

THE RECORD

These are a few of our favorite things . . .

SPRING
QUARTERLY
CANCELLED
due to
Covid-19

The archive is the heart of our organization and we want to share it with you in as many ways as possible. Our book and our museum give you a glimpse of the depth of our collection. We had planned to use our May Quarterly meeting as a “Show and Tell” to give you another look into the depth of our archives, but the Covid-19 crisis required us to cancel our meeting. So we decided this version of our newsletter would feature some of the things we wanted to include in our program.

We asked our board members to describe their favorite archive items. We hope you will enjoy them! In the 45 years of our existence we have

collected, stored and catalogued about 200,000 items, everything from industrial and architectural objects, to manuscripts — many of which were donated by you, our members!

Thank you for your past and present efforts to save Burlingame and Hillsborough history! Keep adding to our list of acquisitions.

We may still be homebound when this newsletter arrives, so to paraphrase the old Sound of Music song, we hope that “when the flu hits, when the doors close, when you’re feeling sad, we hope you’ll remember our favorite things and then you won’t feel so bad.” As an added gift to you we are printing this newsletter in color. We hope you enjoy it!

*From our
archives*

Martha Rosman May: No one knew our archive like Board Member emeritus Martha who was with our society since the beginning in 1975, even housing much of the collection in every nook and cranny of her own home until we obtained our current space in 1986. So it was with great anticipation that we asked Martha for her favorite item. Her pick? “All of them!” she said, “I enjoyed all the stories from the donors, too.”

But the beautiful Victorian red and taupe silk paisley parasol with lace and fringe (shown at right), donated in 1990, came immediately to mind as something special. It once belonged to Adelaide Hovey Key, mother of William A. Key, Hillsborough’s Chief of Police from 1976-1990. ***Sadly, just as we finished this newsletter, we learned of Martha's passing (on April 11, 2020) She will be sorely missed! Look for more on Martha in our next newsletter.***



“A Few of Our Favorite Things” continued on pages 2 - 5

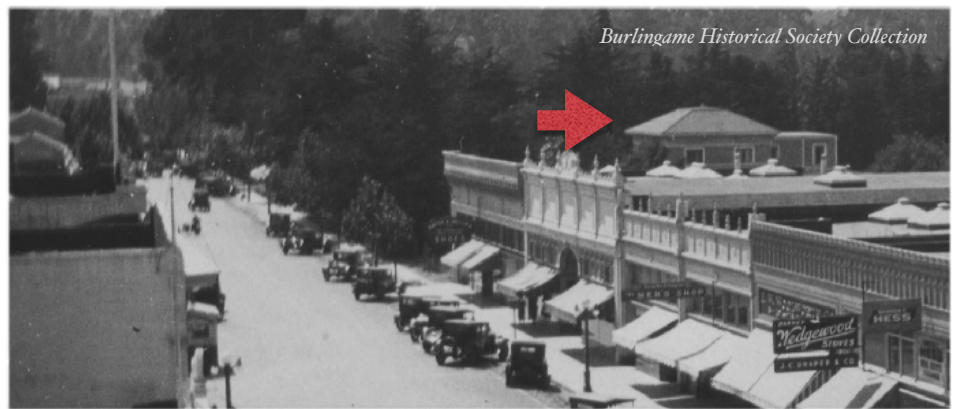
Jennifer Pfaff: Jen loves early photos because “photos don’t lie” (at least before the Photoshop era!) We can date this image from sometime after the construction of both corner structures shown at this Burlingame Avenue and Park Road intersection: at left the structure that now houses Peet’s coffee, and across the street, the former Bank of Italy building —now Apple. Jen’s best guess is that the photo was taken around 1920 or so. A century ago the garden fence (in the foreground at left) would have been part of pioneer and self-taught carpenter, John Donnelly’s vast 5-acre property, located on the north side of Burlingame Avenue between Park Road and Primrose



An undated photo donated by Martha May in 1995 looking out southward down Park Road toward Howard Avenue, from the current site of the Gap store.

Road. The arrow in the 1925 photo of Burlingame Avenue (at right) shows John Donnelly’s 1870s home, likely Burlingame’s first family residence, set back from the developing business district along Burlingame Avenue. Eventually, his children also erected homes on these grounds that were landscaped by his friend, John McLaren.

As the business district became more developed, a number of

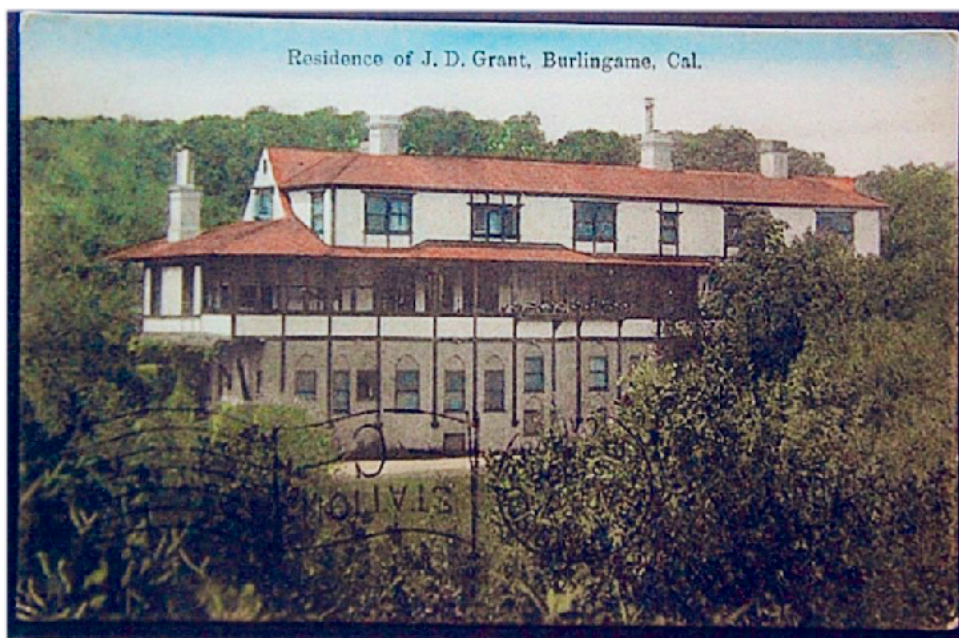


A 1925 photo of Burlingame Avenue looking west, donated by Sue Rebe Bentley in 2016 shows the 1870s home of John Donnelly, at middle right.



these homes, including John’s and his son Daniel’s, (as well as the recently demolished Gates’ home), were either rolled back to Donnelly Ave., or relocated elsewhere. Daniel’s home, pictured at left in 1979, decades after its original relocation to 1224 Donnelly, was demolished in 1995. His father John Donnelly’s home (above with arrow) was razed in 1964— both parcels were used for the expansion of city parking lots to support Burlingame’s business district needs.

Mary Griffith: Joseph Donohue Grant was typical of the second-generation wealthy Californians who helped Burlingame-Hillsborough earn the reputation in the late 1800s as the playground of the rich. In 1907, the dry goods business that his father built, Murphy, Grant & Co. of San Francisco, was reported to be the largest wholesale dry goods merchants on the coast. Grant was a founding member of the Burlingame Country Club and an avid polo player. His hunting lodge in what came to be called Hillsborough, was accessed via Forestview Road. (See postcard at right.) When the hunting lodge burned down in 1909, Grant



Digital image of hand-colored postcard circa 1900, donated by Russ Cohen in 2004

commissioned well-known architect Lewis Hobart (Crocker's *New Place*, *Grace Cathedral*) to build him a second country home on his 40-acre Hillsborough property.



The new home, which he called *Villa Rose*, was built in 1912, in time to be included in a 1915 book by Porter Garnett titled "Stately Homes of California." The book, published by Little, Brown & Co., was designed to impress visitors to the Panama Pacific International Exposition with the architectural taste and sophistication of California and its residents. *Villa Rose*, or *Strawberry Hill* as it came to be known after it was given that name by owners Mr. and Mrs. Charles Blyth, is one of the last remaining intact estates of early Burlingame-Hillsborough. In 1965, Strawberry Hill was used as a Decorator Showhouse by the San Mateo County Junior Museum Auxiliary.

At left: ca. 1965 contact print of Villa Rose, in Hillsborough, donated by the Hillsborough Boutique & Villager archive

Mary Packard: Board member Packard chose a photo of an historic event with current relevance. Her photo shows two Burlingame residents in Golden Gate Park wearing face masks during the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic. Dressed for a visit to The City, sixteen-year-old Genevieve Weishar and her unidentified companion were photographed in Golden Gate Park, each wearing the most important fashion accessory of the time, a face mask to fight the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918. Genevieve was the step-daughter of Edward Shaver, a well-known and respected Burlingame builder, responsible for a diverse array of structures in the community, including the Spanish revival style arcade at the Burlingame train station, the William Henry Weeks classically inspired Burlingame Bank

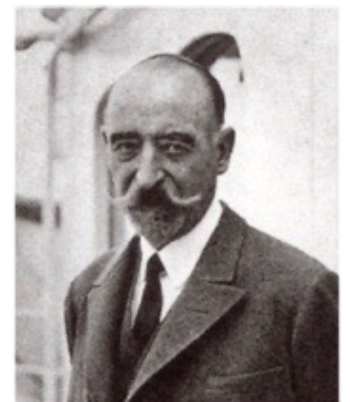
building at California Drive and Burlingame Avenue (that now houses Flights restaurant), and the California ranch style house at 704 Burlingame



Photo of Genevieve Weishar Phelan and companion, donated 1995

Avenue. The ranch home was built for Genevieve and her husband, insurance broker Chris Phelan in 1937; Genevieve continued to live there until her death in 1996.

Joanne Garrison: Joanne chose eight letters that George Howard (the architect of the Burlingame Train Station and Kohl Mansion) wrote to his wife in the 1920s and 1930s. The letters offer an intimate window into the family life of George and Antoinette ("Nettie") Schmeidell Howard, elite members of San Francisco and Hillsborough society during that time. George and Nettie were married before 1,000 guests at Trinity Episcopal Church in San Francisco in 1888 and settled into family life at 1812 Gough Street. They had two sons, George Jr. and Henry S. P. Howard. The couple built a country home, "Howard House" in Hillsborough that was classically inspired and designed by George. It sat at the top of Roehampton Road amidst formal gardens which they called "Versailles Park." In the first of our letters, dated February 24 1926, George writes from his office in the Lick Building in San Francisco to Nettie in Paris. George reveals himself as an indulgent father when he asks Nettie not to blame their son



because George gave half of Nettie's Christmas present to the son: "You were very generous to send me \$50 but I really did not want it so it did us no harm to give G. \$25 of it". This sounds like the tension parents might have over raising a teenager until one realizes that George Jr. was 36 at the time! The letter goes on to describe repairs being made to Howard House in anticipation of sale. "The garden laborers account costs us about \$250 a month, besides the carpenters plasterers and painters and roofers I have at work. It is all very trying and very expensive. I do not think the place will sell but will I think surely rent." He closes the letter by saying that he cannot afford to meet her request to build a new house "as I must turn such a sale [of the home] into income producing safe bonds which income I am perfectly willing and happy to share with you". The next letter is dated March 18, 1933. George writes a chatty letter on stationery from The San Francisco Overland, Ltd. to Nettie and their second son Henry who are in Monaco. George describes some of his impressions of America in 1933 during the height of the Depression. He concludes "I did not realize what America was really like until I commenced my trip from ocean to ocean. I feel as if I were in a strange country amongst a strange people."

In the next letter, dated March 21, 1933, addressed solely to Nettie, we learn the reason that George left Nettie and Henry in Europe to make the long

trip via ship and train to the Bay Area: The Howards' first-born son, George Jr., has died in Europe at the age of 41 and his father is accompanying the son's ashes back to Hillsborough. In a very tender letter he writes to Nettie "I know you wish to hear all I have done about dear George. As soon as I arrived (I had already planned this a long time ago) I brought his ashes in the valise to his room and placed all on his bed, where he rests now and where I can go to offer a prayer. I think he is well satisfied with my arrangement. He is in his old room amongst his books pictures and furniture he liked so much." He then lists a number of options for George Jr.'s final resting place (they decided upon San Mateo's St. Matthew's Episcopal Church) before he ends "You may remember my writing you about three beautiful hyacinth plants I kept near him in the Champlain (?) Chapel. Well I threw away the flowers but kept the bulbs and have them and will plant them out here near his window where they should bloom next year. The "mimosa" is in full bloom now, being a riot of golden yellow! I wish you could see it. The place is quiet, peaceful and surely beautiful. I would not exchange it for the principality of Monaco or change places with the Prince either!

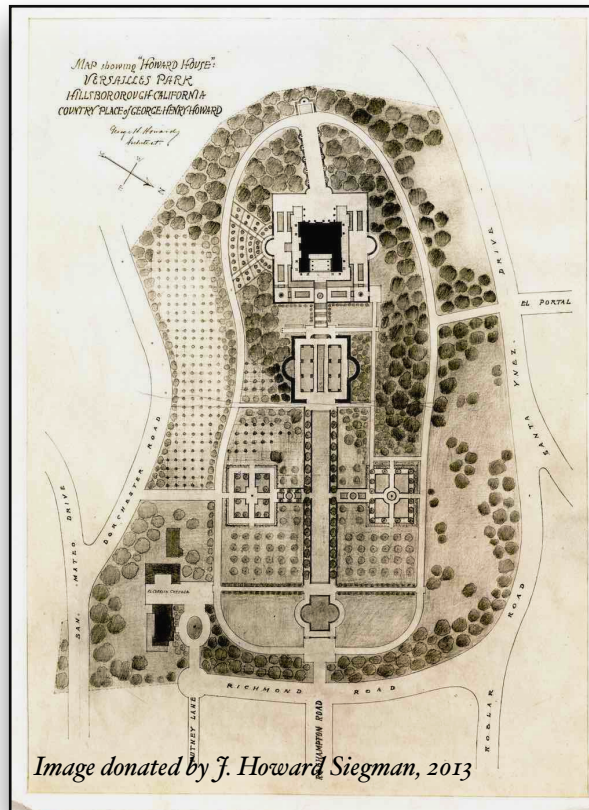


Image donated by J. Howard Siegman, 2013

P.S. A little while ago I saw a huge Coyote from the car windows driving in the snow for water. It was the size of a large polecat.
Sund. Ry.
CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN RY.
UNION PACIFIC SYSTEM
SOUTHERN PACIFIC LINES
8:15 A.M. Saturday March 18, 1933
Dear Nettie and Henry:
We are leaving Ogden. Will be there in 3/4 of an hour, then we change our watches by setting them back one hour. This seems to make the trip longer.

Joanne loves these letters because they reveal George's very tender, sensitive spirit and because they offer an intimate glimpse into one prominent family's life in the Roaring Twenties and the Depression Thirties. These

letters are printed in full in the virtual museum of the website "Peninsula Royalty: The Founding Families of Burlingame-Hillsborough".

www.burlingamefoundingfamilies.wordpress.com

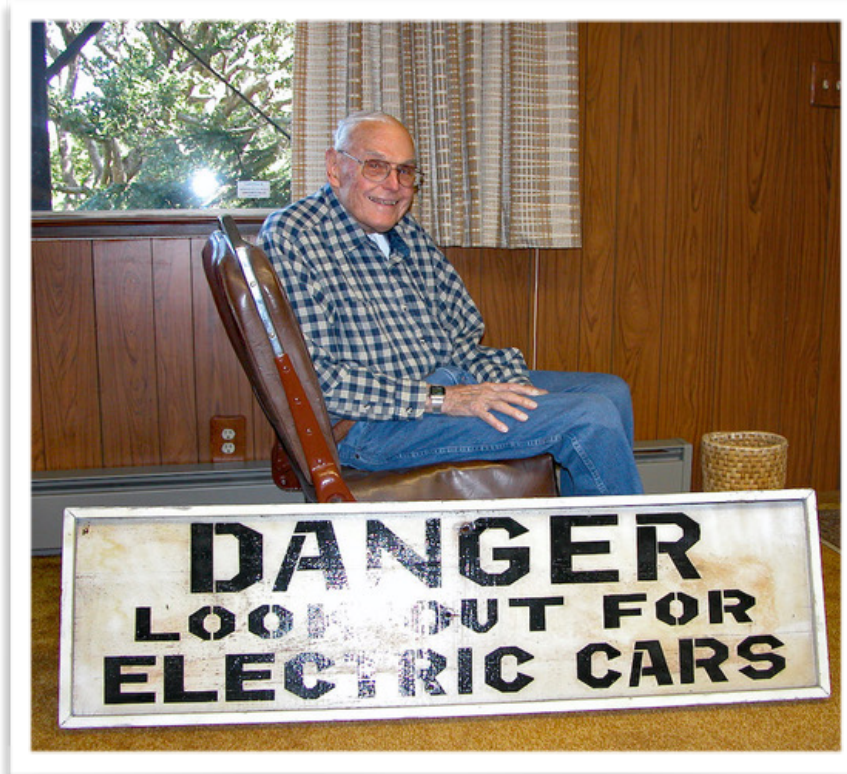
NEW ACQUISITIONS! *With thanks to...*

Walter Vielbaum for items related to Burlingame's (Electric) Interurban Railway (aka the 40-Line), including 2 wooden signs (*shown with Walter in the photo at right*), a restored single marker red tail light (kerosene lantern) that lit the outside of the trolley car if the electricity failed, trolley hardware known as a "pull-off ear" (with a piece of cable) that he managed to salvage in the late 1940s, and a copy of *The Western Railroader* "The 40 Line Pictorial" ©April 1967 containing vintage photos of the electric interurban cars taken by Walt; Burlingame author(s): **Dan Conway**, *Confessions of a Crypto Millionaire: My unlikely escape from corporate America* ©2019, and

Eileen Conway, *Madame X and the World Beneath* ©2019, Zealot Publishing, Burlingame; to **Rino and June Betti** for assorted Sam's Italian Sandwich Co. menu boards and a "Sam" stand-up figure used in the longtime eating establishment; to **Jim Shypertt** for a photo essay of the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site walk with Mitch Postel on November 4th, 2019, as well as other points of interest in San Bruno, including the 1934 constructed SF County jail, and a 1985 Susskind and Associates (Mill Valley) *Welcome to Burlingame* wall map displaying many of the businesses in colorful drawings, and a *Hillsborough Resident Handbook*, c. 1993 and a photo essay of our February 23rd Annual presentation "Longtime and Local" and photos of local business leaders taken at a Rotary function in 2019; **Martha May** for numerous newspaper clippings related to people and places in Burlingame and Hillsborough, and

several photos circa 1932, originally from the Kreiss family, including Burlingame Avenue during a snowstorm, and taxi cab drivers near today's Limon

restaurant near California Drive; to **Brad McCulley** and the Burlingame Public Library for numerous *bound Burlingame Advance Star* newspapers and *Peninsula Life* magazines; **Jim Kelly** for *misc. 1912-1916* newspaper clippings related to Ansel Easton's Blackhawk stock farm, his



and William Ward's award-winning stallions, and to the popularity of the Edison battery technology related to the 1913 [Easton owned] Burlingame Railway trolley line, news stories related to the widening of Chapin Avenue, as well as the demolition of Burlingame's first (rented) city hall, June 16, 1953 from the *San Mateo Times* newspaper, to the 1957 cash box theft of Harry Danielson, a blind war veteran and concessionaire at the Park Road Post Office, numerous digital news clippings and transcriptions thereof (SM Times and SF Examiner) regarding the legal conflicts between Burlingame and Millbrae between 1940 and 1954, including the so-called "Chinese Wall"—a 100 ft. strip annexed by Burlingame in 1946, around the 730-acre Mills Estate; **Lilliana Cifuentes** and **Art Morimoto** (City of Burlingame Public Works) for a digital scan of a March 6, 1990 CalTrans aerial photograph taken of the then new Anza offramp

area, and numerous large rolled city maps (involving utilities and other infrastructure) from various decades (1923-1980s); **Douglas Lambert** for a wooden Liberty Cleaning & Dyeing Works hanger (the establishment was located at 1475 Burlingame Ave., in 1930), and multiple newspapers containing various (local) history articles; **Joe Baylock** for a photo of flooded El Camino Real, April 2020 (*lower left corner*), and a framed original book cover of *Lively Memories* ©1977 by the Burlingame Historical Society honoring the Society's first president (and significant contributor to the material for the book), Beverley Evans (recently deceased); **Richard Kirchner** for a circa 1940s postcard of a eucalyptus lined winding street, possibly photographed near the Burlingame Country Club golf course, in Hillsborough; **Denise Haerr** for a handmade 1965 invitation to a Peninsula Tennis Club's New Years party, made to resemble a diaper: Announcing A Celebration Heralding the Birth of the Year 1966; **Russ Cohen** for two undated digital postcard images: the Gunst Estate Mansion and the Burlingame Woman's Club; to **Ray Tyler** for filming our Longtime and Local presentation on Feb. 23, 2020, and to **Bobbi Benson** for a transcription thereof; **Mary Griffith** for the recent booklet: *Living Fire Safe in Hillsborough's Wildland Urban Interface*, by the Central County Fire Department; and to **Harry Dutton**, kindness of **Sally Meakin**, for two images (taken before 1956) of the Mills Estate landscape of rolling hills and small lakes (*shown directly below*).

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Janet and Joe Hanlon, as well as (recently deceased) **Sharon McQueen** for their donations in Loving Memory of **Naomi Cissna**.

To **Janet and Carl Martin**, **The Ron and Robin Karp Philanthropic Fund**, **Kent Pearse**, **Clare Cavanaugh**, **Thomas A. Blake**, **Nick Delis** and **Dave Pine** for their generous recent contributions, *and to all our renewing members!* And our Board's continued appreciation goes to **Dreiling Terrones Architecture (DTA)** of Burlingame.



El Camino Real after rainstorm, April 2020



Photo of Mills Estate taken sometime before 1956, showing hills and lake

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Viktor T. Pochron - Individual
 Kent Pearse - History Buff
 Carol Batte - Individual
 Gary Vielbaum - Gift
 Emilio Arco - Individual
 Jessica Willey - Individual

IN MEMORIAM:

Martha May
 Sandy Towle
 Mae Lee Chan

UPGRADES TO HISTORY BUFF!

Wallace Mersereau
 Joe. P. Legallet
 Maureen Byrne
 Thomas R. Friebe
 Jill Lauder

Calendar**Burlingame Hillsborough History Museum (Note below)****1-4 pm 1st Sunday of the month*****290 California Drive****"Through Harry's Lens"**Photographic Essay of Burlingame's
Formulative Years: 1910s - 1920s***Note:****Due to Covid-19, our museum is closed. Please check our website for updates.****Docents Needed!**

No experience required.

Please call 340-9960 to volunteer.

Burlingame Historical Society

P.O. Box 144

Burlingame, Ca 94011

www.burlingamehistory.org

650-340-9960

Address Service Requested - Time Dated Material*Please remember us
in your trust or will!***President's Message**

Where do I begin? For months our Board has been contemplating a fun quarterly meeting in which we could show off some artifacts from our versatile and ever-growing Archive — the one that we have dreams of expanding in the not-to-distant future. No one could possibly have dreamt that just days after our February presentation featuring Burlingame's Legacy Businesses, we'd suddenly lose access to many of them —all in need of our support. "Social distancing" and "virtual meetings" are the order of the day. My daily attire consists mostly of comfy pajamas. Vanity is so Yesterday...I don a face mask. Paradoxically, the bizarre 1918 snapshot from our collection

that depicts two masked Burlingame women so long ago, no longer seems a world away. History is Now...

While much time is spent filing and chronicling vintage materials (much of it donated by you), we strive to keep our collection current. Though we cannot meet right now, we are nonetheless busy clipping articles from hard-copy newspapers (that sadly may not be around forever) taking notes, and snapping photographs that include passionate messages posted on shuttered downtown businesses. Another never-to-be-seen-again visual: "Free Parking" signs at empty public parking lots. Why bother collecting? Because "Now" is the next generation's "Then". We want to make sure they will have and know the Whole Story. Please stay safe and be well.

-Jennifer Pfaff**Current Officers 2020:**

President - *Jennifer Pfaff*
 VP - Museum - *Russ Cohen*
 VP Technology and Education -

Diane Condon-Wirgler
 Treasurer and Newsletter
 - *Joanne Garrison*

Oral histories &
 Parliamentarian

- *Cathy Foxhoven*
 Secretary - *Mary Griffith*
 Corresponding Secretary
 - *Mary Packard*

Social Media-

- *Cathy Baylock*
 Membership Co-Chairs-
Carl Martin and
Leslie McQuaide

Board Member Emeritus
 - *Martha May*