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Orinda Historical Society Newsletter

May 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

Casa Orinda Owners to Speak at May Meeting



Casa Orinda Restaurant Circa 1960, OHS Archives

Did you know that the Casa Orinda is the oldest business in Orinda? The restaurant is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. According to owner and manager **John Goyak**, "Casa Orinda is the oldest continuing operating restaurant in the east bay."

Find out about the history of the Casa Orinda and the secret to its success and longevity at the Orinda Historical Society's An-

annual meeting on **Wednesday May 30th** at the Orinda Community Church. Guest speakers for the evening are long time Orinda residents and Casa Orinda owners **John Goyak** and his sister **Charlotte Goyak Guppy**.

Upcoming Events

- **Annual Meeting**
Wednesday, May 30th, 6:30 pm to 9 pm at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way
- **June Board Meeting**
Wednesday, June 20th, 3 to 5 pm at the OHS Museum
- **July Board Meeting**
Wednesday, July 18 from 3 to 5 pm
at the OHS Museum

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

Earthquakes in Orinda?

At the general meeting on March 21st 2007, the Orinda Historical Society hosted three key speakers: **Peggy Hellweg**, **Bruce Maclear**, and **Rebecca Kunzman** who addressed the topic of Earthquakes and emergency preparedness in Orinda. This was a fascinating evening full of important historical and safety information.

Peggy Hellweg, Ph.D. from the Berkeley Seismological Laboratory started off the evening describing the history of earthquakes in the Bay Area. Earthquakes have only been seismically recorded for the last 100 plus years. Dr. Hellweg, who grew up in Orinda, described the 3 major faults in our area: San Andreas, Hayward, and Calaveras. Orinda is located closest to the Hayward fault. Before the 1906 San Andres earthquake, "the big SF Quake" referred to a 1868 magnitude 7 quake that occurred on the Hayward fault and destroyed the town of Hayward. The Hayward is due for another big one; the USGS gives the Hayward fault a 25% chance of having a 1906 magnitude earthquake in the next 30 years and there is a 62% chance that a "big quake" will occur in the Bay Area. The Hayward fault is the most dangerous in the Bay Area because it been a long time since the north section had a rupture. Historical major quakes on the Hayward fault occurred in 1836

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More Volunteers Needed

The OHS museum desperately needs volunteers to staff it. Please call the museum at 254-1353 if you can help anytime during Monday, Wednesday or Friday 3 to 5 pm.

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 ★ newsletter. ★
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OHS Lifetime Members

Thank you to the lifetime members of the Orinda Historical Society for all your support:

Erik & Heather Andersen

John Loper

Reginald & Katherine Barrett

Jim & Guende McComas

Chris Bittman & Kenda Noble

John Mott

Chuck & Mollie Blue

Richard & Regina Osicka

Gloria Brown Brobeck

Dorothee Paterson

Peter & Lisa Engstom

Leon & Paddy Poupenev

Daniel Holmes

Sue & Ralph Severson

Aldo & Bernadine Guidotti

Robert & Maryett Thompson

Toris Jaeger

Catherine & Stephen Toal

Doug Krotz

Shirley White

Lindsay & Laurie Lantz

Rolfe & Lucy Williams

Kathryn Leland

Carol Lu Zischke

Sue Littlehale

Casa Azul History

OHS members toured the Casa Azul, an historic Orinda home, in January of this year. The current owners of the home, the Garborinos, generously provided historical information about the house including the following interview with Mrs. Rita Frost, April 25, 2002:

Casa Azul is important to Orinda because it was one of the first houses built here. The Chester Williams family built it in 1924-25. Casa Azul sits on three and a half acres of land next to the Orinda Country Club golf course. Mr. Williams bought the land from the de Laveagas. It was originally called Pine Crest Manor. In the Spanish-Mediterranean style. Mr. Williams painted it light pink. There are a couple of Czechoslovakian crystal



Joyce Williams 1940 with Mother

Continued on page 4

Proposed OHS Board Members 2007/2008

President: Lucy Hupp Williams
(650) 349-3382

Vice President: Erik Andersen
(925) 254-8444

Treasurer: Betty Karplus
(925) 254-4970

Recording Secretary: Carl Weber
(925) 254-8473

Archivist: Kent Long
(925) 258-9771

Assistant Archivist/Database:
Dan Holmes
(925) 254-3360

Membership: Sarah Douglas
(925) 254-1128

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

At-Large: Susan Ross
(925) 254-3720

Displays: Barbara Burkhalter
(925) 254-6868

Tours: John Holmgren
(925) 254-5677

Newsletter: Teresa Long
(925) 258-9771

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

School Liaison: Kay Norman
(925) 254-9536

Videographer: Jerry Vurek
(925) 253-7995

**** The 2007/2008 OHS Board
will be voted on at the May
30th Annual Meeting**

Open Positions

OHS is a fun place to volunteer, and there are still some vacant positions that we need filled:

- **Corresponding Secretary**
- **Assistant Treasurer**
- **Grants**
- **Fund Raising**
- **Solicit and tape oral histories**
- **Publicize events and calendar**
- **Organize and schedule programs for the general and annual meetings.**
- **Organize hospitality for general and annual meetings**
- **Organize holiday dinner**
- **Make Telephone calls**
- **Organize 4th of July Participation**

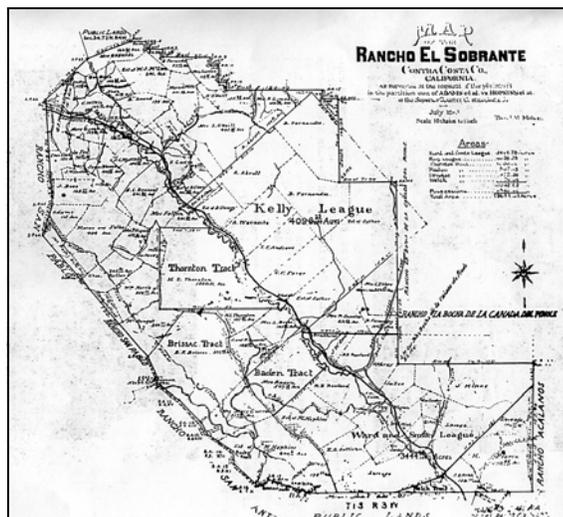
If you are interested in helping us out, please contact the OHS Museum at 254-1353.

What is that old Railroad Tie & Rails?

If you've been by the OHS museum lately, you might have noticed an old large piece of wood and some metal rails on the floor. These artifacts were a gift from Dave Bradas of Napa; they are actual railroad tie and tracks from the old California and Nevada railroad that went through the town of Orinda in the 1890's.

In November of 1993 while working on the east Bay Bridge project in Emeryville, crews discovered, buried in the earth, 100-year old train artifacts including the tie and rails now at the OHS Museum. Most of the artifacts went to the Ardenwood Historic Park in Fremont. Dave Bradas explains in his letter regarding his donation, " My family has a direct connection to this railroad as my grandmother rode it as a little girl in 1890's..... I believe people should find these interesting; it is history you can touch."

Railroad →



Map showing Rancho El Sobrante 1893; dark line indicates California and Nevada Railroad line to Orinda.

Casa Azul History (continued from page 2)

chandeliers. There is a pond, playhouse, tower, ballroom, kitchen, breakfast room, four huge bedrooms, an outside breakfast room and more.

Mr. Williams built the pond in front of the house for his daughter, Joyce, as a swimming pool. It was only two feet deep. Her playhouse was a nice playhouse that included a kitchen that actually worked and chairs and couches.

The second owner was a lady from Oakland who rented out the bedrooms during WW II. The John French family from Piedmont were the third owners, from 1946 to 1957. They painted Pine Crest Manor in green gray blue—the color of the sea. Mr. French's daughter, Rita (now Rita Frost), who still lives in Orinda, was 14 when she moved to Orinda. With all her friends back in Piedmont, she was lonely at first. So her mother fetched her a sister who needed a home. Mrs. French was an amazing mother.

Since she was 14 years old, she was too old for the playhouse, so her dogs lived in it. She had two Irish Setters, an Australian Shepherd, a Terrier and a Pomeranian. The terrier had six puppies. Which made them have 12 dogs! Mrs. French quickly found new homes for the puppies.

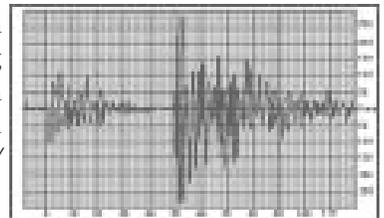
Rita remembers one Christmas morning when she was at the original Santa Maria Church, which was right next door to her house on Miner Rd. She had left one of her Irish Setters in the basement of the house. At the church a little boy was singing Silent Night. She heard a bark. Everyone turned around and there was the Irish Setter on his tummy crawling down the aisle. He knew he was going to get in trouble. It was so funny. But Rita had to leave and take her dog home.

Rita had many hiding places in Pine Crest Manor. Her favorites were the tower, attic, and her closets. Rita's mother was an opera singer and loved to entertain. They had many parties in the ballroom. Rita's job before the parties was to clean the crystal chandelier, which was about 40 inches, round. It was a big job. The ball room was not just for special occasions. They also used it as their living room. Rita had a live-in butler, maid and gardener. She did not have a nanny, because she was too old. They lived in the servants' quarters above the four-car garage. Rita loved to paint in the tower. Whenever Rita got home from Acalanes High School, she found her mother in the tower painting. After Rita's mother died, Mr. French sold Pine Crest Manor to the fourth owners who renamed it Casa Azul, meaning Blue House in Spanish. Rita was not happy that the name was changed. She wanted to keep the history. The fourth owner had eight children. They used the ballroom as a gym.

The fourth owners then sold to the Garborinos who had six children. Mr. and Mrs. Garborino still live in Casa Azul today. Counting all five owners, there have been 20 kids who have grown up in Casa Azul.

Earthquakes in Orinda? (continued from page 1)

(magnitude unknown) and 1868 (7.0). The San Andreas fault had significant quakes in 1865 (6.5), 1906 (8.25), 1957 (5.3), and 1989 (7.1). The Calaveras fault recorded big quakes in 1911 (6.2) and 1984 (6.2). The ground in California is definitely moving; on average, the state has 30 earthquakes a day with most being too small to feel. If you feel an earthquake, there is a USGS website to report shaking: pasadena.wr.usgs.gov/shake/ca/.



Are you ready for a “big one”? **Bruce Maclear** and **Rebecca Kunzman** with the Community Emergency Response team in Orinda both talked about how to be prepared for an earthquake. Be ready to be on your own for 5 to 7 days, that means no water or electricity. Do you have a week's supply of water, food, fuel, lights, money and other supplies on hand? You should! Orinda can expect damage to roads and a loss of communications (cell phones probably won't work after a big earthquake.) For more information on how to be better prepared look at the Lamorinda CERT web site: www.lamorindacert.org

Many thanks to our speakers for an entertaining and enlightening evening.