

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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April – June 2020

The Novato Historian

Volume 44, Number 2

Covid 19 - The Coronavirus Pandemic in Novato

The March General Members meeting had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus called "Covid 19." The Third Grade Tours also had to be cancelled. What originated in the Yuhan Province of China spread across the world like lightening causing flu-like symptoms and respiratory failure. As of May 3, 2020, Marin County had 240 cases and 13 deaths due to the virus. The state of California had 54,902 confirmed cases and 2,214 deaths. This virus has killed more than 247,431 people globally.

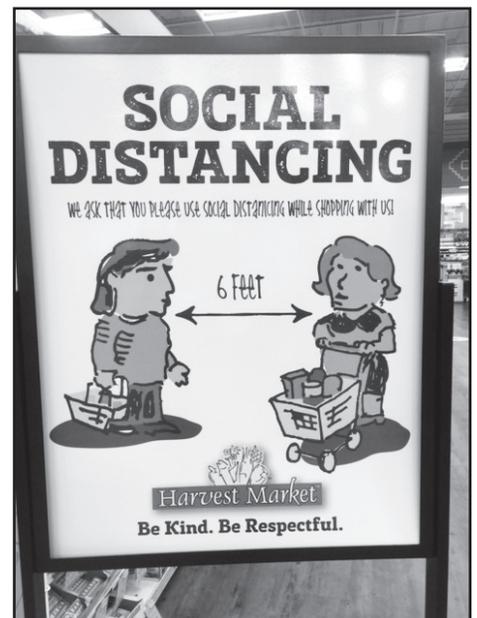
To protect its citizens, "Shelter in Place" orders were started in California on March 16, 2020, by Governor Newsom and may still be in enforcement as of the printing of this newsletter. Novatans are practicing "social distancing," wearing respiratory masks, latex gloves, and staying home to stop the spread of the virus. Most businesses have had to shut down and schools have closed. Many workers are losing their jobs while the more fortunate employees can work from home.



Sign posted at Rush Creek Open Space Trail prohibiting parking near trail. All county parks restricted to walk-ins only.



Medical staff with masks at entrance of Kaiser Permanent medical offices in San Marin.



Social Distancing sign inside Harvest Market at San Marin Plaza.

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Guild Mission Statement

To collect, preserve, and make reasonably available to the public, exhibits and information related to the history of the Novato area..

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Deadline for the September 2020 issue is

August 1st

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Address Changes

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President's Corner

Kathryn Hansen

President, Novato Historical Guild

Gratitude and Fortitude

The Guild wants to take a moment to thank you. Thank you for accepting the challenge of sheltering-in-place and practicing social distancing. There is no doubt that this is disruptive. It has a huge impact on our lives and, in some cases, livelihoods.

The Novato History Museum and the Hamilton Field History Museum are closed for the month of April but you can always go to the website at novato-history.org. There are many interesting videos to view and facts to read about Novato. We have cancelled the March General meeting and April Board meeting. Our hope is to be back to normal by May or June.

It is an honor to be named president of the Novato Historical Guild. The interest in history must be in our family's genes. My father, Bernard Keena, was the first president of the Guild back in 1977-78. He grew up on a farm in Novato and took the train to San Rafael during high school. My mother, Esther Silacci Keena, was president in 1982. She

grew up in Petaluma on a dairy ranch on Lakeville Highway. My cousin, Jim McNern, retired Novato teacher, was president in 2007-08, and cousin Tom Keena Jr., retired Novato fire fighter, was president in 2013-14. I have served as Secretary and as Treasurer of the Guild in the past.

Although I grew up in San Francisco, I came to Novato almost every Saturday to visit my grandparents, Michael and Mary Keena, and to play with my cousins. My grandparents purchased 20 acres in 1910. My father had stories about taking the ferry from San Francisco to Sausalito, then getting on a train to Novato in order to make payments on the McClay Road property.

The property had orchards of apples, apricots, plums and walnuts. There were chickens and a cow or two. My father used to call it the town of "no regrets."

I hope you are all feeling "no regret" for settling in this beautiful town.



Incoming president Kathryn Hansen, receiving the Guild gavel from outgoing president Jim Crumpler. Mandatory gloves, masks, and 6 feet social distancing guidelines were followed due to the corona virus (Covid 19)!



Novato – 50 Years Ago

(April, May, June 1970)

by Yvette Borloz Jackson

Dear Readers,
I am confident that you will be receiving this newsletter, although maybe later than usual. We are going through an historical time, with this quarantine and for me at least, things feel very skewed. As I was writing this article I wondered that if, in 50 years, there were a “50 Years Ago” column in the local Historical Newsletter, what would it say? The meetings are canceled, the Museum is closed, the parade is canceled, sporting events are canceled, and so on. We must persevere and stay safe, and hope that we will enjoy life in a more normal way soon. I hope this article will spark some memories, and please remember that the majority of the text was taken from the pages of the **Novato Advance**.

Virtual Hugs, and Elbow Bumps,
Yvette Borloz Jackson

Some members of the Grateful Dead rock band who own a ranch west of Novato were in Pini Hardware on a recent Saturday and the placed reeked of what the employees there thought was marijuana. Actually it was pastouli oil, a favorite scent of hippies. It’s pungent and clinging and is often used to overpower any lingering marijuana odor. The pastouli scent in Pini’s lasted for hours after the Grateful Dead members left.

Remember when mini-skirts came in how all the clothing rules and regulations at schools had to be changed? If and when high school girls ever start wearing midis, will they be sent home for wearing a dress that is too long?

The Novato school district, looking ahead to leaner years from the income standpoint, will ask voters April 14 to okay an 85-cent increase in the ceiling on the general-purpose tax for schools. The increase would raise the ceiling to \$4.28.

The city council race and the pending supervisor race have overshadowed another extremely important election issue on April 14th - the proposal to raise the ceiling of the Novato tax rate. Until recently a tax rate proposal would have received almost automatic approval at the polls. But due to a variety of complex reasons, public support of schools has eroded and passing school measures has become an increasingly more difficult task in the state.

BIG ROCK DANCE AT NOVATO HIGH
“Without question, it’s going to be the big-

gest high school dance in Marin County.” That’s the way Mark Tracy, a spokesman for the Novato High senior class, described the high school rock dance concert to be staged Friday (04/03) from 8 p.m. to midnight in the girls gym at the school. “We’re expecting 1000 to attend. This will be the first time in Marin County that a high school dance has had bands comparable to those that play at the Fillmore-West in San Francisco,” said Tracy. Main attraction will be Mike Bloomfield, renowned blues guitarist. Also entertaining will be Beefy Red and Bugaloo Express. Bloomfield, formerly of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and the Electric Flag with Buddy Miles, is now performing and recording with his own band. Other personnel in Bloomfield’s band include John Kahn, Nick Gravenitis, Ira Kamin and Mark Naftlin.

INTERNIST OPENS OFFICE IN NOVATO:

Dr. Richard Friesendorf, a specialist in internal medicine and cardiology, has opened an office in the Indian Valley Medical Center at 1615 Hill Road. He comes to Novato from Milwaukee, where he was on the teaching staff of Marquette University and was assistant chief of cardiology at Wood Veterans Hospital. Dr. Friesendorf says a trip to San Francisco for a medical convention convinced him that he wanted to live in the Bay Area. He is now looking for a home in Novato. His wife Suzanne and daughters Kathy, 11 and Elizabeth, 9, are still in Milwaukee and will arrive later in the year.

SEA COAST-LIKE LIVING: Hoffman Company yesterday unveiled plans for their \$100 million Bahia community in Marin County. These first phase townhouse homes were designed by Warren Callister. Bahia is a water-oriented residential and recreation community on the Petaluma River in Novato. The master plan calls for construction of 2250 conventional single-family homes, cluster homes, townhouses and extensive recreation facilities over the next seven years. Townhouse homes are priced from \$33,000.

The following is an excerpt from an editorial from the editor of the *Novato Advance*, George Barnwell, from the 04/08/70 issue.

“Are we really going to allow it to happen? Are we going to express our spite at today’s change by the simple-minded act of shorting our school system? We have allowed ourselves to be tax-bled and robbed for the sake of stupid and senseless wars, for the sake of voracious defense industries and war profiteers, for the sake of prod-

ucts whose manufacture and use have polluted our country such as no country has been polluted before. Now we are going to call a halt to this self-destruct system by voting “no” against funds for our schools. We’ll save about \$50 each in extra taxes and provide a collapsing school system for our kids. Is this what we really intend to do? What will we be proving? That we are just irrational and mean as everybody else?”

He continued and concluded with the following “Will Novato allow its schools to languish? Will Novatans pretend a crisis does not exist, avert their eyes, and kid themselves that the long-term effect of a failing school system won’t happen? No, we don’t think this is the image of Novato or of Novatans. We have more faith than that in our fellow citizens. We feel confident Novatans will step up and vote a resounding affirmation for their children, for their schools, for their community, and above all else for themselves!”

(Novato Advance 04/22/70) START MADE ON SCHOOL CUTS The Novato school board started making budget cuts Monday – an aftermath of the defeat last week of the school tax increase proposal.

The Novato Horsemen will sponsor the queen contest for Novato Western Weekend. The contest is open to girls between 14 and 18 years of age who are Novato residents, never married and not professional models. Entries for the contest will close on May 27 with judging for horsemanship, appearance, neatness of horse, tack and rider – to be held at the Novato Horsemen’s arena on Bugeia Lane on Saturday, May 30 at 10 a.m.

MERRILL ELECTED MAYOR The new broom that swept Councilmen Wayne Sartin and George Quesada into office in last week’s election – and swept Harley McAskill and Babe Silva out of office – completed its sweep last night with the unanimous election of Councilman Douglas Merrill as Novato’s new mayor. Councilman Joseph Gargiulo was named mayor pro tem. It was a sweet sweep for conservation-minded residents to see Merrill accept the gavel.

The Nixon administration’s campaign to fight inflation apparently doesn’t extend to those federally employed. Hamilton Air Force Base active duty personnel will be receiving more money in their pockets come May 28. That’s

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50 Years Ago

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when they are due for a pay raise of 8.1 per cent, retroactive to January 1. It's taken five months to re-program the computers that turn out military paychecks. The wage boost means \$9.30 per month for a new recruit. Not that we resent the increase, but was it really necessary for President Nixon to veto that education appropriation bill which resulted in a \$200,000 slash in federal aid for the Novato school district to pay for the education of children of military children?

A&W REMODERNIZATION Peter K. Pilaski and his wife, Melanie, who bought the A&W Root Beer franchise from Betty French are planning to install completely new patio furniture and are in the process of streamlining both appearance and operations of the restaurant in Nave Shopping Center.

Carrol Varner of Novato was among the 437 entries in the 18th annual World's Wristwrestling Championship Tournament held Friday night in Petaluma. He lost his first match in the lightweight class. Mike Dolcini, 17-year-old North Marinite, won the lightweight title and his older brother Jim, 19, won the heavyweight crown. Their father, Arnold Dolcini, operates a dairy west of Novato.

CAMBODIAN ADVENTURE The decision to send troops into Cambodia has been received by Americans with mixed feelings. It has already resulted in campus action, which may close some colleges for the remainder of the school year. The stock market, already in a slump, plunged even deeper. The mood in Washington D.C. is even more bitter and divisive. The invasion is bound to produce harsher debate and polarization in the country. To find out how Novatans feel about the issue, the *Advance* contacted some 30 citizens and asked for their opinions. Many are not familiar with all the circumstances in the situation; many are obviously reluctant to criticize the President. Most are concerned about the purpose and the effects, not only in Indochina, but here. (Dow average for 1970 was 753.12)

ANNOUNCEMENT: Dean's Rexall Drugs Prescription Dept. has been sold to the MEDICINE CHEST, Novato Fair Shopping Center

The cause of a plane crash Monday morning a few minutes out of Hamilton Air Force Base, killing 13 men and seriously burning the only survivor, is still a mystery. Investigation so far has unearthed no reason for the T-29 Convair twin engine craft to smash into flaming pieces in Sonoma County several minutes after take-off from Hamilton at 8 a.m. with a crew of four and 10 passengers. Sole survivor of the worst crash in Hamilton history is Capt. George A. Burk, 29, who is reported

still in serious condition today at Brook Army Medical Center, the burn treatment center at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Burk was found badly hurt but still alive by the Mangels Ranch foreman in Sonoma, where the plane went down.

The council delayed a decision on limited parking for vehicles on Front Street, pending staff investigation of the possibility of freeing the east side of Front Street for all day commuter parking and imposing a two-hour limit on the west side. William Criddle, proprietor of Kentucky Fried Chicken, had asked for parking time limitations on commuters who leave their vehicles in front of the restaurant on the west side of Front Street. Approval was given to the request from Merton Shelton, 1304 Grant Avenue, to remove the existing stop sign on Hill Road at the Tamalpais Avenue intersection because of low traffic volume.

HOST SOUGHT FOR GHETTO CHILDREN: Novatans interested in having a ghetto child as their guest for 10 days this summer may obtain an application form for the Friendly Town program from Mr. William Eckhoff, local representative, it was announced last week. Novato families have participated in the program for two summers. Purpose of the program is to build friendships between suburban and inner city families... If they wish, the host family and the ghetto family may keep in touch with each other throughout the year, and the suburban children may visit the ghetto home. Last summer over 1,000 families participated in the program.

Oscar Houge, owner of Oscar's Paint Store, decided to have the last word when the city planning commission ordered him to remove the billboard which stood for years on Virginia Avenue, advertising his store. He replaced the billboard with an equally large sign that read "City Planning Forced Me To Remove My Sign." Someone else got the last word by adding. "It's About Time." Meanwhile Oscar's billboard rose again on Simmon's Lane. This time it's on wheels - fastened to a wagon.

The five member Boz Skaggs music group and Born Again will be featured at a teen dance this Friday from 8:30 p.m. to midnight in the girl's gym at Novato High School. The youth group of the Novato Citizens Band Committee is sponsoring the dance to raise money to promote next Tuesday's park election. Tickets priced at \$2.50 a person will be on sale at the door. Boz Skaggs, Bill Graham's hottest new group, has played at the Fillmore in San Francisco and has cut two records.

ANNUAL TOWN CELEBRATION: Western Weekend Inc. calls the annual community celebration Western Country Fair, ever since the format was changed two years ago. The Novato Horsemen Inc., who hold the rodeo in conjunction with Father's Day event, still call the celebration Western Weekend. In any case, the affair is being planned for June

18-21.

Marianne Gerssing was chosen Saturday to reign over the Western Weekend Country Fair and Rodeo. Her princesses are Patricia Carson, Carol Hansen, and Bambi Anderson

Soon Novato should be known as the pizza capital of the world. There are several in the area already. Ben Ostlund wants to locate another -Pizza Hut - on the corner across the street from the Community House. There's a new one slated to open its doors this summer next to the bookstore in the Downtown Shopping Center. Pizza Lovers should feel they're in paradise.

A Novato Hiking Club is being formed and the group is holding its first hike Sunday. It will be a walk up Mt. Burdell. Anybody is invited to join. The hike will start at 11a.m. from San Marin Club.

Novato firemen had to leave the Annual Volunteer Firemen's Association picnic at the Silveira Ranch north of Novato Sunday to fight a six-hour grass and 24-hour hay and barn fire. Novato Fire Chief Kidder said the hay and barn fire off Deer Island Lane destroyed 300 tons of hay valued at \$6000 and owned by the Dickson Brothers. The value of the barn, which was owned by Mary E. Richardson, Sacramento, is unknown, said Kidder.

Our new environment-conscious councilmen are thinking of all angles these days. During one of the city council work sessions on the budget they were assured by the city staff that the city does not use DDT in any of the spraying programs

WEDDINGS:

Barbara Cole - Alonzo E. Jordan
 Wilma Cramer - Melvin R. McNeil, Jr.
 Daven Dingle - Donald Edward Fritz
 Diane Rae Baker - Terry Gordon Owens
 Diana Lynn Bright - Charles H. Seebock, Jr.
 Marianne McFarland - Gary Edward Anderson
 Shirley Ann Bowles - William Thomas Brannigan
 Janice Dee Brown - Kenneth Q. Ongaro
 Phyllis Perry - Mervyn Attell
 Karen Garaventa - Seaman Michael Garrett
 Cheryl Hook - LeRoy Ziegler
 Annette Ghisletta - Alfred E. Corda
 Nancy Bole Jack - Robert L. Hayes
 Elizabeth Ann Hancock - Dean Aron Robbins
 Janis Ruth Bueler - Winslow Marks
 Cynthia Lee Truog - Kirk Marcus Wolter
 Alexia Craig - Timothy Malcom Tindal
 Susan Chipman - John Bitzer
 Doreen Ann Bobo - James C. Halliday
 Nancy Lynn Fry - Rocky Lamar Stone
 Debra Jean Kile - Sgt. Richard L. Carter
 Laura Ann Thomas - Steven Diggs Reynolds
 Jean Elizabeth Hutton - Bradley Wayne Varty
 Wendy Cutler - Kenneth Alan Kramer
 Susan Lynn Pemberton - Donald Dean McCann

Novato Memories

Jim McNern



Kathy Marzell Baldwin

Kathy Marzell Baldwin is the daughter of the late Sam and Josephine Marzell. She attended Hill, West Novato, Hill Junior High and graduated from Novato High School in 1967.

Kathy attended Dental Nurses College in San Francisco after graduating from high school. She has worked locally and continues working in that profession for the past 52 years. Kathy lives in Novato with her husband, Dennis. She has three children: Donald, Matthew and Stacey. Kathy shares her Novato memories in this June edition of the Novato Historian..

I was born in Sonoma County at the old Petaluma General Hospital on Sixth Street. Novato did not have a hospital at that time. I was brought home from the hospital to the family home on Arroyo Avichi Road (which is now Indian Valley Road) to join my sister, Joan Marzell Quinn. My father, Sam, was a Novato fireman (the first paid full time fireman in Novato.) He was at the only fire station Novato had at that time on Grant Avenue (next to Redwood Credit Union, which used to be Andersen Chevrolet back in the 1950's.) Dad, in his spare time, had Sam's Rototilling Service. He kept busy rototilling many gardens in town. My mother, Josephine, was a homemaker and cared for the family chicken ranch when Dad was at the fire station. In her spare time she loved to cook, bake and can fruit for us. She was also past president of the Novato Ladies Auxiliary of the Novato Volunteer Fire Department, Garden Club and Novato Grandmother's Club. (I'm sure I missed others.)

I did not attend Kindergarten, it was not mandatory at that time, and my parents decided to keep me home another year. I went to Hill School First through Third grade, which was walking distance from our ranch. My teachers were: Miss McNulty, Mrs. Hulme, and Mrs. Mason. My friends were: Sandy Pronzini Tomrose, Shelley Rocca Grossi, Sherri Dimmick Dague, Robin Lawrence, Ellen Bussman Glass, Ann Noonan, Delores Coulter Cherita, Carol and Linda Murphy, Dan Carlos and Mike Studley.

We were transferred to West Novato School for Fourth through Sixth Grade. That meant

we had to ride the school bus, which was very exciting at that time. The first stop on our route was Chamberlin Lane, which was down the road from us. So I would walk to the bus stop and meet Margaret Guibbini and we would wait for the bus. Our bus driver in the morning was either Peggy Roberts or Lena Blaski. Our next stop was at the Murphy's driveway, and we would pick up Linda Murphy. Several more stops along Indian Valley and Wilson Avenue. The last stop was at Shield's Lane and we would pick up Mike Mazzoni. On our way home our driver was Tony Mello. We would do the reverse route, starting with Shields Lane and ending at Chamberlin Lane. Tony was so nice, he would always have me stay on the bus and he would drop me off at our driveway. (He didn't want me walking by myself.) My teachers at West Novato were Miss Mollenkamp, Mr. Rolle and Mrs. Ritzinger.

Fourth Grade was my favorite year in grammar school. My teacher, Clare Mollenkamp, was a wonderful teacher. We learned all about California history and did so many projects including making a popsicle stick mission, yarn picture of a mission on burlap and a painted plate to name a few projects. She always sent me a Christmas card with a note until I graduated from high school.

It was then back to Hill School for Seventh and Eighth Grades. Big changes with gym lockers, showers, changing classes, different teachers for each class, dances and so many books and lots of homework. Some of my friends were: Shelley Rocca Grossi, Sherri Dimmick Dague, Patti Villa Beckstrom, Susie and Sandy Mclsaac, Louis Butti, Ray Jones and Gary Miller.

Then it was time for high school. Novato High School was well established by the time our class got to Ninth Grade. (I was somewhat familiar with some of the teachers as my sister, Joan, was in the first graduating class from Novato High in 1959.) The first month of school was a little challenging wearing those gold and black beanies on our heads for a month! The four years flew by. Lots of activities, football and basketball games, ski trips and dances to name a few.

Then it was off to Dental Assisting School in San Francisco. My girlfriends, Shelley Rocca Gross and Patti Villa Beckstrom and myself commuted daily for the next

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Kathy and her pet goat, Emily, in 1955

Novato Memories

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school year to school in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury and Masonic area. We found a very diverse crowd of people in vintage clothing, bookstores, record shops and eclectic restaurants. It certainly wasn't Novato and was a real eye opener. Needless to say, we were always happy to get back home at the end of each day. We graduated and found jobs in our area. We found out we weren't city girls!

We had great neighbors growing up in Novato. There were the Pronzini, Manzonis, Liebs, Trabucchis, Cabezzas, Strockbines, Lamberts, Guibbinis, Murphys, Rivasplatas, Rasmussens, Pozzis, Bushers, Edwards, Witzels and Marecks.

Our family friends were the Pronzini, Baccaglio, McClelland, Grossi, McNern, Lear, Hogan, Baldwin, Nunes, Pacheco, Young, Smith, Ferrarese, Keena, Rocca and Silva families to name a few

My sister, Joan, joined 4-H when she was 10 and I had to wait until I was 10 before I could join. (It seemed like an eternity.) Although I took part in all the activities, I was counting the days until I could join. 4-H was very popular and Novato had four clubs. We belonged to the Novato Aggies. Our parents were both leaders, and it was a big part of our lives. We have made so many life long friends through 4-H. We showed our sheep at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, Petaluma Fair, Santa Rosa Fair and a few times at the California State Fair in Sacramento. In 1965 I won Grand Champion at the Sonoma County Fair. Reno and Babe Pronzini purchased the lamb at the Junior Livestock Auction. I also met my future husband, Dennis Baldwin, when I was 10 years old at a 4-H meeting!

Growing up on a small ranch brought a few daily chores when Dad was at work. We had to help Mom collect the eggs, candle and crate them, feed the sheep and my two goats, Emily and Trudybell, feed the chickens and get them in the hen house and feed the baby chicks when we had a new batch. We were on well water, so at times we would check the pump to see that it was working properly.

Without my parent's knowledge, I wrote to KGO television station to the King Norman Program stating that I had two goats that did tricks. Well, they called our house and told my mother they wanted us to bring the goats to the station to appear on the children's program. She told them I did

have two goats, but wasn't aware that they did tricks! Consequently, we did not go.

Every year before Christmas, the Novato Theatre (Don Donahue) would have a Christmas matinee. When it was over, everybody would walk across Highway 101 to the fire station, where my father, Sam, would be Santa giving out oranges and a bag of candy. I did not know it was him until one year I said my Daddy has glasses just like yours and the same black boots. I finally put it together!!

The firemen would also host a public Easter Egg Hunt where CVS and Lucky Market is now located. My father would boil all the eggs and the volunteer firemen would color and hide them. We were all looking for the "Golden Egg." After the acreage was developed, the Silveira family property on 101 North would let the fire department have it at the Deer Camp.

The Annual Novato Volunteer Fire Department Chicken BBQ was also held at the Silveira Deer Camp. What a great get-together it was. Frances Manzoni's famous bean recipe would be served along with potato salad. Reno Pronzini and Eleanor "Pee Wee" Renati would sell tickets for a 4 foot long salami. Other games included spinning the wheel for a bottle of whiskey, burlap sack races, egg toss, and a sawdust pile with pennies where children would be able to look for pennies. (That's when you could go to Ben Franklin's on Grant Avenue and Estelle Frost would help you at the candy section and you could get candy for five cents.) Fun was had by all.

The Fire Department also had the Ladies Auxillary Club, which most of the volunteers' wives belonged to. When there was a large fire they would come to the fire house and prepare sandwiches for a bag lunch for the men fighting the fire. They also knit scarves for the burn victims at the burn clinic in San Francisco. They enjoyed monthly meetings at the firehouse in the back room. (It became more of a social club as the years passed.) They disbanded quite a few years ago, and the money that was left in the treasury account was donated to the Burn Clinic in San Francisco.



Kathy and her Champion Fat Lamb at the 1965 Sonoma County Fair. The lamb was purchased by Reno Pronzini at the Junior Livestock Auction.

The Novato Volunteer Fire Department also put on a St. Patrick's Day Dance at the Community House. The Ladies Auxillary would provide the cake and pie desserts.

OTHER MEMORIES:

- Going to the Sanitary Market with Shelley Rocca Grossi to purchase meat for her mom. We would always be given a slice of bologna to eat on our walk up Reichert Street
- Torassa's Bakery would give you a big bread stick or a cookie whenever you went in the bakery.
- Going to Mr. Vogel's Junque Store with Dad to visit and look at the junk! It was the biggest old store in town. If he had a fire, it would have taken days to stop the smoldering of smoke. He would always sit in a chair outside his store and watch the few cars go by. He had old windows, doors, kitchen ware, tools and just junk. One day he let me pick something I wanted to take home. I chose an owl cream pitcher, which I still have and use for syrup when we have pancakes or waffles. It's an antique now!
- Chinese dinner at DeBorba's was the best in town. Jimmy, the cook, would make the best pork chow mein and egg foo young.

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Novato Memories

- Bruno Schultz with his cane stopping the traffic on Highway 101, so he could cross to the other side of town.
- “Thrill Hill” on McClay Road being lowered and the hill in front of our house on Indian Valley Road also being lowered.
- Going to 4-H meetings with the family in the club car behind the Community House.
- Going to Novato Library where Alice Becker’s is now located looking at childrens’ books.
- Going to the McNern’s for New Year’s Eve and Margaret serving plum pudding cakes from Blum’s in San Francisco. What a treat!
- Rayburn’s Market burning down in Old Town where “Five Little Monkeys” and “Flour Chylde Bakery” is now located..
- Babe Pronzini teaching me how to drive the ranch jeep when I was about 12 years old.
- Pronzini’s cow falling into our well on Easter Sunday morning.
- Tot ‘n’ Teen Childrens’ Clothing Store with side doors going into Pini Hardware on Grant Avenue. Mrs. Warner worked in Tot ‘n’ Teen and they had all your needs for childrens clothing and cute little dresses and coats.
- Dr. Weseman making house calls at night after work when we had the measles and mumps.
- Novato Drug Store at the corner of Grant Avenue and the old 101 Highway. Ralph Kemmerer was the pharmacist and you could watch him compounding some of the drugs. They had a great soda fountain.
- Helping Saralee McClelland feed the calves at their dairy on Olive Avenue. The day Saralee decided to start cooking on her own and Mom and Dad racing over to the McClelland’s Dairy to make sure she wasn’t burning the house down.
- Sandy Pronzini and I would take the ranch jeep and drive out Indian Valley Road and McClay Road without a license, sampling fruit in the orchards along the way.
- Going to the Hi-Fi and Carousel Drive Ins and having hamburgers for 75 cents.
- Novato was a great small town to be raised in. We are so fortunate to have such wonderful memories of our childhood and still able to have friendships with our friends we started grammar school with. I am so thankful for having such wonderful parents who chose Novato as the community to raise my sister and me.



“Social Distancing” and parking restriction sign at entrance to Open Space trail.



“Social Distancing” sign on floor of Safeway store at check out.

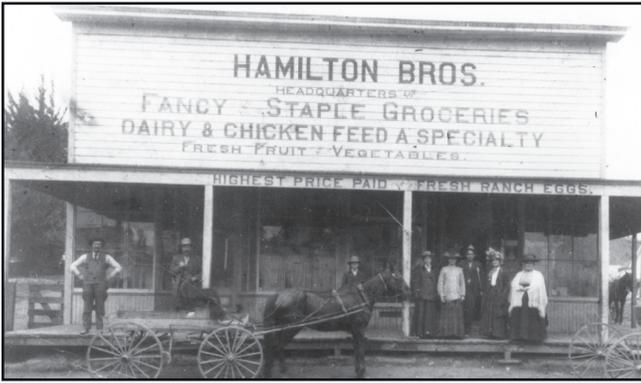


Sign with rainbow at a home in Novato thanking first responders, medical staff, delivery and grocery workers.

NOVATO'S TREASURES

Hamilton Bros. Building

MIKE READ



823 Grant Ave.

Feb 15, 1904 - James W. Hamilton (1860-1922) the well-known Petaluma grocer, purchased three lots in Novato and began the erection of a building, 40x80, which was a one-story structure. The building was occupied as a grocery store and was known as the Hamilton Bros. Grocery. Fred Sturges Hamilton (1867-1941), a brother of J.W. Hamilton, arrived here from Kansas. He was the business partner and was in charge of the Novato store.

Feb 26, 1904 - Fred Sweetser began breaking ground and graded the lots on Grant and Sherman Avenue for J.W. Hamilton's new merchandise store. Camm & Hedges, the big Petaluma lumber firm, contracted for the building which would be 40x65 feet.

March 19, 1904 - Rodd & Rodd, contractors of Petaluma, were awarded the contract to build the store.

April 18, 1904 - Hamilton Bros. purchased the feed, wood, coal and egg business of W.J. Wood of Novato. Mr. Wood occupied a position with Hamilton Bros.

May 1, 1904 - Hamilton Bros. new store was opened.

Dec 19, 1914 - Fred S. Hamilton was appointed postmaster and succeeded Postmaster A.D. Scott, whose term expired.

Jan 9, 1915 - The Novato post office was moved into its new quarters in the store of F. S. Hamilton.

Aug 12, 1915 - F.S. Hamilton would be the vice-president of the newly formed Chamber of Commerce.

May 1917 - F.S. Hamilton sold one-half interest to George P. McNear of Petaluma lots #10, 11, and 12 block "G". The other half he sold to George in October 1918.

June 1917 - F.S. Hamilton intended to leave for Marysville to take charge of a cannery. He decided to move to San Rafael, where he would work for the American Express Company's office in the San Francisco ferry building.

In **1919-22** - The building would become the town's community house. First started by A.D. White when he obtained an option shortly after the first World War from George P. McNear.

Sept. 1922 - The old Community House was sold to A. H. Anderson who purchased the property for \$3500.

Nov. 1923 - H. Pini & Co. rented the building to enlarge their grocery and vegetable department.

Nov. 1943 - The First Baptist Church of Novato, organized a few months ago, purchased the property from Mrs. Anderson who had been occupying it as a real estate office. The church planned extensive improvements.

Nov. 1945 - The building now owned by Mr. A.E. Pulley was razed.

Presently, the modern building that now occupies the site houses professional offices on the second floor and *Grazie*, an Italian restaurant, on the street level.

Airmail: Trouble Taking Off

By Michael Corlett



National Airmail Week stamp

The Hamilton Museum has a display featuring National Airmail Week held in May 1938. To say that bringing Airmail service to the country had trouble “taking off,” or even finding the runway, would be an understatement.

Over its history, the US Postal Service has continually looked for ways to reduce mail delivery times. In the early 1900s, horses were used, then Horseless Carriages, followed by automobiles and trucks. For long distances, trains had been used since the 1800s. Coast to coast, mail took 90 hours by rail in 1924.

So it is not surprising that soon after the Wright Brothers flight, the U.S. Postal authorities became interested in delivering mail by air. In 1911, the post office experimented with the concept. Pilot Earl Ovington became the first airmail pilot by delivering a sack of mail from Long Island, NY to a nearby airport 6 miles away. Legend has it he flew at 500 feet and tossed the mailbag out of the plane at his destination.

There were sporadic attempts over the next 2-3 years to expand airmail delivery. However, Congress was reluctant to fund the novel idea. The matter was dropped as U.S. aviation efforts were concentrated on the emerging crisis in Europe.

Before WWI was over, the Army agreed to fly the airmail for the Post Office because it would provide valuable training for Army pilots.

The much-publicized inaugural flight was on May 15th, 1918 from Washington, DC to New York with a refueling stop in Philadelphia.

A special airmail stamp was issued on that day to commemorate the occasion. President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt were

in attendance. The first of three planes to depart was piloted by Army 2nd Lt. George Boyle, who was fresh out of flight school. (Boyle had a well-placed government benefactor which resulted in his receiving the prestigious assignment.) The inaugural flight was delayed because the engine on Boyle’s plane would not start. Mechanics were scurrying trying to determine the problem. Finally, someone checked the gas tank and it was empty! Immediately after takeoff, Boyle followed the wrong set of railroad tracks out of town and got lost. While making an unscheduled landing in Waldorf, Maryland to ask for directions, his hard landing damaged the prop. The mail was trucked back to Washington. A rather humiliating end for a much-ballyhooed first flight. However, the two other flights that day by other pilots were successful. The next day Boyle got another chance on a different route. He got lost again and low on fuel, he crash-landed. Postal authorities decided that his talents must lie in other areas and relieved him of his duty.

In 1926 the Post Office contracted with commercial airlines to take over air mail delivery. By October of 1930, thirty-four airmail routes had been established around the country.

In the early thirties, airline passenger service was minimal. Airmail contracts were the main source of income for the aviation industry. The Airmail Act of 1930 gave Post Master General Walter Brown the authority to consolidate and extend the existing airmail routes in a way that would be best for the public need. Three airlines received most of the work and the other airlines were forced out.

When President Roosevelt was elected in 1933, Congress established a committee to investigate how Brown had allocated the routes. There were allegations that the

major routes went to companies favorable to the Hoover Administration. Smaller airlines were crying “foul.” There were also questions about whether Brown’s actions were legal.

On February 19, 1934, President Roosevelt summarily cancelled all airmail contracts. He ordered the Army to deliver the mail while new contracts with the airlines were being worked out. That decision was to be a disaster.

The Army planes were not suited for night flying and the pilots were not accustomed to long flights in bad weather. In the 78 days that the army flew the mail, there were 66 accidents and 12 pilot deaths. Famed aviator Eddie Rickenbacker called it “legalized murder.” With the contracts reworked, commercial airlines began flying airmail again on May 8th.

By 1938 the airline industry was making progress but struggling. The country was stalled in the Great Depression and airline passenger travel was not yet widely accepted. President Roosevelt and Postmaster General James Farley created a National public relations campaign to generate wider usage of airmail, which would help the airline industry.

They declared May 15-21, 1938 National Air Mail Week (NAMW) to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Air Mail service. A new 6 cent airmail stamp was created to celebrate the event. The slogan for the campaign was “Receive Tomorrow’s Mail Today.” The goal was to encourage every citizen to mail and/or receive an airmail letter during the week. The idea took off. Thousands of communities across the country joined in with wide-ranging activities to celebrate the week. Newspapers, radio stations and local

Continued on Page N – 10



Hamilton Field Cachet

Airmail: Trouble Taking Off

Continued from Page N – 9

postmasters promoted it. Veterans organizations, college fraternities and Boy Scouts got involved. There were essay and poster contests for children. In short the celebration became a very big deal!

Thursday, May 19th was the big day of the week. Cities and towns had been encouraged to develop their own special cachets to be applied to letters mailed on May 19th. The cachets allowed each locality to brag about what made their town special or important. Volunteer pilots, who had been sworn in as government employees for 24 hours, crisscrossed the country which allowed many small towns to get one-day of airmail service.

In towns that did not have an airport and if a suitable landing strip was not available, a local road would be closed to make a temporary runway. Sometimes pilots and postmasters would sign the envelopes that were delivered that day.

National Airmail week was deemed successful in stimulating increased interest in airmail. Many more people became willing to spend an additional 3 cents to send a letter by air. Additionally, the increased revenue helped sustain the airlines until passenger travel became more popular.

Air Mail stamps were discontinued on October 10, 1975, when all First Class mail went by air whenever practical.

To see if your town had a special cachet for National Airmail Week, go to <http://www.aerodacious.com/NAMW.HTM>

Sources: U.S. Postal Museum <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/exhibits>

1934 Airmail Scandal postalmuseum.si.edu

A Brief History of Airmail and How it Took Off. <https://disciplesofflight.com/brief-history-of-airmail/>

National Airmail Week 1938, Jeffrey Shapiro, <http://www.lingens.com/articles/shapiro/namw.shtml>

Welcome New Guild Members

Novato Historical Guild Membership Report June 2020

Individual Membership

Marsha Anderson
Marianne Dwelly
Will Mazzoleni
Eileen Campagna
John Torres

Family Membership

Steve & Betsy Ussery

Business Membership

Dennis Hagerty, State Farm Insurance
Aaero Heating & Sheet Metal, Inc.

If you have questions about membership, call

*Lane Yee, Membership Chairman,
415 – 898 – 0444*



Please support our Guild Business Members:

Aaero Heating & Sheet Metal, Inc
A. D. Scott Building
Andrew McAgnon Landscaping
Bank of Marin
Dennis Hagerty, State Farm Insurance
Goltermann Real Estate and Construction
Indian Valley Golf Club
Marin Landscape Materials
Marin Trophies
Marin Volvo/Saab
Mclsaac Dairy
Nave Enterprises
Novato Builders Supply, Inc.
Pacheco Ranch Winery
Pini Hardware
The Wright Salon
Trumbull Manor Inc. – Novato
Valley Oak Wealth Management
Zenith Instant Printing



All schools in California were closed due to the coronavirus. Notice at San Marin High School..

2019 Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of the Month
Margaret Todd Senior Center
1560 Hill Road

Time: 1:30 – 3:30 PM

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

Membership Meetings

March 14	10 – 12 City Hall
June 13	10 – 12 City Hall
Sept. 12	12 – 2 Hamilton Field Museum
Dec. 12	10 – 12 Margaret Todd Centerl

Guild members are welcome to attend the Board meetings. Please check with the President, Kathryn Hansen at (415) 898-0467, in case a meeting has been changed.

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.

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 (415) 897- 4320. All contributions are tax deductible. Plaques cost \$250 per person named.

Contact Us

Hamilton Field History Museum
Manager: Ray Dwelly
Museum phone: 415-382-8614
Email: Hamilton_museum@att.net
<https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonFieldHistoryMuseum/>

Novato History Museum
Manager: Susan Magnone
Museum phone: 415-897-4320
Email: NHG1850@yahoo.com
<https://www.facebook.com/NovatoHistoryMuseum/>

In Memoriam

In Memoriam
Russ Drosch
Leonard Genetin
John Hale
Donald Hale

The Guild Extends Sympathy to

The family of Russ Drosch on the loss of Russ Drosch

Shirley Genetin and family on the loss of Leonard Genetin

The Hale family on the loss of John and Donald Hale



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 | | Additional donations? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life membership, joint | \$500 | | 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

General Meeting cancelled due to Corona Virus

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