

THE RECORD

50 Years of Saving History

ANNUAL
PROGRAM

50 Years of Collecting

Feb. 23, 2025

pg. 5

Fifty years ago, Martha May and her cohorts started squirreling away Burlingame and Hillsborough artifacts in home closets and under dining room tables. Inspired by the upcoming U.S. Bicentennial celebrations in 1976, Martha Rosman May (a Realtor), Beverley Evans (a graduate history student), Don Ringler (a high school teacher), and long-term resident Nancy Constantino all shared a passion for our unique local history, and a concern that it was being thrown out. The first organized meeting of the Burlingame Historical Society was held on

November 13, 1975 in the community room of the Western Federal Savings Building at the current site of the Apple store at 1301 Burlingame Avenue.

Within 2 years, a book entitled "*Burlingame: Lively Memories*" was published, reflecting memories of several pioneer families that still had a strong presence in Burlingame during the 1970s. The book, which included numerous historic photographs, was available at *Art in the Park*, and sold out after two printings. In 1986, after years of efforts to identify a permanent home for the ever-growing collection, the City agreed to let the Society house the archive in the City-owned Gunst estate Carriage House in the back of Washington Park. For the next 20 years, the Society's collection grew by leaps and bounds and was properly catalogued by dedicated volunteers.

By the time of Burlingame's centennial in 2008, the Society began to focus on sharing the richness of its

collection. We published a new book, *Burlingame Centennial 1908-2008*, in time for the City's celebrations.

However, the book was not the only means by which we sought to share our history. Recognizing the potential of the defunct Caltrain operations in the Burlingame Avenue Railroad Station, negotiations with several agencies resulted in the long-pursued goal of some space to showcase some of what had been collected over the decades. The museum opened the same year as Burlingame's Centennial (see *Museum*, pg. 3).

After the Centennial, we continued efforts to broaden our reach by placing history plaques on Burlingame Avenue and informational panels in Washington Park. Our *You Tube* channel allows us to post videos on a variety of topics, such as *Pacific City*. A website entitled "Burlingame Founding Families" tells our story from 1850-1908. Third grade students continue to delight in our Passport Tours offered each Spring (see *Passport Tours*, pg. 2). And more recently, our *Oral Histories* program (pg. 4), expanded exponentially as these are now conducted and communicated in a podcast format and are posted to our YouTube channel as well.

All this would never have been possible without decades of work by volunteers, and generous community members who understand the importance of history and a sense of place that help to make life richer here and our citizenry feel more connected.



Martha May promotes our first book called "Burlingame: Lively Memories" seated in a vintage Burlingame Seagrave Fire Truck in the late 1970s.

Passport to History Tours

by Diane Condon-Wirgler

I like to call it the “touch-and-feel” tour—an experience designed to make history truly come alive for every Burlingame third grader. This year marks the 25th anniversary of this remarkable program.

It all began as a favor for my son’s 3rd-grade teacher, and now, 25 years later, more than 7,000 children have taken part in these tours.

The Passport Tours are field trips where third-graders walk to designated historical sites in Burlingame. Each child receives a special passport and sun hat to keep. At each site, the kids learn something about our history and are given a quiz. If they pass the quiz, their passport is “stamped” as visited.

One of the first lessons I learned while conducting these tours is that kids love to compare notes with their classmates—what they saw, where they went, and which stories they heard. Because of this, every tour is unique. Tailoring each one to that school’s neighborhood keeps the experience special for each group and gives them their own “bragging rights.” Highlights of the tours often include visits to sites affectionately dubbed “Mummy’s Cave,” the “House with the Moving Walls,” the “Candy Store,” and the “Storybook Houses.”

Although there are 25 eligible sites, each tour only visits about 7–9 locations due to time constraints. However, every passport includes a map of all the sites, encouraging children and their families to explore them all later at their own pace.

The kids’ creativity never ceases to amaze me. Last year, a group of 3rd graders from McKinley School composed a song naming the “Seven Creeks of Burlingame.” Knowing these creeks is essential, as every class must correctly name them to win



Third-graders and chaperones listen enraptured during a recent tour as Diane tells the story of Burlingame’s “Dairy Boy” hidden between two buildings for nearly a century. The vintage mural is now visible from the lobby of 250 California Drive.

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SEVERN LODGE DAIRY

The Dairy’s distribution operations were located in the building from 1919-21. In 1921 it changed to the Severn Lodge Garage and acted as a parking concession for the “Pacific City”. The circa 1917 mural was uncovered when the Regan Building was torn down.

What is across the street from the Mural?

- A. The Candy Store.
- B. Christie’s Restaurant.
- C. The Train Station.
- D. All of the Above.

the grand prize for the day. Past prizes have included the Burlingame Centennial book or even Golden State Warriors memorabilia.

What makes this program so remarkable is the positive and lasting impact it has on the children. Siblings who

have previously participated often share their excitement, creating anticipation for the younger ones. We’ve even had high school students cheer, “Best field trip ever!” as they recognize us touring the town. Parents frequently mention how thrilled their children are to share what they’ve learned, inspiring family outings to explore the sites together.

We’re deeply grateful to the Burlingame Lions Club and Jack Van Etten for underwriting the cost of the passports and for their ongoing support of this incredible program.

We’re always looking for tour guides who love teaching, have a great sense of humor, and enjoy seeing children’s faces light up with wonder. If that sounds like you, join us! I can promise it’s an experience that will keep you smiling for years to come.

(Answer to Passport to History quiz above: D)

Creating a Museum *by Russ Cohen*

The late Martha May, one of our founding members, said to me once, “I never thought I would live long enough to see the Burlingame Historical Society open a museum.” Thankfully, she did. The year was 2008.

In 2006, I was a regular rider on Caltrain going to and from work in San Francisco each day from out Burlingame Avenue station. I noticed a sign saying that soon there would no longer be a waiting area or ticket agent inside—tickets would only be sold from electronic ticket machines located outside. Even though I was disappointed that I could no longer wait inside or have a pleasant conversation with an agent, I seized upon the opportunity. The upper echelon at Caltrain were contacted and negotiations begun. I pointed out that as a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, remodeling the inside of the station as a private business or restaurant would be challenging and that, if given permission to use the waiting room as a museum, the Historical Society would not only keep the inside intact, we would be stewards of this most important and recognizable structure. In time, we came to a mutually favorable agreement.

We began designing the first exhibits and challenged ourselves to open the museum in time for our Centennial Year, 2008. By the skin of our teeth, we made it! In the beginning we were open each Sunday. Over time however, getting volunteer docents for 52 weeks out of the year was too much of a challenge. We decided that opening one Sunday per month would not only be easier on our volunteers, it would also drive a more focused visitor base—one that would make the museum a destination rather than a “just passing through” kind of experience.

Our very first exhibit met with success. Called “Planes, Trains and Automobiles” it featured a big, tail-finned 1959 Plymouth smack dab in the middle of the space. While



Russ Cohen by one of many new Museum displays

the exhibit was a hit, it also allowed us to learn that we were missing some key information about how Burlingame and Hillsborough came into existence. The next exhibit focused on the beginnings of our two towns.

During Covid, we were forced to close our doors. Again, we took advantage of a difficulty. In the last year-and-a-half, we’ve completely rebuilt every exhibit and added new ones. Visitors will now see hundreds of artifacts and photos never before seen in public. The place is packed with gems from our archives. At our reopening on December 6, after the City tree-lighting ceremony, it was packed with visitors too! Over 250 people enjoyed seeing the new exhibits for the first time.

Our recent museum revamp is by far our most ambitious update and several need to be recognized for their assistance. Meryl Pataky restored all of the neon signs on display, Kent Lauder helped with carpentry, Gary Doss helped with lighting, Jennifer Pfaff and Joanne Garrison helped with content development and proofreading, Carl Martin helped with framing, and heavy lifting was provided by Joe Baylock, Mark Lucchesi and David Harris.

From the beginning, the vision for the museum was always to have a place where the exhibits would change periodically, the displays would be informative -- but not overwhelming -- and visitors would want to return again and again. I hope that we have stayed true to the vision with this latest remodel.

It’s hard to believe we’ve now been open for 16 years. Now’s the time to visit us for the first time or visit us again. You won’t regret it.



Burlingame: It's a Small Town *by Mark Lucchesi*

For many years, Burlingame Historical Society board member Cathy Foxhoven, conducted oral histories for the Society with Ray Tyler filming them. Then she became a grandparent and moved out of state to be closer to her family. Soon thereafter, Leslie McQuaide, a long time BHS Board member and a fellow colleague of mine at Mollie Stone's Market suggested that I apply for the role. I attended every BHS meeting for a year; one day I got a call and was asked if I would like to join the Board. I jumped at the opportunity. Almost three years later with 90+ podcasts on YouTube, Apple and Spotify, I have found my niche. It has been very satisfying for me to find this way to give back to our community.

My oral histories are conducted as podcasts titled "Burlingame, It's a Small Town." I use the name "Mark at the Mic" to host the show because this broadcast handle has stuck with me since my days as a campus disc jockey at Long Beach State. The current podcast show is comprised of interviews with City Leaders, Business Leaders, Managers, and citizens of Burlingame and Hillsborough talking about their occupations, experiences, memories, and the challenges that they encounter while working or living in this area. I had studied Broadcast Journalism in college but never had the chance to pursue that dream until a friend of mine, who knew I would be retiring from the supermarket industry after 50 years, suggested I create a podcast. He even suggested that I take a podcast class offered at Stanford, continuing education for adults, which I did. And then Leslie mentioned doing the show in conjunction with the Society's efforts to document and preserve our history.

All of my podcasts are recorded at the Burlingame Public Library, where I spent a good portion of my

youth. The great Ray Tyler, the BHS videographer who had also filmed Cathy Foxhoven's interviews, accompanies me to record DVDs for our guests and the BHS archives. One of the differences between Foxhoven's earlier oral histories and mine is that we now use technology to broadcast them on YouTube, Apple, Spotify etc., allowing them to be heard by more people. All my podcasts are currently in audio-only format, though the goal is to add some of Ray's recorded visuals next year.

I'm grateful to all my guests for taking the time to sit down with me. Each and every episode holds a special memory for me.

One of my memorable episodes, when I became confident I could do a good interview, was with JoAnne Nagler, a local Burlingame author. She had just completed writing "Stay with me Wisconsin," a book of short stories where the stories and the characters are intertwined.

JoAnne's reading of a passage and her enthusiasm lit a fire under me. Another episode was with retired United States Congresswoman Jackie Speier. That episode was a new level for me and gave me the confidence that I could sit and interview anyone. The 90+ podcasts that I have completed in three years speak to my enthusiasm for

tackling this project. The podcasts, all of which are filed with the Society's archives, are adding another dimension and layer to our preservation of Burlingame's history. I, in turn, am indebted to the Society for giving me this amazing opportunity.



Mark at the Mic interviews longtime resident and business owner Josh Turow



Burlingame author JoAnne Nagler reading from her latest book on Mark's podcast

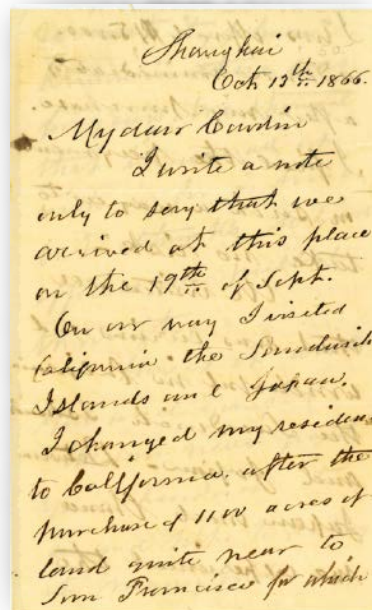
2025- Annual Election and Program at 1:45 pm

Sunday, February 23rd, 2025
Lane Room of the Burlingame Public Library

Executive Board Election at 1:45, followed immediately by our Annual Presentation at 2pm where all are welcome!



Above: Norton Pearl's Go-go dancer, 1964



At left: Anson Burlingame's 1866 letter to a friend about his recent purchase of 1100 acres in California

50 Years of Collecting...

From precious to quirky, we have it all! Come join us while we share samples of our vast archive collection and celebrate our Golden Anniversary.

ANNUAL ELECTIONS:

Proposed Executive Board Slate: 2025

The following slate of Executive Officers was approved at the November 2024 Board meeting:

President - Jen Pfaff; VP Museum - Russ Cohen; VP Technology and Educational Tours - Diane Condon-Wirgler; Treasurer - Mary Griffith; Secretary - Leslie McQuaide.

Elections open to all current members. Nominations for all positions will also be taken from the floor at our Annual Meeting on Feb. 23rd at 1:45 in the Lane Room of the Burlingame Public Library.

Membership renewals for 2025 are due. Please use the enclosed envelope, or share with a friend if you owe no dues—we love new members! **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.

-TO ALL OF OUR 2024 Year-end DONORS-

Received Nov. 1st - Dec. 31st

Thank You! Our work would not be possible without you.

Anonymous (4x)
Linda Easton
Mark Hudak
Stephanie and Nick Delis
Lynn and John Parkin
Sylvia Lopez Verbelli
Jeannie Howard Siegman
Donna and Bill Lema-Cerna
Anne Maria Gaddini
Jill Wakeman-Goodman
Manya Egolf
Jennifer & Juergen Pfaff
Marjorie Kobe
Audrey Chai
Ann Malouf
Serena Conti, Realtor
Scott Allen
Jim and Terry Nagel

Erik Winkler
Gary Hernandez
Tom Blake & Jackie Stahl
Carolyn & John Root
Jim Nantell
Walter Sorensen
Teresa Boland
Jim Brogan
Dennis Moskovitz
Nancy Finney
Constance Quirk
Eric Mendell
- Kern's Jewelers
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JoAnn Lyons Quadt
Rich and Mary McLinden
Dewey Land Co. (ongoing)
Jill and Kent Lauder
William Schmid
Lynn Feeney
Ed and Patti Fichtner
Katherine L. Colman
Betsy and Brian McGinn
Linda Yelnick
Don and Debbie Doyle
Tim McCarthy
Cathy Foxhoven
JoAnn Crossman Stenberg
Leslie and John McQuaide
Bonnie Hower

Thomas Longa and Chris Chan
Carol Tanzi in memory of Joseph L. Tanzi
Thomas A. Larsen
Rebecca Haseleu
Frank Pagliaro
Pamela and Wayne Gehrke
David Kell
Pete and Joanne Garrison
Don Donoughe and Beth Concoby
Christopher Voon
Jack and Lynn Van Etten
Cecilie Klaumann
Diane Elcan
Emily Beach
Cathy and Joe Baylock
Ron and Robin Karp

Acquisitions with thanks to:

Caltrans and **AECOM** consultants for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) prepared over the past 4 years to record anticipated impacts related to the *Howard Ralston Eucalyptus Tree Rows* (see sample of Photographer William Dewey’s 2023 work at right), as well as to 3 significant buildings that line the highway, the front landscaping of which will be affected. Also included are several vintage images from the Caltrans Transportation library, as well as samples from our own archive. These photos and documents will be added to the collection of the U.S. Library of Congress*; **Richard Kirchner** for a Lionel Co. 1950s prairie freight model train set and two 1930s era “Pullman” passenger cars (on display in museum); to **Jim Shypertt** for misc. digital memorabilia files, including a short video clip of some eucalyptus removals at Ray Park in August 2024, and a synopsis of the history of the Greyhound Company, founded by Swedish immigrant Eric Wickman, born Martis Jerk (1887-1954); City of Burlingame Planning Dept., kindness of **Neda Zayer** for a packet of *Peninsula Outlook Weekly* clippings including an aerial image of the City in 1948; miscellaneous Caltrain paraphernalia (including a beautiful Copenhagen sugar cookie adorned with an image of the Burlingame Railroad Station’s image), related to Caltrain’s Electrification Event on September 22, 2024, kindness of Burlingame Mayor **Donna Colson** and an image of the event crowd from **Joe Baylock; Mark Lucchesi and Ray Tyler** for multiple podcast interviews and DVDs of local business owners and personalities and **Leslie McQuaide** for transcriptions thereof; **Tom Collins** for several framed and/or decoupage images of Burlingame (1890s-1970s) he’d collected for many years; and to **Thomas Mullins** and **Albert Wagner** for Boy Scouts of America paraphernalia including a 1928 trophy, plaque, banner, booklet, uniform shirt, and various patches. ***Note: To view Caltrans’ 3D visualization of the El Camino Real Renewal Project, go to: <https://ecralternatives.com/design/>**



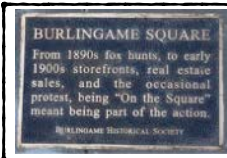
Many thanks to member **Kent Lauder** for repairing a plumbing problem at the museum in December; **Jason Raby**, of *Articulate Solutions* in Gilroy, for donating his staff time and effort to help make two new history panels a reality. We gratefully acknowledge the recent monetary bequests of retired **Burlingame firefighter Thomas D. Heaton** who passed away in June, and **Beverley Evans**, one of our founders, who passed away in August.

The Burlingame Historical Society and Burlingame Parks Forever Foundation thank the following individuals and groups who have generously donated to help fund the *Cupola Restoration Project* that we hope will be underway in the coming months.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Lisa Rogers | Ruth Kavanagh |
| Laura Hesselgren | Howard Page |
| Donna Colson | Betsy and Brian McGinn |
| Lynn Israelit | Rainville Osumi Family |
| Leslie Kirkbride | Jennifer Pfaff |
| Rebecca Haseleu | Estate of Beverley Evans |
| Theresa Meyer | Rich’s Bocce Team |
| The Plumbers and Mechanics Local | Anonymous |
| Union 467 & Apprenticeship | Duncan Beardsley |
| Training Center | Burlingame Historical Society |
| Lynne Herrick | Burlingame Parks Forever Foundation |

Welcome New Members:
 David Harris
 Serena Conti
 Judith Anderson
In Memoriam:
 Beverley Evans

If you can donate toward this effort, please send check to: Burlingame Parks Forever Foundation (501C3) specifically noting “Cupola Restoration”: 850 Burlingame Avenue, Burlingame, CA 94010



We Hate to BRAG but...

Have you heard all that we accomplished in 2024?



Museum Reopened: On December 6th to high acclaim! All new exhibits. Beginning January 5, it will be open on the first Sunday of each month, 1-4 pm (excluding July)

Began Monthly E-Blasts: If you aren't receiving them and would like to, please send us your email to burlingamehistorical@gmail.com. Receive up to the minute news and reminders of quarterly meetings.

Cupola Restoration: Worked with Burlingame Parks Forever Foundation to ensure our old City Hall Cupola south of the Apple store is repaired and repainted. *Donations still welcome (see pg. 5)*

Two New History Plaques Installed and Two More in the Pipeline: Worked with private donors of Burlingame High School class of '62 (Bill Walsh and Fred Hawley) to create two history plaques, one located at the driveway entrance to Burlingame High describing the Corbitt horse ranch that once occupied the land, and the second plaque located in the rose garden of Washington Park describing the Gunst mansion that formerly occupied the site. *Thanks to the City Parks staff for installing the plaques.* Two additional plaques were approved by the City Parks and Recreation Department Commission for installation in 2025: One describing Mr. Easton's battery-operated railway on Hillside Drive and the second describing Baseball in Burlingame and our historic wooden stands.

Documented the Oral History of Over 30 Community Members: We have been on a roll, documenting the oral histories of over 30 community members, all of which can be seen on the YouTube channel "Burlingame: It's a Small Town."

Working with Caltrans on History Walk Project: As part of the CalTrans remodel of El Camino Real, we are composing history plaques to be inserted in the sidewalk along the Howard-Ralston Historic Tree Rows district.

Over 300 Third-graders Participated in our Passport to History Program: Once again we contributed to the local history portion of the elementary school curriculum by conducting multiple walking tours.

Four Fabulous and Free Quarterly Meetings: 1) At our Annual Meeting in February, we presented over 100 images of "Then and Now" in our community; 2) In May, we presented original research on Ansel M. Easton and his "Town of Easton," including extensive research to pin down the exact location of Anson's parents' 19th century home, BlackHawk; 3) In August, 80 people participated in our San Mateo County Historical Association-sponsored walking tour, *"Up, Down and All Around: A Hidden Tour of Burlingame"*; 4) In October, retired Police Chief Jack Van Etten kept us in suspense as he described how, as a young detective, he solved the mystery of who was responsible for the gruesome stabbing of the train station agent in 1986.

Four Intriguing Newsletters: Our lead stories included "Best Seat in the House" (about Burlingame's past movie theaters); 2) "Priceless Portals to our Past" (about past photographers and the importance of their work to historians); 3) "Burlingame's Front Door" (about our historic train station); and 4) "Crime Scene: Do Not Cross" (about crimes committed in Burlingame).

Celebration of Caltrain's Electrification: In late September, just before our train station's 130th birthday, we participated in a celebration of CalTrains' conversion to electric trains and provided a *Burlingame Square* history plaque (shown above) that was embedded next to an original *Burlingame Square* imprint.

*None of this would have been possible without the support of you, our Members:
Thank you!*



Burlingame Historical Society
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 Burlingame, CA 94011
 www.burlingamehistoricalsociety.org
 650-340-9960

Address Service Requested - Time Dated Material

Calendar:
 Burlingame Hillsborough History Museum has reopened!
First Sundays of the month 1-4 pm:
 Sunday, February 2 and March 2, 2025
NEXT EVENT:
Sunday, Feb. 23rd, 2025
Election of Executive Officers 1:45, followed at 2 pm by our Annual Presentation:
“50 Years of Collecting” by the Burlingame Historical Society
Lane Room of the Burlingame Public Library (see p. 5)

Please remember us in your trust or will!



President's Message:

Our December 6th Museum re-opening was very enthusiastically embraced, with visitors of all ages streaming in by the dozens. I'd like to congratulate and thank VP Russ Cohen for spending literally thousands of hours over the past year and a half to reconceive and redefine the museum experience. He's created a terrific space that is beautiful, informational and welcoming to all.

In that vein, it would not be possible to sum up a half-century's worth of work by devoted Historical Society volunteers in this small space, so I won't even attempt it. What bears repeating is that local history continues to matter. We are indebted to scores of volunteers, who,

throughout the decades, have helped us stay true to our educational mission and had a great time, spreading joy and enthusiasm, while doing so.

Those of you who will be able to join us for our Annual Presentation on February 23rd will see artifacts covering a period of five decades, samples of what our archivists thought mattered and was worthwhile to save and remember. We have all been huge beneficiaries of this very time-consuming work.

As each generation seems to change, developing new habits and technologies that in many ways seem beyond recognition for the old-timers, there remains a real attachment and yearning to know what came before. With your continued support, we'll carry on as good stewards for memorabilia and interesting information that helps us to form bonds with places and to each other.

- Jennifer Pfaff

Current Officers 2024:
President - Jennifer Pfaff
VP - Museum - Russ Cohen
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
Oral Histories/ Podcasts - Mark Lucchesi