



Orinda Historical Society Newsletter

October 2011

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 pm**
Or by Appointment
Call 925 254-1353

Or

Pres. Lucy Williams at
650-349-3382

Web Site

www.orindahistory.org

Newsletter

Editor: Teresa Long
teresa@orindausa.com

** If planning a visit,
please call ahead to
confirm museum hours
We are a volunteer staff
and thus our hours can
vary.

Caldecott Tunnel - 100 years of History



Jeff Weiss and Ray Mailhot
OHS Holiday Dinner December 2010

Heading to Oakland, one can't help but notice the construction going on for the new 4th bore of the Caldecott tunnel. At last year's OHS holiday dinner, attendees got a view into the fascinating inner working of the new tunnel's construction with a presentation from Caltrans spokesperson Jeff Weiss. Another highlight of the evening was being taken back in time by retired Caltrans tunnel expert Ray Mailhot, who shared his insightful photos and stories about 100 years of tunnel history. Ray

worked for Caltrans from 1968 until he retired in 2007. During this time he gave thousands of Caldecott tunnel tours and became the unofficial Caldecott tunnel historian.

The Caldecott tunnel was completed in 1937, so how can there be 100 years of history? The idea of connection Oakland to Orinda by tunnel was first conceived in the 1860s. The first attempt to bore a tunnel in the Oakland hills in 1870 soon ran out of money. In 1903 the Kennedy tunnel (also known as the Broadway Tunnel or Inter-County tunnel) was opened to horses and wagons. It was located higher on the hillside than the current Caldecott tunnel. The road to get there was *Continued on page 4*

OHS Photo Display at the Orinda Library

In January, OHS displayed historic photos from its archives in the gallery of the Orinda library. Included were many 1910s and 1920s era photos that were recently added to the OHS photo collection thanks to the de Laveaga family. These fascinating photos show a very rural Orinda just starting to develop into a town.

Thanks go to OHS member **Charles Vollmar** for spearheading this event and to **Susan Leech, Lucy Hupp Williams, Kay Norman, Vicky Carter, and Teresa Long** for helping with the exhibit. Don't worry if you missed this display. Photos from the de-Laveaga collection are available for purchase online (www.orindahistory.org and click on [Purchase Historic Photos](#)) or from the OHS museum.



OHS member Charles Vollmar at Photo Exhibit at the Orinda Library, January 2011

Upcoming Events

- **November Board Meeting**
Wednesday, November 16
3-5 pm at OHS Museum
- **2011 Holiday Dinner**
Wednesday, December 7th
6 to 9 pm at the Orinda
Community Church



**Remember to mail in your
RSVP and payment for the
Holiday Dinner by December
1st!*



OHS Board Members
2011

President: Lucy Hupp Williams
(650) 349-3382

Vice President: Open

Treasurer: Betty Karplus
(925) 254-4970

Archivist: Kent Long
(925) 258-9771

Publicity: Erik Andersen
(925) 254-8444

**Recording Secretary &
Membership:** Susan Karplus
(925) 330-5035

Technology/Publications:
Teresa Long
(925) 258-9771

School Liaison: Kay Norman
(925) 254-9536

Videographer: Jerry Vurek
(925) 253-7995

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

At-Large: Marge Rieger
(925) 254-2759

At-Large: Lindy Phillips
(925) 254-8478

2010 OHS Award Recipients

At last year's OHS holiday dinner, awards were presented to the following people in recognition of their dedication and support given to the Orinda Historical Society over the years:

Widgie Hastings

Long time Orinda resident Widgie Hastings has recorded and continues to record many events in different venues in the Lamorinda community. She has shared these recordings with the Orinda Historical Society. Widgie has provided back up to Jerry Vurek, our videographer, when he was unavailable, and has supported our goals in preserving historical events.

Betty Karplus

As a longtime Orinda resident Betty Karplus has been active as a volunteer in many facets of the community. At 85, she not only actively serves as Treasurer with the Orinda Historical Society, but also provides financial leadership for the Orinda Community Church.

As a past member of the Orinda School Board and as a teacher, she has had a lasting and positive impact on the Orinda Schools. Betty continues to volunteer in the schools on a regular basis. She also has a library named after her in Jamaica.

Jerry Vurek

Jerry Vurek has been an Orinda resident since 1939, and he attended the Orinda Union School and Acalanes High School. Jerry has volunteered for many years with the Roads of Hacienda Homes, working with other volunteers and the contractors for road repairs in that area.

He has been the official videographer for the Orinda Historical Society recording our meetings and special events for over ten years. As a volunteer, he assists other people with tax preparation under the AARP program. In his spare time he reads to kids in Richmond and has served on the board of the Lorraine Hansbury Theatre in San Francisco for over twenty years.

More OHS Events . . .

All OHS events with speakers are videotaped and may be viewed at the OHS Museum



Orinda Arts Council representatives Nancy Daniels and Susan Garrell speak at the OHS general meeting, which celebrated the Orinda Arts Council's 60th Anniversary, March 2011



OHS member Teresa Long with daughter Natalie helps with OHS history displays at the Orinda Car Show, September 2011



Caldecott Tunnel - 100 years of History (continued from Page 1)

treacherous, and the tunnel had many problems. It was dark, and travelers had to carry lanterns back and forth. The tunnel was later widened, and automobiles were allowed. Lights were put in it, but the tunnel was wet and prone to closures. While the Kennedy tunnel still exists, it is now closed up at both ends.

In 1934, work on the Caldecott tunnel began. Construction of the first two bores used lots of local wood as scaffolding, and many laborers. Some of the wood was later used to build homes in Contra Costa County. There were 1000 people working on the tunnel at any given time. The workers would bore holes, then put the dynamite in, light the fuse and “run like heck.” Bores 1 and 2 were completed in 1937. Opening day was a big deal; people rode through on horseback, and the 1st thousand folks through got a commemorative certificate card. OHS member John Kirby shared with the audience the card his mother received as she was one of the first people through the tunnel that day. Initially the new tunnel was wet like the Kennedy tunnel - it seemed to rain inside even in the summer. Holes were drilled in the side of the tunnel to fix the problem. The Caldecott tunnel was named after Alameda county supervisor Thomas Caldecott, who campaigned to get he tunnel built. Caltrans chief civil engineer George Posey designed the tunnel - “he was a hands on guy” according to Ray Mailhot. Architect Henry Myers designed the art deco work seen on the outside of the tunnel’s portals.

In 1964, a third bore was added. There was no money to add a 4th bore at that time. Bore 3 is a wider tunnel, and with its addition came the switching of the tunnel directions during the day to help traffic flow. Ray also talked about the exhaust ducts built above each tunnel. The huge 100 mile per hour wind fans in the tunnels equalize pressure and provide fresh air. Two major events with the tunnel were mentioned: the tanker fire of 1982 and the 1997 Oakland hills fire. In 1982, a bus clipped a tanker truck full of gasoline and exploded in Bore 3. Seven people perished, but the truck driver survived. It got so hot that an anvil in the tunnel’s maintenance shop was melted into a puddle, and the tiles popped off the inside of the tunnel. Ray shared many photos of the these events and interesting historic photos of building the tunnels. He graciously donate his displays to the Orinda Historical Society, and the exhibits were shown at the Orinda Car show in September. They are now available for viewing at the OHS museum.

The 4th bore of the tunnel is currently being constructed with a project completion date scheduled for spring 2014 (tunnel portion to be complete Summer 2013). According to Jeff Weiss, it will cost 400 million for the entire project which is drilling 24 hours a day and employing 100 people right now, as opposed to the 1000 workers who built Bores 1 & 2. The 4th bore will have a safer shoulder and allow two tunnels to be available each way for traffic (no more switching directions). Instead of building elaborate scaffolding and digging out the tunnel like in the 1930s, the 4th bore is being built applying the “New Austrian Tunneling Method” which uses a 130 ton, 5 million dollar “Roadheader” to bore out the tunnel. To prevent cave-ins, the tunnel is bored a few feet, then concrete is sprayed, and the process is repeated. Paleontologists working in the construction area have found fossils such as a camel tooth, horse leg bone, and a partial oreodont (prehistoric pig.). The funny thing is that it will take slightly more time to build the fourth bore (4 years) using fancy machines then it did the first two bores (3 years) by hand back in the 1930s.

Earthquakes In & Around Orinda

At the OHS May meeting, Dr. Peggy Hellweg, a seismologist working for the USGS at UC Berkeley and daughter of OHS board member Betty Karplus, talked about the timely subject of earthquakes. Given the recent jolts experienced in Orinda this October, it is a subject worth knowing about. Three significant faults in our area are the San Andreas, Hayward, and Calaveras faults.

Looking to the past, a large earthquake struck the Amador and San Ramon valleys in July of 1861. Seismologists had gathered data from old newspapers and photographs and observed damage to an adobe to calculate shake maps and the magnitude for this quake. In 1868, a magnitude 6.8 to 7 quake initially called, “the Great SF Earthquake,” destroyed the city of Hayward, killing 30 people and caused \$350,000 worth of damage. Then in 1906 came an even larger quake that is now famously referred to as “the Great SF Earthquake.” It registered 7.9 and killed 3,000 people.

So when will the next big one be? Hard to say - the Hayward Fault has the highest probability for a quake with a 28% chance of over a 6.7 in the next thirty years. Hayward is a creepy fault that moves about 1/4 inch a year. So be prepared!