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Orinda Historical Society Newsletter

January 2007

P. O. BOX 82, ORINDA, CA 94563

(925) 254-1353

Museum Location

Lower Level of
Orinda Library
26 Orinda Way

Museum Hours of Operation

Monday, Wednesday,
& Friday 3-5 p.m.
Also by Appointment

24 Hour Answering Machine
925-254-1353

www.orindahistory.org

Upcoming Events

- **Next Board Meeting**
Wednesday, February 21,
from 3 to 5 pm at the
OHS Museum
- **General Meeting**
Thursday, March 21, 7 to 9
pm at the Orinda Community
Church—Speakers to be
announced
- **Board Meeting**
Wednesday, April 18 from
3 to 5 pm
at the OHS Museum

Check out our online
OHS Museum Store
at
www.orindahistory.org

Holiday Dinner Celebrates Miramonte

The OHS 2006 annual holiday dinner in December was a huge success with approximately 100 people in attendance; it was the best attended OHS dinner ever.

The entertaining theme this year was the 50th anniversary of Miramonte High School. Adding to the festive occasion were artifacts and decorations from Miramonte displayed around the Orinda Community Church where the dinner was held. Many speakers were featured that night along with a showing of a student-made video reflecting on Miramonte's 50 years.

A highlight of the evening was when **Vanessa Crews** and **Marty Schimbor** presented OHS with a DVD of digitized images representing 50 years of Miramonte's newspaper, the *Mirador*. This will be a very valuable addition to the OHS archives. Many thanks to everyone involved in this monumental project.

Speakers at the dinner included: **Bran Yaich**, a well-known former Miramonte principal who gave great insight to life at the school in the 70s and 80's; **James Fessenden**, the architect who designed Miramonte who is now in his 90's; **Jim Negri**, Acalanes Union High School District Superintendent; **Raul Zamora**, Miramonte's Principal;

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Vanessa Crews & Marty Schimbor presenting OHS with Miramonte's *Mirador* DVD

Casa Azul An Orinda Landmark



Casa Azul, Built in 1925

Have you ever noticed the stately blue house located near the entrance to Miner road? Members of the Orinda Historical Society took a tour in January of this historic house known as Casa Azul. One of only three private homes to be designated as an official City of Orinda Historical Landmark, Casa Azul is an impressive Mediterranean Revival style home. The house was built in 1925, at the same time as the Orinda Country Club, and has been home to the Garbarino family since 1962. This beautiful estate shows a classic 1920s style which fits perfectly in the Orinda area. The home has impressive details, from lovely interior arched doorways, to a wrought iron staircase rail, tiled roof, ornate windows, and even a tower. This house is truly an Orinda gem. Many thanks to OHS member **John Holmgren** for arranging this tour, and to the hospitality of **Dr. Eugene Garbarino and his wife, Joan**, for allowing OHS to tour their wonderful home.

OHS Board Members 2007

President: Lucy Hupp Williams
(650) 349-3382

Vice President: Erik Andersen
(925) 254-8444

Treasurer: Pat Jackson Draa
(925) 376-6657

Archivist: Kent Long
(925) 258-9771

Assistant Archivist: Dan Holmes
(925) 254-3360

Membership: Sarah Douglas
(925) 254-1128

At-Large: Charles Blue
(925) 254-2324

Finance/City Liaison: Carl Weber
(925) 254-8473

Tours: John Holmgren
(925) 254-5677

Newsletter: Teresa Long
(925) 258-9771

School Liaison: Kay Norman
(925) 254-9536

Videographer: Jerry Vurek
(925) 253-7995

Displays: Barbara Burkhalter
(925) 254-6868

Display Your Creativity!

Help design and create displays for the Historical Society. We would like to set up a committee to come up with design ideas and then implement them. Currently, 5-6 displays are put up per year at the Historical Society Museum. It does not take a lot of extra time and is fun! Plus, you'll learn a lot about our local history. If interested, please contact **Barbara Burkhalter** at 254-6868 or barb@barbsdesk.com

A Fond Farewell

Unfortunately, during these past few months Orinda has lost some notable citizens:

Ben Randall Jr.: Long time Orinda resident Ben Randall Jr., our featured speaker at the 2005 OHS holiday dinner, passed away last month. OHS was fortunate to have had him tell his memories of growing up in Orinda as the son of the manager of the Orinda Theater— now, these fond remembrances are preserved in the OHS archives.

A. Richard Newton: An OHS member and prominent Orinda citizen. Richard Newton was Dean of Engineering at UC Berkeley.

Alyson deLaveaga: Longtime OHS member and Orinda resident, Alyson deLaveaga was wife of Ned deLaveaga who was the son of the original Orinda deLaveaga family.

Kathryn Trask Swackhamer: An early environmentalist, Kathryn was instrumental in starting the garden at Wagner Ranch when it first opened in 1969. She was part of Orinda's organic gardening group the Green Garbage Gang. As an active Wagner Ranch school volunteer in the 1970's, she took students on field trips to her gardens at her home, which was built in 1898, on South Trail in Orinda. A very active actress for 50 years, Kathryn appeared in numerous theatrical productions in San Francisco, Berkeley, and the east bay. In her 44 years of living in Orinda, Kathryn loved the wilderness and natural feeling of the area, and she gave back to the community in many ways such as being involved in the many planting in the area for the schools and the community center.

Remembering Robert E. Paterson

By Jill Lamont

Bob Paterson came to Orinda in 1950, building a house in Sleepy Hollow on evenings and weekends. His two oldest children, Kaki and Karol, fell asleep in their cribs to the sound of a table saw. Years later when he retired from Chevron as an engineer, he became devoted to helping the historical society and was a major source of support and leadership in the 1980's and early 1990's. Bob was the driving force behind cataloging records, photos and historical treasures for the first time on a computer. In fact, he donated our first computer. Bob was OHS president from 1988 to 1990. He was also one of the early members of the Orinda Historic Landmarks Committee. Bob is fondly remembered for his thoroughness, attention to detail and for recruiting younger people to the historical society. When approaching a seemingly intractable challenge Bob maintained: "There is no job you can't do if you break it down into small enough pieces."



Bob Paterson

Trains in Orinda?

By Kent and Teresa Long



deLaveaga Train Depot in Orinda, c.1905
Collection of Wayne York, New Bremen, Ohio

When our son was five his idea of a dream house included a real live train going through the backyard. We explained that unfortunately Orinda didn't have any trains, but despite his utter disappointment and disbelief, "what kind of town was this anyway," we moved back to Orinda. If only he had been around here in the 1890's when Orinda was in fact served by a narrow-gauge line, the California and Nevada Railroad.

Incorporated in 1881, the "C&N" was led by Captain "Denver" Smith, who had built several successful railroads in Colorado. The line was planned to run from Emeryville, through Berkeley, San Pablo, and present-day Orinda, then extend through the Central Valley, over the Sierra Nevada near Sonora Pass, and terminate in Nevada, where it would connect with the Carson and Colorado Railroad. Trains began running between Emeryville and San Pablo in 1885, and the track was extended to the Orinda Crossroads (then called Bryant) by 1891. Impressive trestles were built in Orinda to cross the local creeks, and three stations were established, Orinda Park (at Wagner

Ranch), de Laveaga (on the deLaveaga family's property at Miner Rd.), and Bryant. Picnickers from Oakland would take the train out to enjoy the Orinda countryside, and hay grown in Lafayette and other local produce would be transported by the train back into market. As it turned out, the Bryant station at the Crossroads was as far as the railroad would ever reach, its finances hampered by competition and frequent washouts of the tracks. The train stopped running in late 1900. The right of way on the Berkeley side had long been desired by the Santa Fe railroad, which purchased the remnants of the C&N. Ultimately, part of that line was used to build BART through El Cerrito—so even today, you can still ride the rails on the old C&N right of way!

Luckily, some things have survived, like this photograph of the deLaveaga train depot recently donated by Wayne York of Ohio. Amazingly, this tiny train depot is still around today; it was declared the 14th City of Orinda landmark in 2000. The Orinda Landmark Committee, with help from the Orinda Rotary Club, has relocated and restored the building. It is now located at the Orinda Crossroads on the corner of Bates Blvd. and Davis Road. Inside the building are displays about the railroad and early Orinda. This is the last stop on the 3rd grade history tours that the OHS offers to students. The deLaveaga train station is available for viewing by the public. Call OHS member Kay Norman at 254-9536 for more information.

Holiday Dinner (continued from page 1)

Vanessa Crews AUHSD Board Member; **Marty Schimbor**, Miramonte journalism teacher; **Cheryl Davis**, the Digital Media teacher at Miramonte who oversaw the making of the Miramonte video; **Sue Wecht**, volunteer historian; and three Miramonte alumni, **Squire Fridell**, **Vicki Saputo** and **Nancy Peterson**, who each gave amusing anecdotes about teenage life in Orinda in the 50s and 60s.

As a special treat, the directors of the Miramonte video, Miramonte high school seniors **Scott Demunck** and **Tyler Pavey**, spoke about making the film, and what resources they had used.

OHS is grateful to **Widgie Hastings** for video taping the entire dinner program. This video, along with the 50 Years of Miramonte video, is available at OHS for viewing. Many thanks to all the speakers, long time OHS member **Dave Englehart** who helped with the wine, the Orinda Community Church, the Orinda Senior Village who loaned center-pieces, and all the volunteers who organized and set up the dinner.



Scott Demunck & Tyler Pavey,
Miramonte student film directors