores* - Pat Johnstone – Report on museum store sales.



## New Novato Historical Guild Board Members



Meet our newly elected Board members (pictured above) from left to right: Judi Brady, Lonnie Karste and Ray Dwelly..

### Judi Brady

Judi and her husband Tom moved to Novato from the City in 1975 looking for sunshine. They found much more. Novato was a welcoming community with strong schools, engaging sports programs and neighbors who are still their close friends after 30 years. Judi enjoyed volunteering in art docent programs, religious education and PTA when the kids were young. In the 1980s she earned her Masters degree in Art from SFSU and worked at California College of the Arts for many years. A passion for genealogy now leads her to research Novato's pioneer families. As a docent at the NHM, Judi loves meeting new people and sharing her excitement about Novato's rich history.

### Lonnie Karste

Lonnie Karste was born in Southern California and moved to Novato in 1968 where he attended Novato schools from 6th grade through high school. After graduating from the University of San Francisco, Lonnie worked as a Recreation Supervisor for the City of Novato.

In 1989 he and his family moved to Antioch, California where Lonnie became Director of the City of Antioch's Parks and Recreation Department. Retiring in 2011, he now has a consulting business. In 2014 Lonnie and his wife Kathy Manzoni Karste moved back to the area and live in Sebastopol, California. Having served on many non-profit and community service boards, Lonnie is looking forward to serving as a Novato Historical Guild Board Member.

### Ray Dwelly

Ray Dwelly is returning to the Board after a year off. Ray was born and raised in Marin, moving to Novato in 1941. He attended Grant Ave. School, San Rafael High School, College of Marin and Healds Engineering College.

After graduating, Ray worked five years for the Train Co as a Field Engineer. He then worked for Commercial Air Conditioning for 29 years, retiring as General Superintendent. Ray continued working as a Building Engineer for Fireman's Fund and Cal Fox in SF. Along with these jobs, Ray also had 38 years working with the Novato Fire Department. In 2002 Ray started work on creating the Hamilton Field History Museum and has been in charge of its operation since it opened in May of 2010.

## Welcome New Guild Members

### Novato Historical Guild Membership Report March 2016

#### Individual Memberships:

Marcia Dontje  
Kate Johnston

#### Student Memberships:

#### Family Memberships:

#### Patron Memberships:

Life Memberships:  
Kay & David-Price Jones

#### Please support our Guild Business Members:

Acme Digital and Screen Graphics  
Andrew McAgnon Landscaping  
Bank of Marin  
Burrous Bros. Cleaning  
Goltermann Garden & Country Inn  
– Petaluma  
Indian Valley Golf Club  
Marin Landscape Materials  
Marin Trophies  
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*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.*

# NOVATO'S TREASURES

## The Novato Theater



Earliest photograph of the Novato Theater c. 1946.

Henry Pini originally built his store on this site in 1923 on the north side of Grant at the corner of Machin Avenue covering one hundred feet of frontage on Grant Avenue.

In January 1945, the building was sold to Alfred W. Bowman for \$25,000. Mr. Bowman also purchased the nearby corner property from Mrs. Mary Pini, wife of the pioneer merchant.

During Henry Pini's gradual retirement, he disposed of his various store departments. The meat department was sold to Harry Hale and Mr. Thompson; the clothing department to J.C. Foisey; the hardware & farm implements department to R.A. Thompson-Baxter Hovis & Douglas D. Phillips; the food department to Mrs. Edward Magnus and was known as "Ida's Grocery".

**FIRE** – April 19, 1945 – The entire building containing all various departments was reduced to ashes in one of the County's most disastrous fires.

The fire broke out a few minutes after the 7:00 PM closing. Lack of fire walls within the building turned the interior into a blazing inferno. The east and

west walls of the building were fire walls which saved the balance of the business district from destruction.

Mr. A.W. Bowman, owner of the building was able to secure priorities for rebuilding during war time shortages.

Mr. Bowman awarded the contract to rebuild the building to Litchfield Construction Co. of San Rafael through engineers, H.M. O'Neil Co. of Oakland, at a cost of \$55,000 plus. The frontage line along Grant Ave. included construction of Novato's first theater using 45 feet with a depth of 120 feet and seating capacity between 400 to 660 with final seating to be determined. The store building was built of a similar construction of the Theater having a frontage of 54.6 feet with a depth of 85 feet.

**NEW Theater** – The new theater had 488 seats and was equipped with the latest sound and projection equipment as well as being air conditioned. The theater was leased to Manuel Levin, a San Francisco Theater man and was managed by Guy R. Judd.

On July 13, 1946, Marin's seventh

motion picture house was opened in Novato at 1:45 PM on a Saturday. A capacity crowd attended the gala opening viewing "Doll Face and Abelenne Town" – Sunday & Monday, "The Stork Club & Tokyo Rose". Admission was 50 cents for adults and 14 cents for children.

In 1950 Donald F. Donohue took over operations of the theater and ran it for 22 years. In 1972, he sold his interest to R & C Enterprises, the partnership of Mrs. Pearl Raga and Bernard "Barry" Carroll. Alfred W. Bowman, owner of the real estate, confirmed the transfer of the lease, effective April 1.

Throughout the years, different people would operate the theater. In November 1989, an eight-screen cinema opened at Rowland Plaza. It was just a matter of time before the Novato Theater closed in 1991.

Plans in 1996 called for reopening the theater under the Novato Theater Restoration Committee (NTRC). They raised over \$200,000, but needed \$5 million to rebuild the theater. The city of Novato took over the deed at a cost of \$500,000 from the Bowmans, with the understanding that it would stay as a theater. The NTRC gave up on the project in 2006.

In 2010 the city sold the theater for \$50,000 to Novato Theater Group and they plan to reopen the theater in 2016.



1964 picture of Mary Donohue bringing posters up to date at her dad's Novato Theater.

# Third Grade History Tours

It's another new year! And you know what they say... New Year, New Third Grade Tour Season! Teachers have been sent information regarding the tours. They have scheduled tour dates for their third grade classes which will take place between March and June.

The tours include an exciting walking trip through Old Town Novato where the students are invited to time travel back to the Novato of long ago with the aid of booklets of old photographs that show what Novato looked like back then. They are so excited to learn that Dr. Insomnia used to be the blacksmith's shop, the Flatiron building used to be Mr. Carlisle's first hardware store and how Mr. Hamilton invented Novato's first burglar alarm!

The students will also enjoy an in-depth tour of the museum. The new

train exhibit is bound to be a huge hit! And of course the buggy room is always filled with delightful historical treats!

These tours are led by our fabulous third grade docents. Without these docents, this amazing program would not be possible. New docents are always welcomed and needed. If you are interested in becoming a third grade docent please contact Laurie O'Mara who is taking over as coordinator of the program from Cindy Motsinger. You can reach Laurie by calling 415-892-3716 or 415-246-8168.

Training is available and plenty of help and support is unlimited. We are looking forward to another successful year of third grade tours and would love to have you join us if you are interested in doing so!

## 2016 Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of the month  
**Margaret Todd Senior Center**  
 1560 Hill Road  
 Time: 1:30- 3:30 PM

Jan 12	July (no meeting)
Feb.9	Aug 9
March 8	Sept 13
April 12	Oct 11
May 10	Nov 8
June 14	Dec 13

Guild members are welcome to attend the Board meetings. Please check with the President, Susan Magnone at [NHG@Yahoo.com](mailto:NHG@Yahoo.com) or 415 892-8458, in case a meeting has been changed.

## Unique gifts available at Museum's Gift Shops

by Pat Johnstone

If you want something unique for that visting relative, we have warbird design T-Shirts and Polo Shirts with P-38 Lightning and P-51 Mustang designs on them.

We also have a large selection of note

cards with historic buildings on them, coffee mugs, tote bags, sweatshirts, caps in several colors with "Novato" on them and our books: *Novato Township*, *Novato, Then and Now* and *Hamilton Field History*.

Stop by one of our museums on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 12-4pm and buy that unique gift for someone special.



### Membership Form

Please mail checks to Novato Historical Guild. P.O. Box 1296. Novato. CA 94948.

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

- |   |        |      |                                   |
|---|--------|------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (full time) membership | \$10   | year | Name _____                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual membership          | \$20   | year | Address _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family membership              | \$30   | year | City _____                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron membership              | \$100  | year | State _____ Zip _____             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting membership          | \$200  | year | Phone _____                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life membership, individual    | \$350  | year | Additional donations? _____       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life membership, joint         | \$500  | year | Interested in volunteering? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor                     | \$1000 | year | Email address: _____              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business membership            | \$50   | year |                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate membership           | \$1000 | year |                                   |



Novato Historical Guild  
P.O. Box 1296  
Novato, CA 94948



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## YOU ARE INVITED

**General Membership Meeting**  
Novato Historical Guild

**Saturday, March 12, 2016 - 10:00 am - noon**  
Novato City Hall - 901 Sherman Avenue, Novato

**A special presentation on our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln**

*A continental breakfast will be served.*

**Guild members and anyone interested in Novato history are welcome.**

**Novato History Museum**

**815 Delong Avenue**

**(415) 897-4320**

**Hamilton Field History Museum**

**555 Hangar Avenue**

**(415) 382-8614**

**COME VISIT AND BRING A FRIEND!**

The Museums are open three days a week -- Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday - Noon to 4 p.m.

**Closed Major Holidays**