

THE RECORD

BURLINGAME'S INVENTOR, ADELARD F. MARTEL

2023

Annual Meeting -
Jon Mays "How the
News is Made."*See page 5*

The last half of the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th formed a period of invention in America unlike anything before or since. Bell, Edison, the Wright Brothers, and many others created devices and systems to improve safety, efficiency, comfort and reliability in all aspects of life. Burlingame's contribution to the fraternity of inventors at work during that period is Adelard F. Martel. He was born in Montreal, Canada in August 1853. In 1880, by the age of 27, Adelard had immigrated to the U.S. By 1899, he had taken up residence and established a successful business in San Francisco. His younger brother Charles, also an inventor, arrived in the United States in 1888.

Adelard achieved some local notoriety in 1899 for violating the Garbage Act by purchasing and burning waste paper, wood and straw from various San Francisco businesses for use in his electricity generation operations at 153 Fremont Street. He was tried in Judge Treadwell's court, but no verdict was reached. He responded to this by filing a lawsuit against the Board of Health and the Health Office to restrain them from continuing to arrest individuals whose businesses collected and delivered this material to his company, indicating that the Board

of Health was acting as an ally of a garbage monopoly, the Sanitary Reduction Works, and that he would be

unable to carry on his business of generating steam and electricity without the delivery of this fuel, resulting in the ruin of his company. Although no results of the suit have been uncovered, it was apparently successful, since the 1900 San Francisco City Directories reveal that A. F. Martel was the president of the Martel Power House on 1st Street.

Approximately, nine years later, Martel was in the San Francisco papers again – this time for entering into a competition, sponsored by the U.S. Post Office, to test which devices were best for delivering and receiving mail from fast moving trains. Rules stated that the

device must operate without hitting anyone in the head who might be standing nearby on the platform and without damaging the material in the custody of the Post Office. The pouches could weigh up to 200 pounds and the trains could operate at speeds of 10 to 60 miles per hour. A. F. Martel's device met every demand made upon it. By 1913, Mr. Martel demonstrated that his mail crane could deliver and receive bags of raw eggs without breaking any.



In 1912, newspapers delivered a less generous appraisal of Martel. The Market Street Bank, of which he had been president, failed. The January 17th *Stockton Independent* reported that A. F. Martel, President of the Market Street Bank was arrested for being overly inventive in his reporting of the bank's assets, and the January 23rd *Marysville Daily Appeal* reported that he had been found guilty and sentenced to 5 years in San Quentin. The February 26th *Los Angeles Herald* reported that Mr. Martel was seeking release on bail and that his associate, Mr. Nash, the bank's cashier, who had also been charged, had died in prison of a broken heart. On September 4, 1913, it was reported in the *Daily News Leader* of San Mateo that Mr. Martel was freed of all charges and "his many friends will be pleased to learn that he is now free from his difficulties."

By the time he was cleared of these legal troubles, Martel was living in Burlingame and pursuing his inventions, rather than his banking career. Perhaps ahead of his time in looking for a carbon-free method of creating energy, he introduced his Wave Motor in 1913. It consisted of a large buoy acting as a float, which rose and fell with the motion of the ocean waves working cogwheels in a ratchet that caused a set of gears to operate air compressors on shore. From compressed air engines, the power was transmitted to dynamos that would generate power and light. An unnamed source stated that should Mr. Martel's invention prove successful, it would be the greatest innovation of the age, making power, light and heat almost as free as the air on every coast. Unfortunately, it was not successful enough to redirect our search for energy sources away from fossil fuels.

In 1915, Mr. Martel's inventive genius was next directed to recreation, with the invention of an automated pin-setting machine for use in bowling alleys. As a result, he and his brother, Charles, opened a bowling alley in

the Hatch Building in Burlingame, where they had previously operated a vulcanizing business. (The vulcanizing business—that consists of hardening rubber—was moved to an area behind the building.) The bowling alley gained public notice when the Burlingame Trustees (City Council) were invited to stop by and check it out after their meeting on February 17th. The *Daily News Leader* reported that the invitation was unanimously accepted and

following adjournment, the Council repaired to the Martel alleys, where "several games of ten-pins" were enjoyed. Trustee W. H. Pearson, Chief of Police George E. Jones and Trustee August Berg scored successes, but "City Clerk James R. Murphy refused to disclose the nature of his score." The vulcanizing business continued until May 1920, when it was reported that the Martel brothers would retire from that business but would remain in Burlingame.



Martel Traffic Signal debuts in Burlingame on El Camino Real - 1924

A traffic signal developed by Martel and his brother seemed to offer the greatest hope for a significant contribution to Burlingame life and to the Martels' pocketbooks. The traffic signal made its Burlingame debut in 1924, but it had actually first been installed in Oakland in 1923 to great acclaim. Praised by the police, it started and stopped traffic every twenty-seven seconds by use of signs during daylight and lights at night. It could be operated automatically and by hand if necessary. Louis Allen wrote in the *Oakland Tribune* of December 9, 1923, that the position of the monitor at the side of the road rather than in the middle of the intersection was a great advance in safety and efficiency. "It is unquestionably more efficient than the old system of maintaining an officer at the center of traffic, who must emulate a whirling Dervish, while trying to see what is happening behind him and be at all times ready to sidestep some irresponsible auto driver. With such a

device, there is no need for a man taking his life in his hands and attempting to direct traffic from a little platform where he must needs be constantly on the alert to prevent being run down by autoists or bruised by passing street cars.”

Reports of the tests in Burlingame revealed that the device included semaphores with light and bells either operated by an officer in a tower beside the highway or automatically. Signals gave drivers ample time to stop, thereby reducing the likelihood of rear-end collisions when traffic was stopped on a busy road. In April of 1924, it was reported that the device could be installed at little cost and should prove to be of value in eliminating traffic problems in San Mateo County. However, by 1926, when Mr. Martel offered to rent the signal system to the City of Burlingame, the offer was rejected by the Trustees.

quite a few other properties around. As I recall, those 2 brothers, the Martel brothers, actually developed the



The Martel Brothers' home - 1208 Bayswater Avenue as seen in 2022

The Martel brothers in Burlingame were the topic for a 1981 Burlingame Historical Society meeting. One unidentified speaker recalled, “The Liberty Theater over on California Drive was owned by two men, two bachelors [actually both were widowed], the Martel brothers, very pudgy gentlemen. They lived on Bayswater Avenue between Park Road and Lorton Avenue, and they owned this theater and they owned

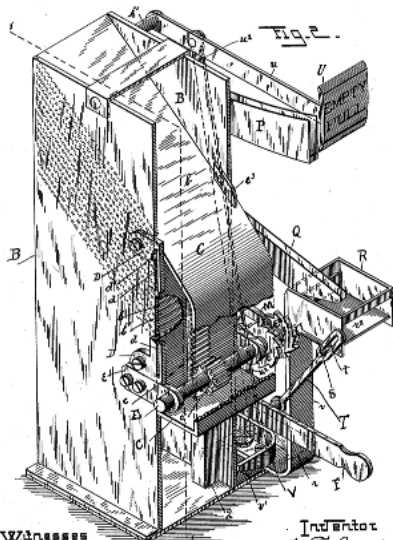
invention of a mechanical signal at intersections, the red, yellow and green, but they fouled up the patent somehow.

I can remember them testing it over Burlingame Avenue [actually Bellevue Avenue] and El Camino. They had a lot of people out there and police and everybody, and they were testing the signals. But somewhere along the line they lost the patent.”

The Martel brothers lived together at a house they purchased in the 1920s at 1208 Bayswater Avenue until the death of Charles in 1926 at Mills Hospital in San Mateo. Adelard continued to live in the Burlingame/San Mateo area until the late 1930s. He lived the last seven years of his life at San Francisco's Laguna Honda Home, dying on March 12, 1946 at the age of 93. He and his brother are entombed in the Martel mausoleum at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma.

During his lifetime, Adelard Martel applied for more than 20 patents, some making improvements on existing inventions—such as wire fences, car brakes, seal locks, sleeping cars, railway signals and switches, and paper files—and some other entirely new inventions, such as his wave motor, traffic light system, a mail box, a device for automatically delivering goods (a vending machine), a clothes wringer, a mail bag shifting apparatus, and a machine for testing the muscular strength of hands and arms. All began their lives in the mind of Adelard Martel, “Burlingame’s Inventor”. A few of the aforementioned inventions are pictured below:

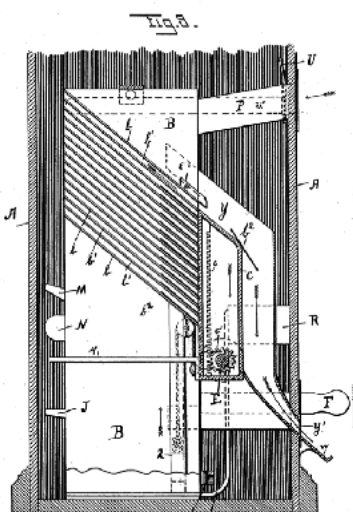
(No Model.)
A. F. MARTEL.
APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATICALLY DELIVERING GOODS.
No. 517,412. Patented Mar. 27, 1894.



Witnesses
John D. Whaley
M. Rosenfeld

Inventor
A. F. Martel
by A. S. Fane
Attorney

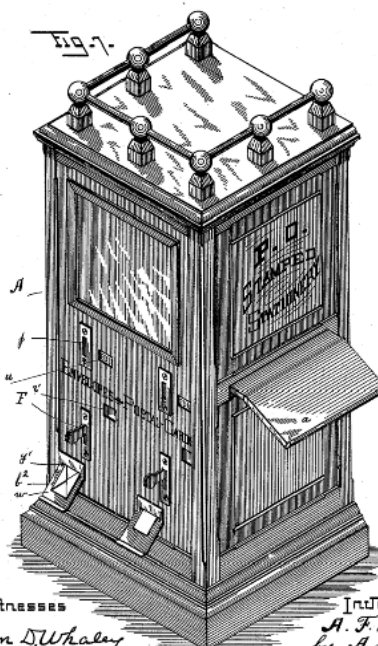
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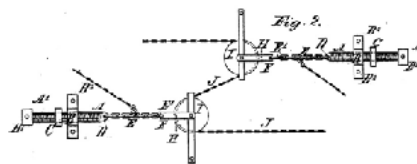
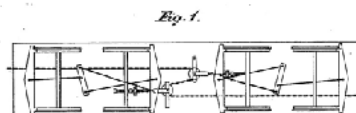
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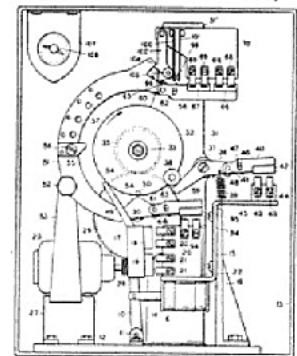
(No Model.)
A. F. MARTEL.
Car Brake.
No. 242,011. Patented May 24, 1881.



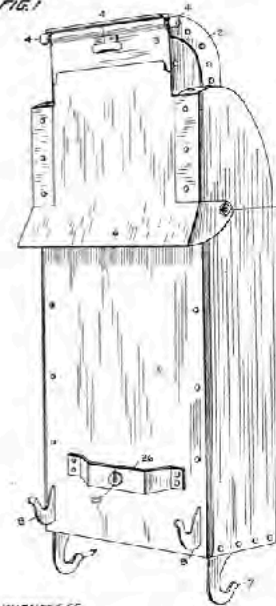
Witnesses:
A. L. Batters
Jas. A. Hall

Inventor:
A. F. Martel
by A. S. Fane
Attorney

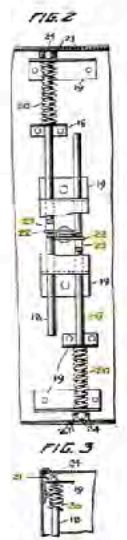
2,119,593
TRAFFIC SIGNAL SYSTEM
Adelard F. Martel, Burlingame, Calif., assignor of
one-half to George W. Gates, Burlingame,
Calif.
Application April 20, 1936, Serial No. 75,357
1 Claim. (Cl. 177-337)



A. F. MARTEL.
MAIL BOX.
APPLICATION FILED FEB. 1, 1919. EXAMINE MAY 12, 1919.
1,364,126. Patented Jan. 4, 1921.
FIG. 1



Witnesses
W. S. Fane
Jas. A. Hall



Inventor
A. F. Martel
by A. S. Fane
Attorney

ANNUAL MEETING -**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12th at 12:45 pm**

From **12:45 to 1 pm** we will conduct our business meeting (president and treasurer reports and election of officers). *See page 7 for 2023-4 slate*

Beginning at **1 pm sharp**, we are thrilled that **JON MAYS** will present **"How the News is Made."** For over 20 years, Jon has been the Editor-in-Chief for the *San Mateo Daily Journal*. During that same two decades, we have all seen the delivery of our news totally upended by social media and digital formats, with Jon having a front row seat. Hear him relate the challenge of making and delivering the news in the 21st century. Our local newspapers are in the business of recording and preserving local history each and every day. Come to this exciting presentation to hear how it's done! We will meet in **MAPLE ROOM of our new Community Center (second floor; handicapped accessible; elevator from garage)** We will wrap up by 2:30 — well in time for the Super Bowl kick off at 3:30 p.m.



Jon Mays

ACQUISITIONS: With thanks to...

Gary Doss for 4 circa 1970s images of the Old City Hall at 229

Park Road being demolished (shown at center), kindness of

Russ Cohen; Billy

Barth kindness of

Linda McLaughlin

for a multipage oral

history of the

development of

Burlingame Village,

including history of

some of the early

residents; to **Mark**

Lucchesi for

interviews of **Jon**

Mays, Michael Collopy, Isabelle de Paz, Peter

Stevenson, and John Kevranian between

September and November, and for **Ray Tyler's**

videography of the Collopy, Isabelle de Paz and

Kevranian interviews, as well as for the filming of

the October 27th Quarterly meeting, moderated by Mark

Lucchesi, that featured a Burlingame High School Centennial

Forum; **Jim Shypertt** for his essay in memory of Albert and

Lillian Ebner, owners of Rorke's (261 Park Road, Burlingame);

Bobbi Benson for informational material related to Mills

Canyon, in Burlingame, including plant species found there; **Ed**

Eisenman for an obituary of Marilyn Herrera, wife of

longtime Assistant Chief Bob Herrera – Burlingame Fire

Department; **Linda Field** for information and photographs of

the Burlingame Public Works Storm Drain Mural Project (Aug.

2022) including locations, artists names and images of various

decorative murals at storm drains in Burlingame; **Jim**

Shypertt for an October 2022 image of Bing and Kathryn

Crosby's residence (1200 Jackling Road, Hillsborough) and a

photo essay about Harriet Pullman and the Pullman cars on



display at the Millbrae Train Museum; **Jim Kelly** for a CD containing a dashcam film (approx. 22 minutes) of El Camino Real in Burlingame (northbound and southbound) experiencing a storm with extreme flooding issues, on the morning of December 13, 2021; **Doug Lambert** for several color copies of local landmarks republished in the San Mateo Times, that

originally were shown in a color photography exhibit at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915; **Carl and Janet Martin** for misc. Burlingame maps, as well as a 1976 Burlingame General Plan, and 1977 Trees of Burlingame booklet, signed by all the 1977 Councilmembers to Martha Benson, Beautification Commission Chair in 1977; **Jill Wakeman Goodman**, kindness of **Joanne Garrison**, for a manuscript about life in Burlingame in WWII when Jill as an 8-12 year old, lived on Hillside Drive; her father, Bill, was

the neighborhood Air Raid Warden; **Nancy de Puy**, kindness of **Cathy Baylock**, for numerous digital images of vintage photographs depicting the residence at 1527-1529 Newlands Avenue circa 1913, including images of the family members who first occupied the home, now that of Cathy and Joe Baylock; **Linda Field** for misc. real estate advertisements, and a purple Pot-pourri shopping bag with "Perks" discount card attached; Pot-pourri [1235 Broadway] closed in December 2022 after 26 years of doing business in Burlingame, and to **Sam Malouf** for misc. memorabilia, including vintage dry-cleaner hangers, an annual financial statement (1939) of the Burlingame Odd Fellows Hall Association (1120 Burlingame Avenue), and vintage postcards including the Burlingame Country Club (circa 1910) and the Hyatt House Fly-In Hotel (1333 Bayshore Highway) circa 1960s.



ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2022:

Special Projects: Due to your generosity, we were able to complete two special projects this year: 1) a plaque on Beach Road commemorating the

location of the Burlingame Drive-in, and 2) the restoration of three neon signs that will be displayed in our museum in the train station. We have been busy updating our displays in the museum in anticipation of a 2023 reopening.

Quarterly meetings: We were able to safely return to in-person meetings in 2022!



Our annual meeting in February was held at the Lions Club and featured car enthusiast and long-time auto salesman, Richard Griffiths, presenting "Tales from Auto Row." Our Spring meeting, held on zoom in conjunction with The Burlingame Library, presented local author Paul Regan discussing his book, *The Forensic*, which described his role as a young CPA in obtaining a multi-million dollar verdict against the elusive Howard Hughes on behalf of shareholders of AirWest. In August, in conjunction with the San Mateo County Historical Association, we led a well attended walking tour (*at left*) around the 5-acre block in Hillsborough where developers built five cottages in 1892 that would jumpstart our Peninsula community and the Burlingame Country Club. Our fall quarterly, in anticipation of Burlingame High School's centennial in 2023, featured a panel of former and current students and teachers led by Mark Lucchesi. It was a lively discussion held at our new Burlingame Community Center. A positive

hold-over from the Covid shutdowns is that we are now recording our in-person meetings and posting them to our website burlingamehistory.org and our YouTube Channel.

Newsletters: In 2022, we continued to provide longer, more substantive stories in our newsletter. In Spring, we gave you the story of Shirley Jackson, the acclaimed author who lived on Forest View Avenue from 1926 to 1933. In the Summer, our member Joe Baylock gave us "The Roots of Rock Music on the Peninsula" and we followed up on the Shirley Jackson story with a piece on Shirley's high school crush, Bud Young, Jr. who helped found the acclaimed jazz program at the College of San Mateo. And, in the Fall, as a follow-up to the walking tour held in August, Cathy Baylock gave us the history of the Whittell family, who were the original purchasers of the cottage that still stands at 50 Kammerer Court. While preparing for the walking tour, Jennifer Pfaff learned that this 5-acre block was at one time in the 1940s considered as a possible site for the new hospital (instead of the current location of Peninsula Hospital) and she told that story in the Fall newsletter as well.



Podcasts, Films and Museum: Russ Cohen and Mark Lucchesi continued to record our history in film and podcasts, with Mark recording 16 podcasts last year, including Broadway's *All that Glitters* shop owner, Isabelle de Paz (*at left*)! These are fantastic interviews available on YouTube at Mark at the Mic. Russ has done a number of short films on a variety of topics available on our Burlingame History You Tube channel. If you haven't done so, check these out. They are terrific.

Education and Research : We continued to provide our popular "passport tours" to 3rd graders and our archives and researchers continue to be the "go to" place for the community. This year, we provided assistance to the Burlingame Woman's Club, the City of Burlingame Planning Department regarding the Millsdale development and the Post Office project, and we continue to work with CalTrans on the proper tree replacements for the ECR remodel.



**A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS (in no particular order)
for generously contributing to our 2022 Year-End Fundraising Drive**

Anonymous-
-in Memory of Nick Baylock
Carole Schweitzer
Jeff Tateosian
Kathleen Egan
Anonymous
Ann Malouf
Rose Welch
Jeannie Siegman
Linda Easton
David Harris
Carol Tanzi – *In Memory of
Joseph L. Tanzi*
Jonathan Koomey
Linda Bullock Merrifield
Julianne W. Mooney
Fred and Joann Hawley
Joe and Cathy Baylock -
In Memory of Martha Benson
Serena Conti
Jeanne V. Patterson
Howard Wettan
Patrick Gilbride
Donna Lema-Cerna
Ed and Patti Fichtner
Clare E. Cavanaugh

John Catania
Mary Lou Wald
Bobbi Benson
Marjorie Kobe
Donna and Eric Colson
Patricia Toft
Meredith and Blair Dunn
Jim Nantell
Walter F. Sorenson
Kent and Jill Lauder
Law Offices of Mark Hudak
Nancy Finney
Joanne and Peter Garrison
Nick and Stephanie Delis
Don Donoughe and Beth Concoby
Doris Harvey
Rich McLinden
Tom Blake
Charlene Campos
Pam Merchant
Catherine Wilkinson
Linda and Ron Field
Norton Pearl
Carol Rossi
Charlotte McFadden
Don and Debbie Doyle

Terry Naylor
Vicki Jacobs – *In Memory of
her parents Ruth and Bob Jacobs*
John Parkin
Kevin and Lisa Cullinane
Harold Schuette
Maureen Byrne
Irvin Ungar
John and Leslie McQuaide
David Kell
Jo Ann Quadt
Tom and Kitty Mullooly
Harry Chin
Thomas Longa & Christine Chan
Bonnie Hower
Sam Malouf Authentic Luxury
Henk Van Arkel
Rebecca Haseleu
Jennifer and Juergen Pfaff -
-In Memory of Charles Voltz
Emily Beach
Jessica Sobolik Willey - *In
Memory of Wonderful Martha May*
Frank Pagliaro
Anonymous

ANNUAL ELECTIONS: Sunday, February 12th at 12:45 pm. **The Proposed Board Slate for 2023-4:**

The Nominating Committee has proposed the following slate of executive officers, having been approved by unanimous vote at the November 2022 Board meeting: President - Jen Pfaff; VP Museum - Russ Cohen; VP Technology and Educational Tours - Diane Condon-Wirgler; Treasurer - Mary Griffith; Secretary - Leslie McQuaide. Additional board positions: Newsletter - Joanne Garrison; Membership - Carl Martin; Social Media - Cathy Baylock. **New to the 2023 slate is Mark Lucchesi - Oral Histories and podcasts. Nominations for Executive Officer positions will also be taken from the floor at our Annual Meeting on Feb. 12th. Membership renewals for 2023 are due!** (If you are paid up, think about gifting a membership to someone!)

Please use the enclosed envelope:

Senior/Student \$30, Individual \$50, History Buff \$100, Charles Seabiscuit Howard \$500, Anson Burlingame \$1000. Life memberships are no longer offered, but existing Life Memberships will be honored. Life Members are always welcome to donate.)

**WELCOME NEW
MEMBERS:**

Carole Schweitzer - Individual
Diane Schweitzer - Individual
Ann Malouf - Individual
Kristin Nisewaner - Individual

Carolyn Simon - Individual
Marie Simpson - Individual
Robin Alioto - Individual
Marian Sosnick - Individual
Rose Welch - Individual
Irvin Ungar - Individual
Nancy Eswein - Individual

Abby Homans Wilder - Individual
Kitty Margolis - Individual

IN MEMORIAM:

Martha Benson
Roberta "Bobbie" Martin
Charles Voltz
Carroll Schmitz



Burlingame Historical Society
P.O. Box 144
Burlingame, CA 94011
www.burlingamehistory.org
650-340-9960

Address Service Requested - Time Dated Material

Calendar:

**Burlingame Hillsborough
History Museum-**

***Note:** Due to Covid-19 safe distancing limitations, our museum is currently closed, but is being updated. Please check our website for status.

Jon Mays presents:

"How the News is Made"

Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023

**12:45 Board Elections, 1pm
program**

Maple Room, Community Center,
see pg. 5

*Please remember us
in your trust or will!*

President's Message - *Best Wishes from Jennifer Pfaff in 2023*

As another year begins, it is worth noting that our team of volunteers has managed to get a lot of work accomplished in spite of various bouts of illness and weather issues that sometimes bogged us down. Nearly 8000 artifacts have been logged in our computer system to date; many hundreds of items have been sorted and filed. The walking tours and much of what is written in our newsletters makes use of materials from the archives. My gratitude goes out not only to our volunteer Board members, each of whom has a variety of tasks to accomplish during the year, but to our Archive volunteer team that forms the essential backbone of a relevant archive.

On the topic of taskmasters, an honor was recently bestowed upon **Joanne Garrison** for her extensive work researching, documenting and sharing local Burlingame-Hillsborough history. Each year since 1930, the Burlingame Lions Club has

awarded the honor to a citizen who has given outstanding service to the community. We are so lucky to have Joanne on our team.

Last, but not least, we bade farewell to longtime Burlingame resident, **Carroll Schmitz**, who passed away in 2022 at the age of 106. In a 2005 interview conducted at the residence in which he'd lived since 1922, Carroll was asked about his fondest memories. There were many, but what rose to the top was his recollection of **William H. Crocker** on his customary morning horseback ride down to the train station with a saddlebag full of toffees (on occasion these were coins) that he tossed to the neighborhood children, one of whom was Carroll. Crocker would then leave his horse with other commuters' horses in a corral located roughly where the tennis courts are now, before boarding the train to San Francisco for his workday. *-Jennifer Pfaff*

Current Officers 2022:

President - Jennifer Pfaff

VP - Museum - Russ Coben

VP Technology and

Education -

Diane Condon-Wirgler

Treasurer - Mary Griffith

Secretary - Leslie McQuaide

Corresponding Secretary

-Mary Packard

Newsletter

-Joanne Garrison

Social Media-

-Cathy Baylock

Membership Chair-

Carl Martin