

The Novato Historian

Fall 2023

Volume 47 Number 3

Novato Community House Opened 100 Years Ago



President's Corner
Our Ageless Community House
Novato Druidic Circle
The Last Plane out of Hamilton
Edward E. Tanner
The 349th Air Mobility Wing

Black John—John Henry Pinkston
Scott House—New Museum?
Novato—50-years ago
Novato Speaker Series
General Meeting September 9

The Novato Historian

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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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President's Corner

Jim Crumpler

President, Novato Historical Guild

Hope you all enjoyed our June speaker, Marcus Combs. Marcus gave a fascinating presentation of Crissy Field and San Francisco before the Gold Rush. The speaker for our September Member's Meeting will be our own "speaker," "historian" and "attorney" Kate Johnston, discussing the fascinating history of Hamilton Field.

We had a really successful booth at the Art, Wine and Music Festival in June. We gave away a couple hundred Historians, made a lot of new friends and got about 30 new members. Thanks to all the volunteers that made that happen. It's really a fun event, which is why I have been doing it for a few years. You really meet a lot of "interesting" people, and you get a really cool shirt. Let me know if you would like a "two hours" shift next year.

Thanks to our Guild member Gary Bramon, there is a brand-new speaker series in town. "The Novato Speaker Series." sponsored by the Novato Rotary Club, the Ignacio Rotary Club and the Novato Historical Guild, held once a month on a designated Thursday at the new Jonas Center at Indian Valley College. The next speaker will be Dr. Michael Blodgett, PhD, on Thursday, September 28, 2023, "History of American Relations with Iran." The doors open at 6:30 PM and the presentation begins at 7:00 PM. Visit the website at "www.novatospeakerseries.com" for additional information.

The Relocation Committee, at the time of this writing (July 25), has just received the City Council's approval to move forward to thoroughly investigate the condition of the Scott house and get estimates as to what it's going to cost to make a state-of-the-art museum out of the Scott House. So, if this all goes as planned, we should be starting construction in early 2024.

I would like to give a really big THANK YOU to Diane Campbell for her 15 years as SUNSHINE chairperson. For those of you that aren't aware of the duties of a Sunshine Chair, Diane was the person who would contact, by phone or card, Guild members who were sick, bereaved or had achieved an individual milestone. Now this brings up the fact that we need a new Sunshine Chair. Any interested parties please contact me or one of the museums. Speaking of volunteer opportunities, the Guild is in need of a person who is good at Fundraising, and we also have a couple places on the Board that need filling.

Thanks again to all our volunteers and docents. We couldn't open our doors without you.

Jim

OUR AGELESS COMMUNITY HOUSE

Novato Advance August 22, 1973

By SUE JOHNSON

The Novato Community House will be 50 years old next week. Tuesday is the golden anniversary of its formal opening. There won't be a ceremony to mark the occasion. It will not be the first time the formalities were dispensed with. It was noted in the December 2, 1922, issue of the Novato Advance that the work begins with no groundbreaking ceremonies, because we are busy people."

There will be a special display at City Hall of yellowed souvenir programs, photographs, and other mementos of the mansion's' first half-century. Novatans who have anything to contribute to it are urged by Mrs. Peg Coady to bring it to City Hall. The display is open now and will be through October 1.

When the mansion opened on August 28, 1923, William Hanen, then editor of the Advance, wrote, "Strangers who visit it stand in astonishment to think a town like Novato was able to build so well."

The opening ceremony was something to remember. The Novato Cornet Band performed, and the Advance noted that "no one expected the boys to play so well in such a short time after organization." Mrs. R. H. Trumbull favored the audience with a vocal solo, and Al Herman of Penngrove gave an imitation of 12 different breeds of roosters crowing.

Mr. Trumbull gave a tribute to the Rev. Charles Christensen of the Novato Presbyterian Church, a key person behind the project. Then there was coffee and cake and dancing until 1:30 a.m.

The Community House was an immediate success as a center of community life and, as the Advance described it, a clubhouse "where each may add largely to the joy of living." In the issue of the Advance that followed the opening Hanen reported that movies were being shown in the Community House and the strange noises and silly remarks made by the young people during the show made some adults vow they would never come again—an indication that some things haven't changed in the last 50 years.

An old souvenir program reveals that nine months after the opening the Community House was the scene of an elaborate banquet. There were 14 entertainment offerings, including a recitation by J. Baccaglio and a whistling solo by Anna Johansen. In the intervening years there has been a minimum of whistling,



A meeting of the Community House board in 1926—From left, seated: Mrs. O. L. Boone, Mrs. Charles Olson, Mrs. Annie Tuckett, the Rev. Charles Christiansen, Bill Gness, Mrs. Elodie Cole, Mrs. Al Bills, Standing: D. D. Pittman, A. D. Scott, Margaret Tracy, Al Cain.



but the old mansion has echoed to the sounds of Community Players rehearsals, Tiny Tots music time, ladies' luncheons, ballet classes, and even slumber parties. The late show is no longer on film—it's provided by the city council and the planning commission.

The present Community House replaced an earlier community center housed in a vacant store on the site that now is the parking lot next to DeBorba's. A dance floor was laid in an adjoining warehouse. That community house, opened in 1919, was the product of volunteer labor.

The sale of that building for \$4500 started the kitty for the new building. What made the new building possible was a loan from the national Presbyterian Church made through the County Life Department of its Domestic Missions office. The loan was made on the condition that it would be taken over by the city when the city was incorporated. When that time came the Community Club, a major user of the Community House, opposed giving up ownership to the city, and the city acquired it only after a court battle.

The contract for construction of the Community House was awarded November 15, 1922, to Charles F. Schuetz of San Francisco for \$18,894. -In charge of the project was a building committee that included three local men—Trumbull, J. W. Cain, and the Rev. Christensen.

Originally there was a reading room (the fireplace alcove off the library), a men's meeting room, a women's room, a mothers' room, a boys' room, and showers for those who indulged in "physical culture." Describing the stone fireplace off the lobby, the Advance declared that "an ornament like this is some compensation for the vexatious delays in getting the building completed. In later years considerable thought was given to ways to disguise the ornament.

The Community House went through a lean period in the 30's and fell into disrepair. In 1947 it was rescued by the formation of Novato Community, Inc., a group that took over the ownership of the building and repaired it. Early members of NCI included the late Capt. Charles Clarkson and his wife, Peter Ferrarese, William Q. Wright, Al Bowman, and Paul Terry.

The aging mansion got a facelifting in 1967 when Mrs. Bea Carpenter volunteered to redecorate it. With a minimum of city funds and a maximum of volunteer labor it was transformed into a well-dressed Victorian.

Novato Druidic Circle

History of Sylvan U.A.O.D.

By Hilda MacDonald, P.A.D. April 18, 1959

Druidism came to Novato in 1899, when the Novato Grove was instituted with about 30 Chartered Members, all of whom are now deceased.

The Druid's Order is a fraternal order, united to assist each other. It gives members sickness and hospitalization benefits. For the woman of Novato, Druids began in Nov. 1901 when the first Novato Circle #17 was organized by Rebekah Hartz, with 32 charter members. Meeting was held the first and third Tuesday's. Anna Sorenson was Grand Arch Druidess at the time. In 1913 Novato Circle consolidated with Hesperian Circle #20.

From 1904 until 1912 there were two circles in Novato. On May 24, 1904 Marin Circle was instituted by Alga Heiden, Grand Arch Druidess and Sister Sweetser, Grand Conductress. There were 26 card members.

At one time all Groves and Circles paid per-capita tax to the Supreme Grove. In 1913 the Grand Grove and Grand Circles of California-Nevada withdrew from the Supreme Grove because of taxation without representation. Some Circles chose to stay with the Supreme Grove when the Grand Circle withdrew so these were suspended from the Grand Circle of California-Nevada. El Dorado #12, Golden West #51 and Marin #40 were suspended June 17, 1914. El Dorado is still in existence but no longer pays per capita tax to the Grand Circle nor sends delegates to Conventions. Golden West and Marin are no more but some of Marin's members joined San Rafael 137 when it was instituted in 1934. Some members transferred to Boadicea #3 in San Francisco when Marin dissolved.

On April 16, 1923, Sylvan Circle #115 was instituted. Pearl Hickey, Grand Arch Druidess, was the mother of our Circle. She gained three Circles during her term, two of which are still in existence, Pt. Arena #112 and Sylvan #115. Anna Hiribarren, Alice Loustaunau and the members of Novato Grove helped get Sylvan Circle organized. There were 31 Charter members as follows: Zelda Stanke, Amelia Trabucci, Rosalia Gness, Elizabeth Firenze, Marie Buzzini (Pini), Dora Manzoni, Alice Rodgers, Angelina Salmina, Marie Nave, Alice Loustaunau, Wilfred Gauthier, Bruno Schultz, Gervasio Trabucci, Paul Renati, Frank Gness, Henry Pini, Anton DeBorba, Louis Bormolini, Leo Zunino Sr.

These are still living: Amtioette Bormolini, Norina Hiribarren,

These are still living: Amtioette Bormolini, Norina Hiribarren, Anita Hiribarren, Irene Nave and Laura Redeni.

These six are still members. May Miller (Nave), Emma Renati (Davi), Assunta Zunino, Anna DeBorba, Dorothy Gambetta and Madeline Hiribarren (York). Twenty-nine members signed the charter.

Irene Nave suggested the name "Sylvan" on account of the many Pines and Redwood tress surrounding Novato.

Sister Anna Hiribarren came into the Circle by card from Boadicea #3 and was elected the first Arch Druidess. May Miller (Nave) was elected the first Past Arch Druidess as she had been a member of the defunct Novato Circle.

The record books from April 1923 to Aug 1932 having been misplaced or lost, nothing can be told (at this writing) of these nine years except that the Circle met afternoons om the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays in Loustaunau Hall and later in the Community House. By 1932 meetings were being held in the evenings.

During the time the Circle met in the Community House they co-operated with the Community Council, taking part in the various projects held to earn moneys for the upkeep of the house,

They also took part, through the years in various Civic Affairs for the betterment of the Community: donating to the Red Cross, March of Dimes and other worthy causes. Gave Christmas baskets to needy families during the depression years.

In June of 1940 the Sylvan Circle moved from the Community House to the Druid's Hall. (The Brothers having bought the old Loustanau Building and having it remodeled and repaired it for their own use, invited the Circle to use the Hall as their own) In that month a District Deputy School was held in Novato for Deputies of our Circle and other surrounding Circles.

In 1940 a Girl's Baseball team was organized with Marie Pronsini as their Captain. The Grove had a ball team for some time. It is regrettable that there were no records kept of how long this team played or when it was dissolved. During the World War II years, the Circle participated in many of the Civil Defense activities: attending First Aid Classes, Home Nursing Classes, knitting and making bandages for the Red Cross, helping entertain the men in services at the USO Building in San Rafael, sending cookies, books and games to the men in service, including those stationed on the Louis Magetti Ranch on Wilson Avenue and Hill Road. (Now Millwood subdivision) The members gave

C.1956 installation ceremony





The girls soft ball team 1936—taken in 1956—Manny Hale, Lena Balaski, Barb Prozini, Myrna Sjlone, Gladly Pementil, Pee-Wee Renati, Irene Petersen, Liz Gness, Fanny Manzoni—Managers were Babe Manzoni and George Gness

blood to the Red Cross many of them attaining the “gallon club membership”, bought Defense Stamps and Bonds. A proclamation was issued by the Grand Circles and Groves that all members entering military services should have their dues paid by their lodge during their term of services, as that they might be kept in good standing until their return. This was done by Sylvan for those of the men who were members. The only Ambulance drivers in Novato for Civil Defense were two of our own members, Lena Elaski and Betty Palmer Wise. In 1947 our Mother, Pearl Hickey donated a beautiful bell to be used in Memorial Services. In 1948 we celebrated our 25th Anniversary with a dinner at Maison Marin. Along with our Deputy, Brother Bruno Schultz was guest of honor at the affair. In December 1952 the Circle voted to sponsor a group of Blue Birds, “The Weeping Willows.”



Top Row—Elizebeth Tallish, Gertruide, Lillian Douglas, Karen Milikin, Laura Nave, Gretchen Gness. 3rd Row— Nettie Walker, Ruth Ely, Ann Johnson, Midge Simmonds, Hazel Orr, Betty Sherba, Verina Helbing. Seated—Joan Whitten, Hilda McDonald, Irene Zingler, Amelia Magetti, Thelma Zunino & Betty Smith

Compiled by Michael Read

The U.A.O.D. (United Ancient Order of Druids) of Novato was formed in April 1899 and the ladies would form their own Novato Circle No. 17 on November 19, 1902. The installation ceremonies were performed by Mrs. Annie Sorenson, grand arch Druidess from Modesto, assisted by Mrs. Knarston of San Francisco. and Mrs. Jahn of Petaluma, with forty charter members. The circle was organized by Past Arch of the Novato Grove 113 E.R. Samuels.

The following were elected and installed as officers of the Novato Circle No. 17, U A. O. D.: Mrs. M. E. Hohrs, P. A. D.; Mrs. C. Hartz, A. D.; Mrs. E. R. Samuels, First Bard; Mrs. A.

Hiribarren, Second Bard; Miss H. Valencia, secretary; Mrs. L. DeVoto. treasurer; Mrs. C. VV Lausen, Conductress; Charles Kusen, Conductor; Mrs. Linn, Inside Guardian; Miss A. Dahl, Outside Guardian.

The ladies Druids would surrender their charter in February 1914 and would consolidate with a circle in San Francisco. This was done owing to the fact that the larger number of the members resided in San Francisco and found it inconvenient to attend the meetings held in Novato.

April 10, 1923 Argus - Novato To Have Druidic Circle

Mrs. Pearl Hickey, Grand Arch Druidess of the Druidic order, has returned from Novato where she has been for several days securing members for the new Druidic Circle, that is to be instituted at that place, which will have a membership of 35. Mrs. Hickey will institute the Circle Sunday afternoon at 1:30. The past arch Druidess' degree team of San Francisco will exemplify the work. A large delegation of the Petaluma Druidic Circle will accompany Mrs. Hickey to Novato to witness the work.

April 21, 1923

Another step-in fraternity was taken in Novato Sunday afternoon, when a Druidic Circle was instituted by Grand Druidess Pearl Hickey in Loustaunau's Hall. The floor work was beautifully executed by an expert drill team from San Francisco.

The officers elected and installed of Novato Circle, which started with a charter membership of over 40 and will be known as Sylvian 115, were as follows: Past Arch Druidess—Mrs. May Miller. Arch Druidess—Mrs. A. Hiribarren. First Bard—Mrs. J. P. Loustaunau. Second Bard—Mrs. Jos. Gambetta, Jr. Secretary—Mrs. A. DeBorba. Treasurer—Mrs. M. Buzzini. Chaplain—Mrs. M. Nave. Conductress—Mrs. Wm. Nave. Musician— Miss Norine Hiribarren.

15th Anniversary

April 1938 Tuesday evening Sylvan Circle, No. 115, U.A.O.D., celebrated its fifteenth anniversary with a class initiation of sixteen members, as follows – Marie Stafford, Alice Sylvan, Tony Soares, Ann DeBorba, Carin DeBorba, Hilda MacDonald, Ella Miller, Frances Lewzey, Orsolina Ferrari, Stanley Blaski, Emma

Continued on next page

Hicok, Laura Deacon, Egidio Hicok, Laura Renati, Mabel Kuhlken, Edward Gness. The degree team of San Rafael Circle put on the floor work in a splendid manner. The guest of honor was Mrs. Pearl Hickey, Past Grand Arch Druidess and mother of Sylvan Circle, who fifteen years ago instituted the circle with the help of Novato Grove and Mrs. A. Hiribarren. The hall was beautifully decorated with house plants by Bruno Schultz. A regular Italian dinner was served under the supervision of Mrs. Torassa.

25th Anniversary

Sylvan Circle, U.A.O.D., celebrated its silver anniversary with a dinner Saturday night at the Maison Marin. Honored guests were the incoming arch druidess, Pearl Treadgall. The mother of the Circle, Mrs Pearl Hickey, formerly of Petaluma, now of San Bruno, regretted being unable to attend owing to the illness of he husband; charter members, Mrs. Emma Renati Ruscini, of Petaluma; Mrs. May Nave and Bruno Schultz, Novato; Mrs. Ruth Warden, the Circle's past arch druidess who arrived from Modesto to be one of the forty members and their guests attending the dinner.

50th Anniversary

Sylvan Circle, the Novato women's unit of the United Ancient Order of Druids, will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Cora Martinelli, grand arch druidess of California, will pay her official visit. Also on hand will be the circle's newly reelected officers: Mrs. Leslie Barlow, arch druidess; Mrs. John Murphy, first bard; Mrs. Orsalina Ferrarri, second bard; Mrs. Ed Larsen, recording secretary; Mrs. Ivan Johnson, financial secretary; Mrs. Fred Nave, treasurer; Mrs. George Scherba, conductress; Mrs. Milton Matz, assistant conductress; Mrs. Bert York, chaplain; Mrs. Robert Listman, inside guardian; Mrs. Leo Schoen, trustee; Mrs. Gertrude Collier, auditor; Mrs. Fred Nave, musician, and Mrs. David Johnson, past arch druidess.



Past Presidents of Sylvan Circle—Standing Mrs. Renati, Anna DeBorba, Maddeline Hiribarren, Mrs. Asunta Zunino, Sitting Mae Nave.

Three charter members are still on the circle's current membership roster: Anna DeBorba, Assunta Zunino, and Madeline York.

Mrs. York's mother, Mrs. Annie Hiribarren, was elected in 1923 as the circle's first arch druidess. Her three daughters, Madeline, Norine and Anita were charter members. Mrs. Hiribarren and her husband operated a hotel at Grant Avenue and Scott Street.

Mrs. Zunino and her husband had come here from Italy. He started a shoemaking business here in 1910. The business (now shoe repair) was carried on by his son.

A former Novato school teacher, Mrs. DeBorba ran a restaurant on Grant Avenue and Highway 101 (where the mini-park is now located), and her husband operated a bar on the site that DeBorba's still occupies.

The first Druid circle for women was formed in Novato in 1901, and a second was set up three years later. Both of these groups disbanded. Mrs. York recalls her mother going to meetings of that earliest circle and bringing her along in a baby carriage.

What is now Druids Hall, at Grant and Reichert Avenues, was the Sylvan Circle's meeting place from the first. It was then called Laustannau's Hall. Later they moved to the Community House, where there was a kitchen. They moved back when the Laustannau building was bought by the Druids in the 1940's.

The list of charter members of Sylvan Circle includes many names well known today. Rosalie and Frank Gness (ex-supervisor Gness' parents), Henry Pini and Marie Buzzini Pini, Paul and Emma Renati, May Miller Nave, Dorothy Gambetta, Antoinette and Louis Bormolini, Irene Nave, Laura Rodoni, Marie Nave, Angelina Salmina, Zeld Stanke, Amelia and Gervasio Trabucci, Elizabeth Firenze, Dora Manzoni, Alice Rodgers, Alice Laustannau, Wilfred Gauthier, Bruno Schultz, Anton DeBorba, Leo Zunino. Men could belong to the women's circle, but women could not be members of the men's group. Mrs. William Nave, now a member of San Rafael Circle 137, was also a charter members of the Novato Circle and suggested the name Sylvan Circle because of the many trees on the hills surrounding Novato.

The Circle had 65 members in 1973, but would be gone within five years.



Charter Members of the Sylvan Circle 115, United Ancient Order of Druids, (from left) Mmes. Bert York, Anna DeBorba, and Asunta Zunino would be honored at the circle's 50th anniversary party at Druids Hall in Novato.

The Last Plane out of Hamilton

By Michael Corlett

In a farewell gesture, Brig. General William Hathaway salutes the last Air Force aircraft to depart from Hamilton Air Force Base on January 6th, 1976. The base closure marked the end of an association between Novato, Marin County, and the Air Force that stretched more than four decades. Old friends and former base commanders gathered in a private ceremony to say their goodbyes. Following is a reprint of the article that appeared in the January 14, 1976, edition of the Novato Advance, marking the occasion.

Novato Advance—Belinda Taylor—January 14, 1976
Old friends and loyal comrades gathered to bid farewell to Hamilton Air Force Base here Friday as the last C-130 cargo plane departed and the flag was lowered for that last time by the Air Force.

This symbolically indicated the final gesture by the Air Force. Other federal units from now on will raise and lower the flag at Hamilton.

Fickle weather, showers, dark clouds, and arching rainbows, reflected the mixed mood of the crowd. Sadness that the gallant old base was closing, hoping that something good would one day replace it.

Air Force captain Robert E. Shepherd of Chico piloted the camouflaged colored big-bellied plane on its symbolic last flight. Remarked one of the crew sardonically before takeoff, "Let's give Bell Marin Keys one final low buzz." Amidst the nostalgic tributes voiced Friday were reminders that there are those in the community who are pleased to see the military airport close down.

Brigadier General William Ridgeway, base commander, gave a crisp military salute as the plane rolled down the runway. Overhead it dipped its wings up and down as a goodbye gesture. The crowd cheered and waved as the airplane roared past. A hush fell and the groups began moving to the flag-pole area for the lowering of the colors that have flown over the military installation since 1933.

Attending the ceremonies were city and county officials, members of the Marin military affairs committee, numerous military brass, and former base commanders. Hathaway introduced them all with a special brief tribute to former Marin County Supervisor William Gness, who helped convince the military to locate Hamilton in Marin County. Gness was on hand to greet federal officials who flew to Marin back in the 30s landing in a hayfield that eventually became Hamilton.

He was also on hand Friday to mark the base's closure after more than four decades. Gness holds out the hope the military yet has a role to play at Hamilton.

Addressing the crowd Hathaway asked rhetorically: "How do you retire an Air Force base with a fabulous history of contributions?"

He went on, "It's our fervent hope that the living, vibrant personality of Hamilton will remain in the hearts of the community."

Supervisor Arnold Baptiste and Councilwoman Gail Wilhelm—at times at odds with each other over Hamilton's future—both spoke of their sadness and hopes for the abandoned property.

Hathaway and Brig. General Sidney S. Novares, commander of the Western Air Force Reserve Region, folded the flag—after a few false starts—and presented it

to Col. Richard George, retired, the new base caretaker. Air Force Chaplain Lt. Col. Howard Schulton closed the ceremony with the invocation: "God bless the memory of Hamilton Air Force base..."



A final fold of Hamilton's flag
Brig. Gen. W. G. Hathaway leads ceremony

Many in the crowd gathered in Hathaway's nearly-empty offices for a glass of champagne following the ceremony. Some reminisced; others talked of the future. "I had the best WAF unit here in the whole Air Force," said

Senior Master Sgt. Jean Colby. She was stationed at Hamilton from 1963 to 1973.

Americo Casci, at Hamilton since 1955 in operations, said, "It finally happened...I can't believe it." He's going on to March Air Force Base.

"It's a sad occasion for a Bicentennial year," said Col. Michael J. Stublarec, retired base commander in 1968 and 1969.

Maj. Gen. C.W. McColpin, former commander of the Fourth Air Force stationed at Hamilton 1964-69, remarked, "We all hate to see the Air Force pull out. It's been a very great base...I hope to God it's got a future. Friday was also the last day of active duty for Hathaway, who informed the Advance that he's retiring after 23 years with the Air Force.

He will be joining the Home Savings and Loan Co. and plans to continue living in San Marin, he said.

Hathaway has the distinction of being Hamilton's last commander. He was also the commander of the 452nd Tactical Airlift Wing, which is relocating to March Air Force Base.

In attendance Friday, in addition to those indicated, were Maj. Gen. Rollin B Moore Jr., retired, former commander of the Western Air Force Reserve Region, and other former base commanders.

Col. Ralph Wanderer (1964-1966), Col. Charles Praui (1966-1968) and Col. aLee A. Sarter (1969-1971).

A small department of defense caretaker staff is to oversee the base until it is turned over to the General Services Administration or local community sometime within the next year and a half.



Hathaway waves good-bye to the last
plane out of Hamilton

Edward E. Tanner

By Barry Smail

Edward E. Tanner was born on December 31, 1920, in Macksville, Kansas. In 1933, the Tanner family moved to Chico, California, the State which Ed would call home for the rest of his life.

In February, 1941, the 20-year-old enlisted in the California National Guard (184th Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division) and received heavy weapons training at Camp San Luis Obispo. Because his father was a baker, Ed also served as a cook. On December 7, 1941, Ed applied for transfer to the Army Air Corps. (It had always been his dream to fly.) In March of 1942, Ed entered the aviation cadet pilot training program at the Hancock College of Aeronautics in Santa Maria. In October, he graduated with the rank of Staff Sergeant, and was assigned to Hamilton Field, where he flew P-39s. In January of 1943, the Army Air Corps, no longer wanting to have "Sergeant" pilots, reclassified them as "flight officers" (a designation like that of a warrant officer).

While at Hamilton, Ed met and fell in love with June Hendrick of San Rafael, who worked on the base as a civilian employee in the accounting/finance office. They were married on February 25, 1943 at St. Paul's Church in San Rafael. (Later, the engine of Ed's P-39 caught fire and he had to bail out over Black Point. The headline in the San Rafael Independent blared "Newlywed bails out.")

In March, Ed received his overseas orders and was transferred to Casablanca, Morocco, where he joined the First Fighter Group, 71st Squadron. (Eddie Rickenbacker was in the 91st squadron.) P-39s were found to be "almost useless" (Tanner's words) as combat aircraft, so the young aviator was allowed to select a different plane. He chose the P-38.

In November of 1943, the 71st was transferred to Sicily. While flying cover for the landing of Allied forces at Salerno, Ed garnered his first victory. "One good thing about air combat is you don't have to see your victim," he remarked. After the Salerno beachhead was secured, the 71st was transferred to Tunisia, and then relocated to Cagliari on the island of Sardinia.

On December 1, 1943, Ed's squadron was providing escort for a bomber group whose mission was to attack a harbor on the west coast of Italy. An air battle ensued and a Messerschmitt Bf 109 jumped on Ed's tail. George Parker, flying above Ed, attempted to engage the 109, but his plane collided with Ed's. "The P-38 had poor visibility below, so Parker didn't see me," Ed explained.

Both pilots ejected to safety and were captured near Pisa. Accompanied by a German guard, Ed and



George hitchhiked to Florence. From there they were transported by rail to Frankfurt, where they were put in solitary confinement and interrogated. "The interpreter knew a lot about me and my family--where I went to school, etc." Ed recalled. "The Germans had agents all over the United States, and they collected news clippings on many U.S. servicemen, including me." On Christmas Eve, Ed and George were released from solitary and "we had a nice Christmas dinner."

On December 26, Ed and George were put on a boxcar and transported to Stalag Luft I on Nazi Germany's Baltic Coast. There were several hundred prisoners housed in 10-12 barracks. Many were British officers who were captured at Dunkirk.

Ed said they were treated very well. "The philosophy of the German Commandant was not to make us mad. But some of the other camps were no picnic, particularly those of the enlisted men. We were very lucky."

The Red Cross supplied supplemental food rations, set up a camp library, supplied musical instruments and much more. "We had a great dance band; there was a guy who played with the Dorsey Brothers." A fellow prisoner had played for the Detroit Tigers; he organized a baseball league, and the Red Cross supplied the equipment. "The English guys set up a cricket league." One prisoner, a Rhodes Scholar, taught a course on philosophy. But it was not all fun and games at Stalag Luft 1.

"Everyone had a notion about escaping," Ed said. The ground was loamy, and it was pretty easy to dig tunnels.

"There was tunneling going on all the time. But the Germans would put seismographs into the ground, so they knew exactly where we would reach the surface. And into the cooler we would go."

During her husband's imprisonment, June resided at 1418 Second Street in San Rafael. She continued to work in Hamilton's finance office. In a letter dated January 4, 1944, the Adjutant General's office in the War Department informed June: "This is to confirm my recent telegram in which you were regretfully informed that your husband, Flight Officer Edward E. Tanner has been reported missing in action over Italy since December 1, 1943. I know that added distress is caused by failure to receive more information or details. Therefore, I wish to assure you that at any time additional information is received it will be transmitted to you without delay."

On January 21, 1944, June received a telegram from E. E. Alderman of Dayton, Ohio. It read: "The Berlin radio at 7:10 p.m. EST today announced the names of 5 captured airmen...One was T/S Edward Earl Canner (sic) with you given as next of kin. Although a POW, you will be glad to learn he is safe and OK. I have relayed over 4,000 messages over the last 2 years to relatives all over the U.S, a volunteer service for the home folks." Moved by this gesture, June decided to monitor the German and Japanese broadcasts on her own. Using shorthand, she transcribed and forwarded the announcements in letters to the wives. She received many replies from spouses, including one written by Mrs. Franklin Fliniau. Dated July 29, 1944, she wrote: "I have received your most welcome letter telling me of a message from my husband Lt. Col Franklin M. Fliniau broadcast by Radio Tokyo July 25. I was overwhelmed by the receipt of this message and your kindness in forwarding it to me. And more than grateful and do appreciate your time doing it. It is hard to find words to express the joy this has brought to me and my

husband's family. In this message my husband says in part 'received your letters.' This represents the nearest to exchange of letters we have had since December 1941 as my husband arrived in the



Philippine Islands just prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor... In closing may I say God Bless you for your kindness." On May 1, 1945, after 545 days of captivity, Ed's German captors moved out as Soviet troops approached. On May 13, a group of B-17s flew in from England to transport Stalag Luft 1's now-former prisoners to France. From there, the Americans took a Matson Line steamship vessel to New York City. Ed recalls they were greeted by a band playing "Don't Fence Me In." Tanner then took a train across country to Camp Beale (now Beale Air Force Base) and was given 90 days leave. Ed and June were reunited at last.

After the war, Ed joined the 349th Air Force Reserve. He served primarily out of Hamilton, but sometimes flew out of Travis Air Force Base to fulfil his annual two-week service requirement. He continued to serve in the Reserves until December 31, 1980, and he retired with the rank of Major. Between his active and reserve duty, he served his country for 39 years.

Ed and June relocated to Kingsburg in the Central Valley, where he managed a cotton gin for the San Joaquin Cotton Oil Co. The couple returned to Marin in 1951, when Ed was hired as a Field Examiner by the California Public Utilities Commission. He retired in 1981 as Director of the Transportation Division. In 1992, the couple moved to the Tamalpais in Greenbrae. June passed in 2017; Ed died in 2019.



Ed and June had two children, Grant and Robert. On February 25 of this year, on what would have been Ed and June Tanner's 80th wedding anniversary, Robert brought his father's archives to Ray Dwelly, Hamilton Field History Museum Manager. (Robert realized only later the serendipitous coincidence of the date.) As a result, a "shadow box" exhibit about Ed Tanner was created and is on

display at the museum. All of Ed Tanner's original materials have been accessioned, placed in the museum archives and are available for public review and research purposes.

Excerpt from "History of the Hamilton Field Air Base Area"

"... Upon this same occasion (7 April, 1945), Mrs. June Tanner, employed in the Budget and Fiscal Office of Hamilton Field, received the award of the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters for her prisoner-of war husband, Flight Officer Edward E. Tanner. The Citation reads: "For meritorious achievement while participating in ten sorties against the enemy and for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while participating in sustained operational activities against the enemy from 22 September to 31 October and from 4 November to 28 November 1943. Flight Officer Tanner was formerly stationed at Hamilton Field with the 328th Fighter Group. He is a member of the 326th Squadron, and a P-38 pilot, now a prisoner in Germany, Tanner is one of the flyers pictured in the painting by Norman Todhunter that hangs in the Enlisted Men's Service Club..."



On June 30, four Hispanic families participated in a tour of the Novato History Museum. San Ramon Elementary School parents Grissel Magana and Sara Torres organized it. Grissel translated the museum's Exhibit Guide into Spanish. Nearly 20 adults and children attended. Grissel and Sara, along with Maria Aguila, Sandra Lua, Novato History Museum Manager Susan Magnone and Guild Vice President Barry Smail, comprise Guild's Hispanic Outreach Committee. Last spring, committee members made a series of presentations to the English Learners Advisory Committees of all but two NUSD schools. Parents were invited to chronicle their Novato family histories and submit their stories and family artifacts to the Museum.

The 349th Air Mobility Wing

Celebrating the 80th Anniversary Of the Wing and its Airmen

Michael D. Blodgett, Ph. D. Historian, 349th Air Mobility Wing

The 349th Air Mobility Wing is currently the largest Wing in the U. S. Air Force, with 2823 Airmen authorized (although only about 2461 are actually present). It was established in 1943 at Sedalia Army Airfield in Missouri as the 349th Troop Carrier Group, and deployed to Europe in 1944. Arriving too late to participate in D-Day, the 349th Troop Carrier Group did fly British paratroopers into Denmark and Norway to take the surrender to German forces there. For a brief time, the Group was deployed to Texas, where they were active training Chinese aircrews in flying the C-46. When Japan surrendered, the group was deactivated then immediately re-activated in the Reserve at Hamilton Field as the 349th Troop Carrier Group (Medium). Ordered to active duty in 1951 for the Korean War, 1962 for the Cuban Missile Crisis, and 1968 to support operations in Vietnam, Korea, and Europe. In July 1969 it was transferred to Travis AFB as an Associate Wing of the 60th Air Mobility Wing. The Wing was now flying the same aircraft as their active-duty counterparts--C-5s and C-141s.



Throughout the '70's the 349th supported Operation Deep Freeze, the Air Force resupply of Arctic research missions. In 1989 349th AMW pilots flew elements of 7th Infantry Division (Light) into Panama in support of Operation Just Cause, which removed Manuel Noriega from power in Panama. All the Wing flying squadrons

were mobilized in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 1990-91. 1994 the Wing received the KC-10, becoming the first Wing in the USAF to operate three weapons systems.

At this time, it was redesignated the 349th AMW. In 2006 Wing C-141s were replaced by the C-17. Wing flying squadrons were mobilized to support Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and supported humanitarian operations in Rwanda (1994), Darfur (2009) and Haiti (2010). In 2020 Wing medical Airmen deployed to New York City to aid in the Covid response there. In 2021 Wing Airmen participated on Operation Allies Refuge. So much for the basic history of the Wing. But like any organization—military or civilian—the 349th really depends on its people to do its missions. So, I feel it is appropriate to look at some of the many—very many, in fact—stories of the Wing's Airmen as we look back on its 80th anniversary.

For instance, in mid-December of 1964 an unexpected blizzard dropped heavy snow in Montana, shutting down roads in that state. The temperatures dropped to 40 degrees below zero, freezing many cattle and making it impossible to get hay to those cattle that survived. Montana ranchers were looking at economic disaster—those herds were their livelihood. On December 18th President Johnson ordered the Air Force to

help Montana ranchers. The 349th Troop Carrier Wing (the forerunner of the 349th AMW) was put in charge of this operation, named Operation Hay Lift. Flying out of Malmstrom AFB in Montana, commanding 9 C-119 Flying Boxcars, the 349th TCW was able to airdrop hay to herds of cattle that were cut off by the blizzard. Now this was not as easy as it sounds, as the aircraft first had to fly a pattern to find the herds, which had been in distant pastures. Once they were found, the Airmen had to push the bales of hay out of the aircraft, which was harder than it sounds. The bales of hay were dropped from a height of 50 feet and a speed of 150 mph—in freezing temperatures. Each C-119 could carry 5.5 tons of hay. Between 18 and 21 December the 349th TCW aircraft delivered 65 tons of hay in 17 sorties. The operation was closed down on 21 December when the roads had been cleared and normal distribution of hay could resume.



When we think of an Air Wing, we think of planes and flyers. But the 349th also has a large Medical Group that frequently participates in humanitarian operations. With the collapse of the South Vietnamese army in 1975 it was clear that North Vietnam would conquer South Vietnam. But there were 3300 Vietnamese infants who had been adopted by American parents that needed to be brought out of Vietnam. This led to Operation Babylift, the airlift of those infants to the United States. However, Operation Babylift was not without loss. The first humanitarian flight out of Vietnam, a C-5A carrying 314 infants, nurses and doctors had its rear doors fail shortly after takeoff. The pilots lost almost all control of the aircraft, but were able to crash-land at Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base outside of Saigon. However, the C-5A came to rest in a rice paddy over a mile away from the airbase and the nearest road, so rescue was slow in arriving. Of the 314 people onboard, 176 survived. Among the dead were three Airmen from the 349th Air Evacuation Squadron—TSgt Denning T. Johnson, SSgt Michael G. Paget, and Capt. Mary T. Klinker. One of the 349th AES Airmen, medical technician SSgt James Hadley, survived the crash and immediately began giving lifesaving oxygen to the surviving infants. For his heroism he was awarded the Airman's Medal.

The Wing also provides aerial refueling to other aircraft, and after the September 11th, 2001 attacks, the Wing provided KC-

10 crews to fly out of Diego Garcia in support of operations over Afghanistan. On 12 December 2001 a crew from the 79th Aerial Refueling Squadron was flying a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom over the Indian Ocean. The Commander of the aircraft was Major Brandon Nugent and his copilot was Captain Michael Dali. A B-1 bomber from Diego Garcia suffered a catastrophic electrical failure and crashed in the Indian Ocean. They had been unable to notify Diego Garcia that they were going down, nor give them their coordinates. The only thing they could do is turn on their emergency transponder. Fortunately, Major Nugent heard the ping of the crew's emergency transponder and immediately notified Diego Garcia of a downed plane and requested permission to leave his assigned area and search for the crew. With permission granted, Major Nugent turned the aircraft over to Captain Dali, who had prior experience in search and rescue. Captain Dali set up a search pattern, located the downed Airmen and directed search and rescue crews to their location. For their action the crew received the James H. Doolittle award for Outstanding Aircrew in 2002.

While the Wing flies mainly transport aircraft into secure airfields, this is not always the case. On the night of 1 November 1968 two members of the 312th Airlift Squadron, Capt. Robert B. Hutchins, pilot and A1C Robert K. Henshillwood, distinguished themselves during an attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base. They had landed at Ton Son Nhut as were offloading cargo when, shortly after midnight, three rockets fell on the runway, one within eighty yards of their aircraft. Heavy fighting then broke out around the air base. They completed offloading their aircraft despite the fighting. Then, the base command post notified them that there was a large quantity of explosives on the ramp as well as numerous aircraft, and ordered the four aircraft that were there to load the explosives and move them out of the Saigon area. Three of the aircraft commanders refused and flew off. Captain Hutchins and A1C Henshillwood, on the other hand, loaded 19,200 pounds of explosives while five more rockets struck the base. Undaunted, they were able to finish loading and make a safe departure. Their calm professionalism and devotion to duty considerably reduced the threat to the freight area and numerous C-130's parked nearby.

We sometimes also forget that even those Airmen who do not deploy to combat serve. For instance, when the United States began deploying forces for Operation Desert Shield in 1990, there was a huge outpouring of support from the American public. Virtually everyone, individuals and businesses, were eager to help. The soldiers, sailors and airmen deployed to Saudi Arabia were asking for things like baby wipes and other creature comforts, and the American people were eager to provide those same creature comforts. But as citizens turned up to offer their donations, there was no one at Travis AFB to collect them. Into this gap stepped SSgt Michael L. Fletcher, a reserve loadmaster with the 312th Military Airlift Squadron. Taking charge, he organized the acceptance of civilian donations, their

packaging and certification for overseas transport, and their transportation to departure points. Ultimately, this program became so big that it received its own name—Operation Desert Support. Soon, SSgt Fletcher received the recognition and support of local Congressman Vic Fazio, who was able to advertise his efforts. This resulted in Sacramento corporations donating much needed boxes and packing materials. Although he did not deploy, SSgt Fletcher had a profound impact on raising the morale of those who did.

Then, there are some missions that are just, well, strange. MSgt Gene Simmons, a loadmaster with the 708th Airlift Squadron, had two of the oddest cargos in the history of the 349th AMW. In December of 1975, scientists studying the swallows of Capistrano wanted to determine how far a swallow could go from Capistrano and still make it back. So, they tagged a several dozen swallows with transmitters, then contracted the Air Force to fly them to India. MSgt Simmons was on the crew that received that job. Flying them to India, MSgt Simmons released the sparrows as ordered. Unfortunately, none ever made it back to Capistrano. Then, in January of 1975 MSgt Simmons was the loadmaster of a C-141 supporting Operation Deepfreeze. In this case scientists had to move 14 penguins from Antarctica to the San Diego Scripps Aquarium for study. The scientists ran the penguins into an open-air corral, then left it up to MSgt Simmons to put them into their specialized containers. This is when MSgt Simmons realized he had a problem. The containers opened on the top, so MSgt Simmons needed to lift the penguins up and into the containers. But when he tried picking them up under the wings they pecked at his face. Flummoxed, MSgt Simmons had to step back a moment. Then he noticed the penguins had a flap of skin between their wings that allowed them to be lifted like luggage and placed safely into their containers. Lifting them by their backs, MSgt Simmons was able to put the penguins in their containers without any injury to himself or the penguins and get them safely loaded onto his aircraft. Problem solved.

And to top things off, there is the Career of Lieutenant Colonel Chester H. Bear. Chester H. Bear was a teddy bear who, surprisingly enough, received a commission in the United States Air Force Reserve. His story begins in 1951, when Captain Larry Toole of the 313th Troop Carrier Squadron was tasked with a humanitarian mission. There was a young girl in Portland who was in an iron lung, but needed to be moved to Great Falls, Montana. The Air Force agreed to transport her, and Captain Toole took the mission. The night before he left, he was telling his family about the little girl and the upcoming

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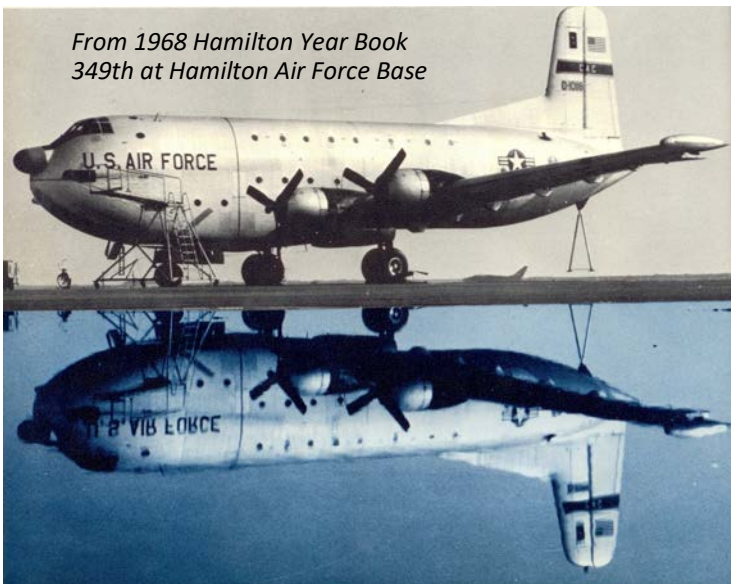


An Air Force reserve C-124 crew of the 349th Military Airlift Wing, Hamilton AFB, awaits clearance at Hickam AFB, Hawaii to continue its cargo mission to Southeast Asia early in 1967

mission when his daughter, who was about the same age as the polio-stricken girl, went to her bedroom and brought back her teddy bear. She told her father that she wanted to give the teddy bear to the little girl, which Captain Toole did the next day. Several months later, a package arrived at the Squadron for Captain Toole. It was from the little girl he had flown to Minnesota, and along with returning the bear she included a letter telling him how much the bear had comforted her both during the flight and the treatment for polio. At this point, the bear, which had been named Chester by the polio-stricken girl, was commissioned into the Air Force Reserve as a Captain. His commission was signed by Major General Nathan F. Twining (who would later become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and Major General Chester F. McCarthy, commander of the 305th Air Division. However, he was required to take a flight physical, which he passed with flying colors, and go to jump school at Fort Bragg. Presumably he jumped in tandem with another trainee. Captain Bear was not destined for a desk job. During the Korean War, an Army parachute unit making a combat jump asked for Captain Bear to accompany them. He did, and not only did he now have a combat jump to his credit, but he was injured in the jump, and received a Purple Heart. In 1956, he deployed on operation Deep Freeze I, the American exploration of Antarctica led by Admiral Richard E. Byrd. During this expedition, he accompanied Major Richard Levett when the latter trekked to the South Pole. He flew into the Persian Gulf during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was finally retired in 2006 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. As an aside to this, he was returned to Larry Toole, now retired. But when Mr. Toole received LTC Bear, he was shocked—Toole had retired as a Major. His records are maintained by the USAF under the serial number A.B.1 (Air Bear 1) and he remains to this day a valued former member of the 313th Airlift Squadron.

The point of these stories is that the Airmen of the 349th Air Mobility Wing have faced situations that were sometimes absurd, sometimes hilarious, occasionally dangerous but always necessary. It is not the aircraft that the Wing flies that conduct these missions, it is the Airmen, and they have, since World War Two, done a magnificent job in serving their country. They are magnificent young men and women who hold jobs during the week, then give up at least one weekend a month—significantly more if mobilized—for their country. That such magnificent young men and women exist gives me great hope for the future of this nation.

Produced by Barbara Irwin Gildea



Black John – John Henry Pinkston

By Michael Read

Below are a couple of stories found about Black John.

Black Pioneers In Early Marin

by Mary A. Wells IJ Nov. 1, 1975

Reuben Knox, a physician who settled in Novato, brought some of his slaves with him from the South. He also brought along with him two sons, and some cousins. He and one of his sons drowned on May 28, 1851, after being in Marin for 8 months.

His surviving son, Joseph, who had planned to return to the East after a short stay with his father, stayed in Novato after the tragedy occurred. The elder Knox had leased Rancho Novato with the intention of buying it, however, the purchase was never completed after the tragedy.

Reuben Knox, in a letter to his wife, writes a few days before his death, gives information about some of his slaves and hired hands: "I heard while in the City last Romeo had gone off on some vessel. Good riddance to the ungrateful little rat. Sara is married and think I told you. No news from George since he left on the British ship Antelope. Hunter, Louis and Fred are still here.

Dr. Robert C. Thomas, presently a practicing physician in San Francisco, is the great grandson of Joseph Knox. He states that Joseph Knox married one of Camillo Ynitia's two daughters. Camillo Ynitia was the only Indian granted a rancho by the Mexican government. It was located in Novato and was known as rancho Olompali.

Helen Van Cleave Park, co-writer of "Early Marin" and also "The Making of Marin," reveals that black slaves were released in Novato by Knox and that some of the black families that lived on "N. Hill" in Novato were freed slaves that came to California with the Knox family.

One black of early Novato that history identifies specifies is John Pingston (also known as Black John). Not too much is known about where he came from and when and where he died or what happened to his descendants. It is said by some that he was one of the slaves that was brought to Novato by the Knox family. However, Dr. Thomas was not sure whether this was true or not. (Dr. Thomas called him Pingston not Pinkston)'

Black John' - a figure shrouded in mystery from Novato's past

By GWEN FRANKEL February 12, 1975 Advance
This being Black History week, some Novatans have been delving into the legend of Black John, one of Novato's earliest non-Indian residents, according to Ernest Gray of the Marin County Human Rights Commission.

Little is known of Black John, or "Juan Negro" as he was called, except that he was a good friend of Camilio Ynitia, last Indian "headman" of Olompali and builder of the old adobe which was later incorporated into the Burdell mansion.

Black John was also probably one of the few literate



Painting of Camillo Ynita

men around the Novato valley during the time he lived here (1830's and 40's) as he was described as "a man of color who practiced white man's law." He married Camilio Ynatia's adopted daughter and was evidently given a piece of land owned by Camilio. Black John Road and Black John slough are named for him. In the interest of giving Black John a more prominent

place in Novato's history, Gray contacted a number of people knowledgeable on the history of Olompali (Helen Van Cleave Park, Gail Wilhelm, Charles Slay maker and William Wright) to piece together what little is known of "Juan Negro."

Wright now lives on Black John Road on the same piece of land believed to have been the home of Black John. A title search by Wright showed that the 4.7-acre parcel on which he lives was once deeded from Camilio Ynitia to "Black John and J. Ynitia."

An 1859 surveyor's map also Pinpoints a spot near Olompali, at the base of Mount Burdell, simply named "Black John."

Unfortunately, most of what is known about Black John is recorded in an unpublished manuscript whose author withdrew it from the public in 1970, according to a spokesman for the University Archives at U.C. Berkeley. The author, Isabella Kelly, compiled "enormous amounts" of material on the Coast Miwok Indians during the mission period, the spokesman said, and for years it was available in the Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley. He recalled that there were three notebooks of more than 900 pages, but Ms. Kelly withdrew them when she moved to Mexico.

She reportedly wrote the manuscript as either a doctoral dissertation or a master's thesis based on field studies she did in 1931-32.

John Rauskolb, of the Novato pre-history museum, calls the manuscript unique as it is apparently the only source of ethnographic information for the Bay Area in the mission period. Rauskolb says only portions of the manuscript have been published in the Point Reyes National Seashore compendium (1971) but they all deal with native plants and linguistic studies not personalities. Copies of the compendium are available at the prehistory Museum.

To the recollection of those Novatans who did read the manuscript dealing with Camilio and Black John, the information was obtained in part by an interview Ms. Kelly had with an Indian woman who'd heard it from her grandmother who was related to Camilio by marriage.

The story goes that Camilio sold a portion of land

at Olompali to James Black for \$4000 but it's not known if the price was paid in full.

At the time Camilio had a daughter about six years old and he asked her to come with him while he buried the money. "I'm drunk now," he told her; "but you remember where I hide it." She went with him, according to the story.

Sometime after that a neighbor of Camilio's told him he'd seen someone heading toward the creek, so Camilio went there and was shot in the heart by an arrow.

He is supposed to have made his way back to the house (adobe?) and called to Black John.

According to the Kelly manuscript Camilio said, "Juan, come quick. Somebody has killed me and I'm dying." Then Camilio's people went to "the man of color who was practicing white man's law." The sheriff came and they caught the murderer, according to the tale. (None of which has apparently been documented from other sources.)

The money was never found as the little girl could not find the place where her father buried it. The tale concludes that Camilio was not killed for the money but rather because of a fight he had been in with his murderer. No one knows where Black John came from or what became of him after he left Novato ... or even if he died here.

Mrs. Park recalls that Black John was a slave brought out to Novato by a man named Knox and then freed.

Black John's last name was Pingston but he was seldom called that and it's not known if he has any descendants.

There were apparently many blacks in the Napa area at the time and Mrs. Park says newspapers of the period told of blacks holding celebrations on "freedom day."

For many years, Mount Burdell was known to area residents as "N. Hill." apparently because Black John lived at the base of it on the east or southeast side.

However there are other legends of how it came to be known as "N. Hill." One says Black John was involved in some mining on the mountain and that there was a cave-in and most of those killed were blacks.

Another story goes that the mountain burned completely black. Others say only a small hill near Black John's house had that name but some people referred to the whole mountain by that name.

Continued on next page



1856 "Plata Map of Rancho Novato—showing Black John's house



1873 map—arrow points to John's House

The 1860 shows S.J. Pinston, age 40, a farmer with a real estate value of \$1000 and was born in the West India Islands and cannot read or write. Has a son J.J. age 9 and a daughter Mary L. age 4 both Mulatto. It also says that Mary A. Pinston was 16, but we know that she was around 35 at the time of her death. Because the U.S. census of people that die before June 1, 1860, shows Mary Pinkston, female, Indian, married, house wife and was born abt. 1825 in California. Die in Novato on May 1860 from rheumatism which she had for 4 months. If she was 16 in 1860, their son J.J age 9

means she gave birth when she was 7. S.J. Pinkston, Dec. 1863 Civil War Draft Registrations records show he was 42, colder, a labor, single and from Isle of Port Prince. June 4, 1864 the IJ would report: "JOLLIFICATION Olampali (Olompali) Ranch, near Novato, was the scene of a grand jubilee on Monday last, gotten up and enjoyed hugely by "our fellow-citizens of African descent." John Henry Pinkston, an old pioneer of California, formerly of Jersey, and known far and near as "Black John" was the "big toad in the puddle," and presided over the affair in a style peculiar to himself."

Married Again

John would get married again on February 3, 1866. Found this IJ story: "Hymenial. – John Henry Pinkston, an old pioneer of California, and known to the old residents under the sobriquet of "Black John," was united in holy bands of matrimony on Saturday last to a dusky maid of the forest—one of the aborigines, and a descendant of the chief of the warlike tribe of the Jouskiousme, which once claimed the territory around San Rafael as their peaceful domain. The notice will be found in another column, under the proper head."

The notice was: "MARRIED. On the 3d inst. by Rev. Louis Lootens, JOHN HENRY PINKSTON Esq., to Miss MARIE ANTONIA SALES (1844-1867), both of this county."

They would have a daughter Mary L. (1867 -) and found this story:

"Feb 16, 1867 IJ - PRACTICAL AMALGAMATION. — Born about a week ago to the wife of Mr. John Pinkston near Novato, a daughter. Perhaps we owe an

By Michael Read

John Pinkston was not part of the Knox party because Knox did not get to San Francisco until September 1850 (See the Novato Historian - a story about Knox called "Knoxville 94945" summer issue 2012). John would get a business license on August 14, 1850, from the newly-founded County of Marin:

"The sum of three hundred dollars for incidental expenses was directed to be obtained from treasurer, and former Alcalde Reynolds, while vendors of goods, liquors and merchandise were called upon to appear to obtain necessary licenses for conducting their business, These were granted to the following applicants on August 14: W.F. Hoover, W.F. Parker, Charles Hill, Leonard Story, John A. Davis, John Pinkston (a color man) James Miller, George Milewater and John Morton." John Henry Pinkston was born sometime between 1820 and 1827, in the West India Islands, either Port-au-Prince, Haiti or Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Caribbean nations that shares the island of Hispaniola. Haiti would get its independence in 1804 and Dominican Republic would kick out Spain in 1821, so at the time of John's birth he was a free man.

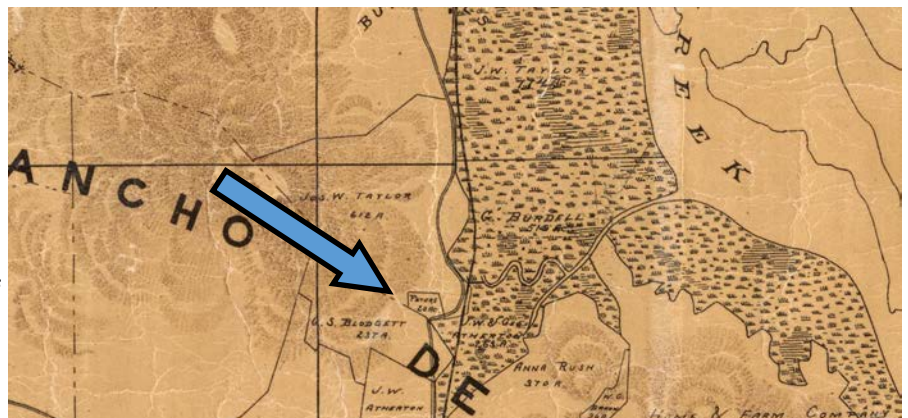
He would leave the Island in 1844, possibly by way of Jersey, before coming to Marin County and the Olompali Ranch that same year.

He would marry Mary A. Ynita (1825- May 1860) the adopted daughter of Camillo Ynitia, owner of Olompali, they would have a son Juan Jose Pinkston (1851- Feb. 1890) and also a daughter Mary L (1856-).

Camillo would convey approximately 20 acres in the extreme southwest corner of the ranch known as Apalacocho (which was a 632-acre parcel) on February 14, 1853, to John Pinkston, husband of Camillo's adopted daughter and "a free man of color." Pinkston was given the land in trust for Camillo's grandson, Juan Jose Pinkston who was born several years earlier. (From Dr. Robert Thomas, 2006, gr, gr, gr grandson of Camillo)

In the 1860 Productions of Agriculture, we find a S.J. Pinkston who has 10-acres of land with a cash value of \$1,000, his value of farming improvements was \$50, he had 4 horses, 1 swine with a value of \$150 of livestock.

I could not find an 1850 census with John or Mary Pinkston in it or even Camillo Ynita.



1893 Map shows the 20 acres that was John's place

explanation to the progenitors of this highly interesting issue, as we have received almost daily, notices from the father to publish the event. He must understand that our publication day is on Saturday and therefore impossible for it to appear in the JOURNAL except by an extra, on any earlier day of the week. We hope no mischief will result from the delay of notice. It may be proper for us to chronicle the fact that this new object of parental affection is a cross between two very distinct but ancient nationalities —the Congo, and the Joustiousme. The latter were the aboriginal inhabitants of all this portion of the Pacific coast.”

Marie would die on May 29, 1867. Found June 8, 1867, IJ: “Died At Novato, May 29th, the wife of John Henry Pinkston.”

The 1870 Census this shows John name as Saml Pinkston, now 43 born abt. 1827 in San Domingo, black, farm laborer, is real estate value was \$500 and personal value was \$500. He still could not read or write. His daughters living with him are now Mary L. 15 and Mary age 4.

Death of Black John

March 30, 1872 IJ: “A Pioneer Gone. - John Henry Pinkston, better known as "Black John," residing at Novato, died on Wednesday last, of rheumatism of the heart. He came to this country in 1844 and has resided in this county since that time.”

About his three children, can not fine anything on them. But John J. Pinkston would get married on June 4, 1886 to M.E. Cole in Woodland and his “Burial Permit” saying at his death he was 40 years and 26 days old, male, colored and married. Death was in Woodland California on February 3, 1890 from “Pahisis.” That is what it looks like on the ‘Burial Permit.”

Some other stories found about Black John:

ARTHUR DAWSON - FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT - February 20, 2021:

Only meager details of Pinkston’s life have survived, but a few stories suggest the depth of his character. As told by Miwok elder Maria Copa: “Once two girls went to swim ... one fellow followed them on horseback. He got one of the girls and was cutting her with a knife. ... The

other girl got away and went to Juan Negro (Pinkston). He rode into San Rafael and got help to rescue the girl. They did and she did not die.”

“When Camilo Ynitia was murdered with an arrow in 1856, the people called upon Pinkston for help. He contacted the sheriff, and the murderer was caught.” For roughly 150 years, it’s been called Black John Slough. But for fascinating reasons, that’s now changed. The new name? Pinkston Slough.

“I felt like this was an important story to tell that wasn’t really well highlighted,” Michael Warner, a former Marin County park ranger who now works in Palo Alto, told ABC7 News.

The slang name Black John came into common use for the Waterway approximately around the early 1880s appearing on local maps.

This petition seeks to show support for changing the name of Black John Slough to Pinkston Slough to more appropriately honor this man’s memory / contribution to this community, and erase the value of tying ones worth to the color of their skin.

August 18, 1887 IJ Novato Notes.

The name of the post office at this place ought to be changed from Black Point to Novato, to avoid confusion and delay in the receipt of mail matter. Black Point took its name from a negro who once resided here and claimed a large amount of the public domain. The next place in which he took up his residence on being compelled to leave the Point was called after him, "N. Hill."



Black John Slough in the 1930’s and today



Michael Warner near Black John Slough



Scott House—New Novato Museum?

By Michael Read

In 1913 A.D. Scott would move his old house from Sherman Avenue to Grant Avenue to make room for a modern residence on the old home site. Fred Mahlstedt would be the contractor for the new house. Mr. and Mrs. A.D. Scott would move into the new house in Nov 1913. Death would come to Alexander D. Scott after an illness of five months on January 19, 1945. A pioneer resident of Novato who had been active in the business life of the town since 1884. His life history is a record of untiring activity and he attained his success by devoting himself to his work. Scott was born in Nova Scotia, a son of the late David and Jane Scott, on January 23, 1860, so he would have been 85 years of age on the 23rd of January. He was educated in the public schools in his home neighborhood and took a course in a business college.

In 1882 he came to California, locating in Humboldt County, where he remained for two years. He had started to write the story of his life in Novato, but death prevented him from finishing it. Quoting from Scott's record: "I came to Novato May 1, 1884 and went to work for McDonald brothers store in old town. It was just across the road where the Baccaglio home is now, but after a few months McDonald closed the place of business and I went to work for them in their main store which is located about where the Sutton girls now live. Senator Frank DeLong owned 12,000 acres of land which included all of Black Point and pretty nearly all of Novato, so he formed a company and sold about 6,000 acres. Then agents for the selling of the land were on hand and induced me to move to what is now Novato. The name of the post office was Black Point, and after I moved my store which I had bought out from the McDonalds. I made application to the government to have the name changed to Novato, which was done without question. I was postmaster at the time, having succeeded J.B. Redmond and remained postmaster for 20 years."

Scott conducted a general merchandise store, the first store established in Novato, and continued in business until he retired about 3 years before his death. Mr. Scott was married twice, first marriage to Miss Mattie Benedict, taking place in 1889. To them were born two children. Mrs. Scott died in 1893, the lady was attacked with an apopleptic fit on the evening of May 8th and died on Wednesday the 10th. In 1895 Scott was united in marriage to Miss Frances Peters, who has also passed away at time of Mr. Scott death.

The Petaluma Argus-Courier would report on July 5, 1945: Mrs. W.H. Busher has bought the A.D. Scott home on Sherman Avenue, in which she has an apartment. As soon as the Scott estate is settled the only surviving heir, Miss Jessie Scott, who occupies the family home, will move and make other plans."

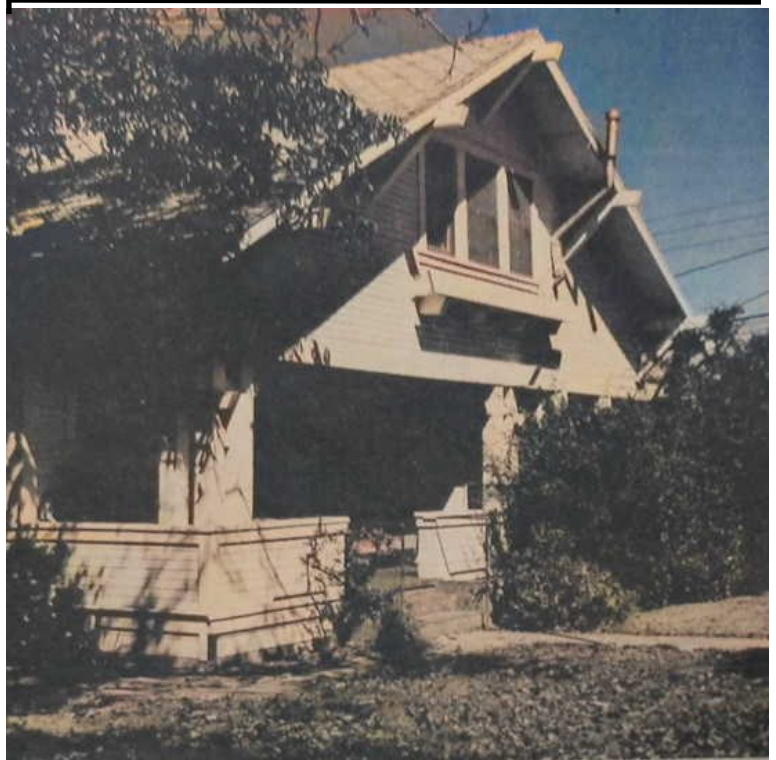
Mrs. Busher was Iva Lois Gage daughter of James Gage of the famous James Gage Breeding Farm and Indian Valley Hatchery. She would marry Dr. Walter H. Busher in 1913 a veterinarian. He would pass away in 1935. She would pass away July 24, 1957.

The City of Novato November 1968 would purchase the house for \$27,000. It was closed in 2005.

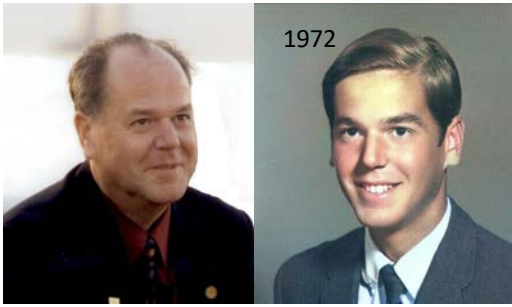
The Novato Historical Guild is now looking at this house for its future Novato museum.



Novato Historical Guild at the Novato Art, Wine & Music Festival
June 10 & 11, 2023



Novato Advance August 1968; "This house in this picture is located next to the Novato police department annex on Sherman Avenue, and it's up for sale. A report is due soon from the city staff to the city council on whether or not it would be feasible for the city to buy the house and either remodel it or tear it down to provide new offices for the overcrowded parks and recreation department. The city has about \$30,000 available for the purchase.



Novato – 50 Years Ago

(July, August & September 1973)

by Michael Read

Go to <https://novatoadvance-ca.newsmemory.com/>
For 50 years ago stories weekly in the Advance



84th leaves after 25 years—The last 12 F-106 Delta Darts on Hamilton flightline before departure for Castle Air Force base, their new home.



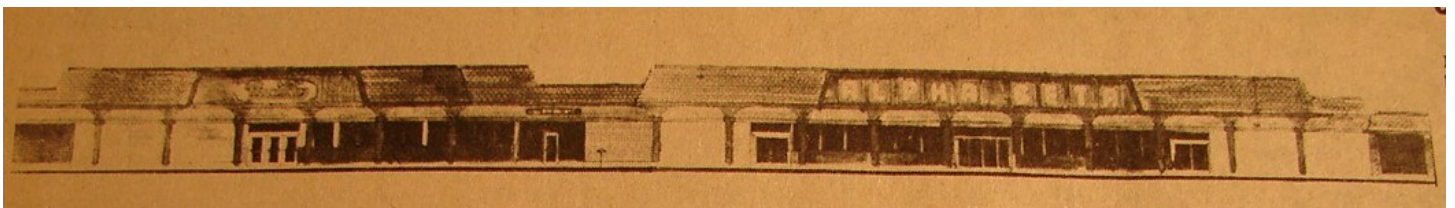
New Police Chief on the Job—Chief John Coleman with veteran police secretary Ferne Isaacson



Can we save it? - The city last year purchased the property of the old “Carly home” at the corner of Reichart and DeLong Avenue and offered the modest Victorian mansion to the Chamber of Commerce for its offices. The offer was turned down and now the city is seeking other sponsors to restore and maintain the now boarded-up vintage building, The estimated cost of restoring it is around \$20,000.



Groundbreaking ‘rehearsal’ - Novato Boys’ Club members Tom Cox, Dan Milano and Scot Eustace found out that groundbreaking is a backbreaking job this time of year when they rehearsed for the public ceremony at 680 Wilson Avenue.



The city’s plan review committee will consider for razing more than 700 lineal feet of vacant stores in the Nave Shopping Center. The buildings are to be torn down to make way for a new Alpha Beta market as shown above. The old Purity market, vacant for many months, will be left standing but will undergo extensive remodeling to house a Thrifty drug store.

Join the Novato Speaker Series at the Jonas Center!

Dear History Guild Community,
We are excited to announce the Novato Speaker Series, sponsored by the Novato Rotary Club, the Ignacio Rotary Club, and the Novato Historical Guild, held at the Jonas Center at Indian Valley College. Our Speaker Series has been receiving great feedback, starting with our successful events on July 27th and August 24th.

If you haven't already, make sure to visit our website at www.novatospeakerseries.com for the latest information and updates. We have an incredible lineup of speakers planned for the upcoming months:

Thursday, September 28, 2023:

Dr. Michael Blodgett Ph.D., History of American Relations with Iran.

Thursday, October 26, 2023:

Chris Gargano-Discuss leadership in a brand new way

Thursday, December 21, 2023:

Heidi Kuhn-Heidi Kuhn's social justice story replaces land mines with grapevines.

Mark your calendars! Each event will be held on a Thursday evening, with doors opening at 6:30 PM. The speaker presentations will begin promptly at 7:00 PM and conclude at 8:30 PM. Tickets can be purchased on our website, novatospeakerseries.com.

To stay connected with our community and receive regular updates on our speakers, we invite you to opt into our newsletter. Join us as we explore inspiring and thought-provoking topics together.

We look forward to seeing you at the Novato Speaker Series!
Best regards,

Welcome New Guild Members

Novato Historical Guild Membership Report September 2023

Individual Membership

Jennifer Albin
Peter Albin, Mike Allen
David Ambrose
Nohemi Beissmann-Mason
Mark Bosch
Ronald J. Buckwalter
Bianca & David Clarke
Gene Day, Leon DeLisle
Brian Eckert
Linda Edwards
Beth & Kevin Flynn
Diane Gibbs
Jay Haney, Casey Healon
Barbara Heynen
Fred Holmes
Will Houston, Debra Ieradi
Vincent Ippolito
Stephanie Koehler
Lisa Langevin
Clay LaPoint
Denise Lawrence
Rod Lemeni
Michael R. Lowery
Mike Mirabella
John Rosenbaum
Susan Royce
Eric & Donna Steger
Gabriel Ryoichi Tanaka
John Tanko, Rick Udalloff
Jeanne Villa
Damian Wellesley-Winter

Family Membership

Sandy & Bob Mauceli
Katherine & Gary Novak
Debby Nowlin
Dick Spotswood
John Williams

Life Membership

Debra Brusatori
Yvette Jackson
Sharlene van Boer

Please support our Guild Business Members:

Aaero Heating & Sheet Metal, Inc
A.D. Scott Building
Alders Financial Solutions
Andrew McAgon Landscaping
Anixter & Oser, Inc.
Insurance Agents & Brokers
Bank of Marin
CCK Strategies
Christman Chiropractic
Memory Care and Assisted Living
H & J Tire
Indian Valley Golf Club
Las Guitarras Restaurant
Marianne's Painting
Marin Color Service
Marin Landscape Materials
Mclsaac Dairy
NARA Aesthetics LLC
Nave Enterprises
Novato Builders Supply, Inc.
Novato Grove Druids #113
Pini Hardware
Planet Home Lending-Bill Hoopes
The Bluffs at Hamilton Hill
Trumbull Manor Inc.
Valley Oak Wealth Management
Valley Memorial Park Cemetery
& Funeral Home

Volunteer Opportunities:

The Novato Historian has an opening on the Editorial Board.

If you like writing and/or editing this is the position for you.

Please contact the Guild at info@novatohistory.org or Ask for Michael Read at 415-717-1412

If you have questions about membership, call Lorne Magnone, Membership 415 - 892-8458



Novato Speakers Series



Bill and Adele Jonas Center 1800 Ignacio Blvd. #19 Novato
Novatospeakerseries.com

Thursday 6:30pm—7:00 Doors Open & Socialize— 7-7:30 Musical Entertainment— 7:30 Speaker

September 28th—Dr. Michael Blodgett, Ph.D./ Chaz & Co., music

October 26th—Chris Gargano / James Harman music

December 21st, Heidi Kuhn's - Social justice story replaces land mines with grapevines/ Don Forbes music

January 25th—Dr. Michael Pritchard & Mark Dale -Navigating the Path to Success: Addressing Opportunities and Obstacles for Today's Youth

February 22nd—Felecia Gaston— Marin Housing Authority in 1942 and Marin City in 1952

March 28th—Chris Waugh—Sutter health's first Chief Innovation Office.

April 25th—Laurie Reemsynder

2023 Board Meetings

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

Time: 1:30 – 3:00 PM

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

Membership Meetings

March 11	10 – 11:30
June 17	10 – 11:30
Sept. 9	10 – 11:30
Dec. 9	10 – 11:30

Guild members are welcome to attend the Board meetings. Please check with the President, Jim Crumpler at (415) 897-5705, 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 their 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.

In Memoriam

Peg Rutt

Stephen Taylor

Martin “Marty” Beebe

Aileen Breg Hune

THE GUILD EXTENDS SYMPATHY TO

The Rutt family on the loss of
Peg Rutt

The Taylor family of the loss of
Stephen Taylor

The Beebe family on the loss of Marty
Marty Beebe

The Hune family on the loss of
Aileen Hune

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: info@novatohistory.org
<https://www.facebook.com/NovatoHistoryMuseum/>

Dropped Patron Level

As of 1/1/2023, the Board has simplified the Guild's membership structure to the Individual, Family, Business and Life-Individual and Life-Joint categories.

For those who send in \$100 for the Patron level we will apply your payment to a \$30 family membership and a donation of \$70.00. Also the Guild will send you a letter for your generous donation.

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

Individual membership \$20 year

Family membership \$30 year

Life membership, individual \$350

Life membership, joint \$500

Business membership \$50 year

Free for 90+

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Additional donations? _____

Interested in volunteering? _____

Email address: _____

General Membership Meeting June 17



Novato Guild Board Member, Lynn Dawson informs the General Membership about the progress of the Novato Museums move to the Scott house and the fund raising for this move.



Marcus Combs, retired Park Ranger for the National Park Service, shared some of his experiences as Bay Area Park Ranger and discussed the making of San Francisco.

Volunteer opportunity

The hospitality committee is looking for volunteers to assist with set-up and refreshments at the Historical Guild's general meetings. The Guild hosts four general meetings a year which offer a great opportunity for members to gather and enjoy presentations from some very interesting speakers. Assistance would be needed from 9:00 a.m. until noon for each of these meetings. If interested please email info@novatohistory.org or call the Novato History Museum at 415-897-4320.

✦ YOU ARE INVITED ✦

General Membership Meeting ~ Novato Historical Guild

Saturday, September 9, 10:00 to noon
Hamilton Field Museum, 555 Hangar Ave. Novato

The speaker will be
Our own Kate Johnston will be discussing everything you
always wanted to know about Hamilton Field

Hope you can make it. Bring some friends. Looking forward to seeing you there.
Guild Members and anyone interested in Novato History is welcome.

Novato History Museum

Hamilton Field History Museum

815 Delong Avenue

555 Hangar Avenue

(415) 897-4320

(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