

THE RECORD

Ghost Stories . . .

FALL
QUARTERLY:
"Burlingame Before"
Film Shorts

See page 4

Nothing says "Fall" like Halloween! Since Covid-19 intends to disrupt yet another of our favorite holidays,



C. Frederick Kohl Mansion, "The Oaks," 1914, Burlingame, California

we thought we'd dedicate this issue to ghost stories from Burlingame. Usually historians describe "real" events — but these stories were "real" enough for those that experienced them. Read them if you dare!!!

KOHL MANSION, Freddie The Ghost: Rumors of Freddie the Ghost at Kohl Mansion are numerous. So we thought we'd give you the true "scoop" from the official archivist Sister Marilyn Gouailhardou's oral history recorded in April 2017 (*who it should be mentioned does not personally believe in ghosts, but ...*) "When the Sisters first moved here—there's nothing written down anywhere—but stories have come down from the original first Sisters who first moved into the Mansion—and keep in mind the Mansion was empty from 1916 to 1924 when the Sisters moved in, there was a small group of employees of Frederick Kohl who maintained the Mansion, but it was not really lived in as a family. And so, when the Sisters moved in they came from a place over in Oakland where there was a

lot of activity, a lot of people around, because they lived right next door to an old folks' home that the Sisters ran, so they come into this big huge empty place. It's huge compared to what they were in. With regard to talking about the ghost of Frederick Kohl, they said they experienced this powdery substance that would drop from around the windows onto the floor and they couldn't figure out where it came from. And then some of the Sisters who lived in the far part of the house at night, the Novices, some of them said they experienced a presence, but I think, it's just they were...I would have been scared living in that place then, the way it was at the time."

In addition to the powdery substance and the strange presence that the sisters reported in the early days of their occupancy there was also the very real problem of terror caused by real people. As Sister Marilyn recalled, the 1920s were "a Know Nothing time, the time of the Ku Klux Klan and the Know Nothings who were very anti-Catholic and anti-

foreigner and anti-immigrant, and the Sisters said that one night when they first moved in here, a group of cars with their headlights on and men piled in, drove through the campus and were yelling and screaming and intimidating them. And they also burned a cross across the ravine that they could see from the other side, so there was a lot of hostility when the Sisters first moved in, which mitigated after a while, but in the beginning..."

REC DEPT, returning vets: Lilliana Cifuentes, who worked at the Recreation Department from 2013-2018 will never forget the time around 2016 that she went to lock up and noticed a young man adjusting the American flags in the auditorium, which she found quite patriotic. The man was wearing a grey heathered shirt and pants, and had a military style crew-cut. He was definitely a young man in his 20s, but not "modern-looking" at all. Lilliana turned her back to him and then within a matter of seconds she turned

back to face him and he was gone. She was confused as to how he could have left without making any noise since both doors on either side of the Auditorium stage were metal doors that made loud sounds when people exited through them. After this occurred Lilliana realized that maybe — just maybe — the young gentleman was a former veteran spirit that was visiting the Auditorium. The Auditorium was used in the past for many gatherings, especially military ones, and the Rec Center was dedicated to



veterans of the war in 1949. Most of Lilliana's co-workers did not believe her, but two came to have ghost stories of their own. Lilliana felt the biggest non-believer was Gina Borba, Parks secretary. Then one day in 2017, Gina was attending a late meeting in the Social Hall (across from the Auditorium) and a balloon left over from a party began migrating from the Auditorium into the Social Hall. Gina noticed how the balloon went up and down as it circled a configuration of tables. The way the balloons were moving up and down (as if being pulled on a string) and were circling the tables at the same time was very odd. She concluded that no wind in the room could have moved the balloons like that — so what was causing their movement? At that moment, she came to believe that maybe Lilliana's story wasn't so crazy. Another non-believer, Tim Barry, came to have his own ghost story, too. Tim was closing the Rec Center in 2018 and was turning off the lights, but noticed that every time he turned the lights off they would turn back on. Unable to keep them off, he finally locked the building and left for the night.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES, bouncing buckles: Jennifer Pfaff recalls that in November 2018, architect Richard Terrones, visited the Carriage House to take some measurements and assess the space for a

possible remodel project. He was wearing a weathered leather messenger bag, with beautiful buckles. At some point after he'd unloaded items from the messenger bag, and taken various measurements, he realized that one of the unique buckles was simply gone. Jen and Richard looked around the floor and table, and stacks and couldn't find it. They looked everywhere, but could not find it — even on the ground outside and in the Lions Club parking lot. About a week later, Jennifer was back in the stacks of the archives, and THERE was the buckle on the floor, in plain view in one of the stacks. She could not recall if Richard had been back there, but was just happy to find it and returned it to him. About 3 weeks later, Richard came back to the archives to re-measure something. This time, he had another saddle bag with him. While standing by the door downstairs THAT buckle from a different bag fell off to the ground. This time, they both saw it fall. Richard said the buckles have never just fallen off like that. Jennifer generally does not believe herself

to be "a ghost-story person" but the saddlebag buckle thing was very, very strange, she mused. She figured that there was a horse spirit in there from the days when the Carriage House had horses downstairs, and that the horse *really* liked Richard and his saddlebag!!

PARKS YARD, a chirper in the chipper?

A big white chipper truck resides in the back of Washington Park, in the Parks Yard. The truck with a square back and big boom was built in 2011 and almost since its "birth" the park employees have noticed that the truck "chirps." Multiple times a day, the big truck honks — even when no one is inside the truck cabin, nor anywhere near it. It almost seems as if an impatient, albeit unseen driver just wants to get a move-on, the quicker the better! The mysterious, intermittent tooting has been going on for years, and according to Parks staff, at least the ones who don't believe in ghosts, the chirping may be attributed to some kind of electrical issue.



A BIG HEARTFELT THANK YOU to:

Thomas Carey, Jennifer Pfaff, an anonymous donor and the **Jones-Rosman families** for the very generous donations *in memory of Martha May*

Anonymous donor for the very generous donation *in memory of Nick Baylock*

Nancy and William Reilly for their donation *in memory of Naomi Cissna*

Kent Lauder and Russ Cohen for plumbing repairs

Erik Winkler for his voice-over of the SMCHA's Victorian Day Walking Tour film "Horsing Around Burlingame"

Lee Ebbert and Linda Field for the amazing Burlingame Historical Society archive-related work they are accomplishing at home, during the Covid-19 shut-down. And to **Juergen Pfaff** (*shown at right*) for extensive IT work in the archives

**IN MEMORIAM:**

Jeannie H. Gilmore

Barbara Hewitt

Joe Legallet

DID YOU KNOW? by Jim Kelly

Did you know the City of Burlingame had a radio station in the mid-1920s?

The radio station call letters K.F.Q.H. were issued in June 1925 to unknown individual(s) living in Hillsborough. The call letters were changed in Feb. 1926 to K.F.O.B. for some unknown reason. Promotions for the station started appearing soon after. The promotions indicated that the station, which typically broadcast three evenings a week, mostly in the late evening hours, may have been owned by the Burlingame Chamber of Commerce. Local performers sang, played music, lectured, performed skits, and there was even a politician or two stumping for votes. Civic groups and businesses added their own elaborate programming in addition to the station's normal schedule. One notable performance, planned by a committee that was headed by Burlingame Police Chief, John Harper, took up a half day of broadcasting time and included a fifty-two piece marching band. The studio for the radio station was located in the Burlingame High school auditorium and by some fortunate happenstance, when a fire broke out behind the High School, the Burlingame fire fighters heard about the fire over the radio before a telephone call could be made. The local newspaper claimed it was the first time in history for a "radio fire alarm."

The radio station closed with as little information as it had begun, in about August 1926.

If anyone has any information regarding this radio station, (e.g. people in ownership or management role, a connection of the station to the high school, or stories and /or photo about relatives who might have performed on air.) please contact us at 650-340-9960 and leave a message. We will return your call as soon as we can.



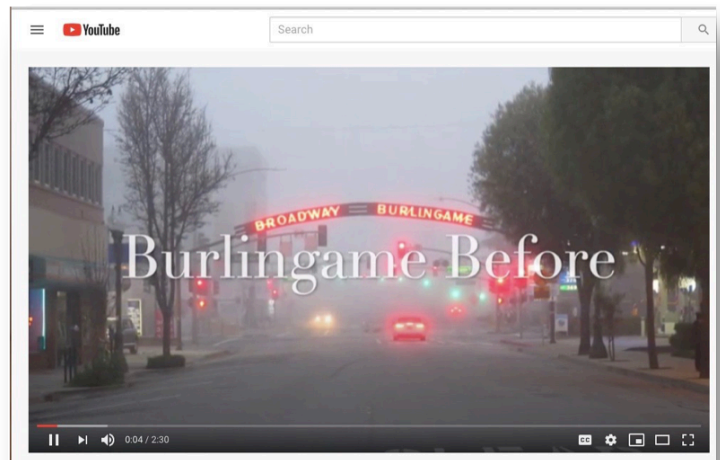
FALL QUARTERLY: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22nd RELEASE OF TWO NEW “BURLINGAME BEFORE” EPISODES

With Covid-19 restrictions once again preventing an in-person gathering, on **Thursday, October 22 in lieu of our Fall Quarterly**, we will be releasing two new “Burlingame Before” short film clips on our You Tube channel. As a member of our society, you are receiving notice of this release before the general public.

The films will be: **“Where is the Square?”** and **“The Station with Imagination”**.

To access them, on or after October 22nd, google **“You Tube Burlingame Historical Society Channel.”** These two films are the 8th and 9th in a series of two to three minute shorts created by our Vice President Russ Cohen. The first seven topics, that are already posted on our You Tube Channel, include:

Episode 1 “From Moses to Washington” (Washington Park); **Episode 2 “From City Hall to Parking Lot”** (Cupola); **Episode 3 “The Rise and Fall of Fox”** (Peninsula Theatre); **Episode 4 “The King’s Highway** (El Camino Real); **Episode 5 “Burlingame. Bikes. And Baseball.”** (Ricci Sports Shop); **Episode 6 “Lights of Broadway”** (Broadway Arch); **Episode 7 “Discovered and Covered”** (Dairy Boy Mural). While visiting our **You Tube Channel**, you may also want to watch the longer film **“Horsing Around Burlingame”** (11 minutes) that was the topic of our Summer Quarterly. This film was produced for the San Mateo County Historical Association’s annual Victorian Day walking tours and is also posted on the SMCHA’s website.



Summer 2020: A Summer Like No Other...

Upper row: Demolition of the Burlingame Recreation Center; a section of James R. Murphy House on wheels for its move to 524 Oak Grove Ave. Lower row: Parklets spring up in Burlingame for safer dining options amidst the Covid-19 pandemic



ACQUISITIONS: *With thanks to...*

Cathy Foxhoven for interviewing and filming an oral history of Randy Williams (*see photo*), Burlingame High



School Campus Safety Specialist for almost 20 years, and **Bobbi Benson** for a transcript thereof, and to **Diane Silven and Greg Taylor** for use of their porch during these times of the Covid-19 pandemic so that the interview could be safely conducted outside; to **Joanne Garrison** for photos taken June 5, 2020 of the 1400 block of Burlingame Avenue boarded up in preparation for possible looting after the killing of

George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020 (*see photos*); **Constance Quirk** for an advertisement for the new Anson Apartments, 1008 Carolan Avenue and for photos taken June 2, 2020 of Burlingame Avenue being boarded up in preparation for possible looting in aftermath of Floyd protests; **Linda Field** for dozens of digital photos, including several of Burlingame's boarded up business districts, the recreation center in various phases of demolition, inspirational "rock" painting projects around town and Washington Elementary School shown decorated on August 26th for *first day of school* photo opportunities in the time of distance learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic; **Kevin Longa** for a film segment from his



documentary series "Taste" entitled: *'Minority' America is the Story of America's Food - Part II* from June 2020, telling the story of his Lee family challenges in purchasing a home in Burlingame, and eventually running a successful Chinese-American restaurant in Burlingame, during the late 1930s and 40s; **Lilliana Cifuentes and others**, for a handful of ghost stories (circa 2016 onward) associated with the Recreation Center, Parks Yard, and Carriage House; **Douglas F. Lambert** for a clipping entitled "County Couldn't Mask Deadly Spanish Influenza", by June Morrall, *San Mateo County Times*, 1997; Burlingame City Manager

Lisa Goldman for exact dates related to and guiding Burlingame's reopening of various businesses types during

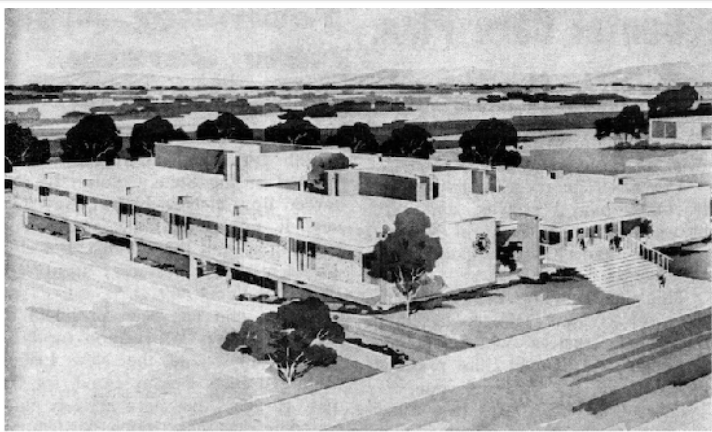


Figure 6. Architect's rendering of 1868-1870 Ogden Drive. Source: *The International Teamster*, Dec. 1963.

the Covid-19 pandemic; **Catherine Keylon, Burlingame Planning Department** for a copy of a historic evaluation survey of an office structure located at 1868-1870 Ogden Drive, designed by **Shigenori Iyama and Robert M. Tanaka** in 1963 as the Western Conference of Teamsters Headquarters (1964-1977)



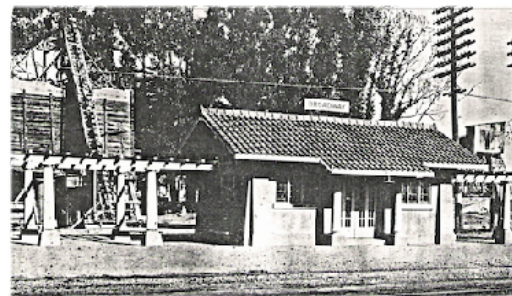
shown at top and in current photos, notable as a site associated with struggles and disputes between the Teamsters and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFW), as well as being associated with the accomplishments of Cesar Chavez between the late 1960s and the 1970s. It was the site of the 1977 jurisdictional agreement between the Teamsters and the United Farmer Workers (Labor Union); **Jim Kelly** for misc. digital

clippings, including those from the *SM Times*, published in October and November, 1932, chronicling the activities of the Republican national committee for California, and the campaigning of President Hoover in an escorted motorcade along El Camino Real, stopping at Burlingame campaign headquarters at 1470 Burlingame Avenue, Council debates about amendments to the Volstead Act (1932) ostensibly to help the economy; use of the defunct Pacific Studios film complex as a homeless shelter in October 1933, several articles related to early radio station(s) K.F.Q.H. in Hillsborough and K.F.O.B. in Burlingame (including the station's association with the early Burlingame Chamber of Commerce) and their brief period of radio broadcast during mid-1920s [please see *DID YOU KNOW?* on page 3]; to accomplishments of Ed Roberts (116 Bloomfield Rd.) stricken with polio at age 14, confined to an iron lung overnight, and attending UC

Berkeley in political science using a wheel chair by day using "frog breathing", *SM Times* Oct. 24, 1962; Feb. 1963 efforts of the Kennedy Administration to find a mansion to function as a "Summer Whitehouse": including a proposal for the Carolands mansion, though apparently Countess Dandini was not interested in leaving her home, and a 1952 article about the Burlingame Council request of the Henry J. Kaiser

Plant, located near the Broadway station, to remove the "eyesore" defunct gravel and sand plant (shown below, left of the Broadway Station in an early, undated photo), source of many community complaints; **family of Angie Lubrano**

for her BHS P.E. uniform (manufactured by Broderick Physical Education uniforms), and socks embroidered with her name, 1954-59; and to **Andrew**



Kwoka, City of Burlingame, for a copy of the "Municipal Code of the City of Burlingame", adopted in 1965, with updates and amendments through 1990, copy belonging to Irv Amstrup followed by Rosalie O'Mahony.

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RAZIEL UNGAR IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE BURLINGAME HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

I've been a member since I was 17 years old when Martha May collaborated with me on my Eagle Scout project 'A Survey of Historic Homes in Burlingame'.

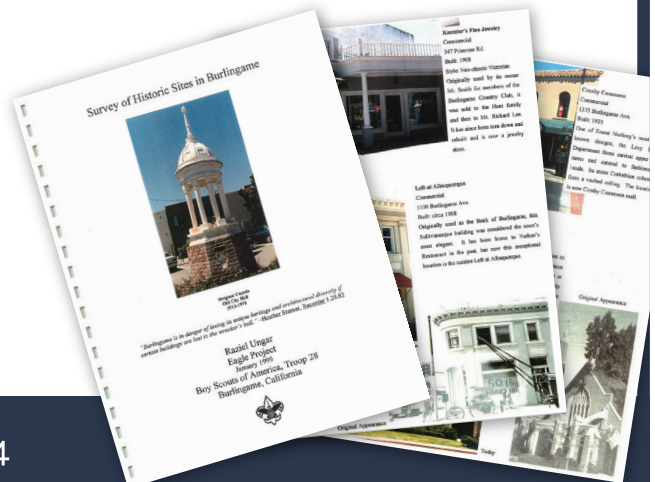


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Burlingame Historical Society
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www.burlingamehistory.org
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Calendar:

**Burlingame Hillsborough
History Museum 1-4 pm 1st
Sunday of the month***

***Note:** Due to Covid-19 safe distancing limitations, our museum is closed. Please check our website for updates.

“BURLINGAME BEFORE”

Two short films released
Thursday, October 22, 2020
see pg. 4

*Please remember us
in your trust or will!*

President's Message

As we enter Fall 2020, the pandemic continues to upend much of life as we have known it. The art of being nimble is proving to be more important than ever before. Who could have imagined as recently as just last summer, that Burlingame restaurants and diners would be spread not only across sidewalks, but have a growing, at times quite elaborate, presence in the form of downtown “parklets” on top of formerly coveted parking spots.

For our part, the Historical Society has been spending considerable energy looking at ways to spread history, beyond the confines of the archive and museum. One of the most successful results has been a growing suite of creative short films by Russ Cohen that touch upon a variety of local history topics (*see page 4*), the latest

two of which have been reserved for our membership to see, first. *Be sure to listen for the “cameo” performance of Russ’s wife, Constance Quirk!*

Lastly, I was fortunate enough to be present around 11 pm on September 17, at the Oak Grove Avenue railroad crossing as Jessie and James R. Murphy’s family home, formerly located at 1128 Douglas Ave., and split into two sections, was rolled for the second time in its history to a new Burlingame location, now on Oak Grove Ave. for a new chapter in its long life. We owe a debt of gratitude to the owner-developer for honoring these pioneers and their home, as well as everyone involved who helped film and document this awe inspiring undertaking for future generations.

-Jennifer Pfaff

Current Officers 2020:

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-Cathy Foxhoven

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