

March 2010

Vol. 29, No. 4



# THE TATTLER

## JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY/COLMA

### Greetings from President Mark

We just had our inaugural "Memories" dinner fundraiser for the museum and what a blowout it was! We were sold out and still more people came. The food was delicious and plentiful; raffle prizes first-class; music, conversation, and festivities most enjoyable. We had almost 200 people and funds raised will go toward continuing renovations and making the museum more informative and accessible to our patrons.



and Mistress of Ceremonies, County Supervisor Adrienne Tissier

This dinner was no easy feat and could not have been the success it was had it not been for the extraordinary efforts of our superb dinner committee: Marie Brizuela (Chair), Marilyn Olcese, and Marian Mann. No detail was left undone, and NOBODY left hungry! What a meal to enjoy: antipasto, salad, pasta with Marilyn's secret family gravy, roast chicken AND tri-tip beef, assorted desserts, and vino. Everyone received a copy of *The Great Daly City Historical Trivia Book*, compliments of Ken and Bunny Gillespie.

We are grateful for the many, many hours of dedicated work of our dinner committee and the generous contributions of all donors and volunteers. We have heard nothing but compliments, but perhaps the best of all was the comment "It felt like a large family dinner."

We've had some notable visits to the museum of late, including 40 third grade students from Westlake School. They were given a tour on Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> by Bunny Gillespie, our City Historian and Board emeritus, and former school teacher and Board Treasurer Judith Christensen. On Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, docent Alex Gallegos and I greeted 21 members of the Fijian Boy Scout Troop 19 of Millbrae and Cub Scout Pack 290 of

Cont'd



Memories Dinner attendees



### HISTORY EVENING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17<sup>TH</sup>  
7:30 PM FREE

101 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City  
Doelger Center Multi-purpose Room

**JOANN SEMONES**

Author of *"Shipwrecks, Scalawags, and Scavengers, The Storied Waters of Pigeon Point"*

JoAnn Semones will be the featured speaker at the second History Evening in 2010 of the History Guild on Wednesday, March 17th. Ms. Semones will present a slide show with excerpts and historic photos from her book on the Pigeon Point shipwrecks and answer questions after the presentation.

Between 1853 and 1953, ships of all types sailing the central California Coast of San Mateo County south of Half Moon Bay fell victim to Pigeon Point's unpredictable weather and rocky shoreline. The fascinating stories of these shipwrecks tell of sailors and salvagers, hard work and bad luck, business schemes and personal dreams.

Ms. Semones' stories have appeared in a variety of publications including *Professional Mariner*, *Lighthouse Digest* as well as in Stanford University's anthology *Learning to Live Again* and in the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* international book series. Her book will be available for purchase and signing at the meeting.



### REFRESHMENT DONORS FOR OUR MARCH MEETING:

Thanks to **Bunny Gillespie, Sandra Bolds, Marie Brizuela, Pat Hatfield, Judith Christensen, Alice Brockman, Marilyn Olcese, and Annette Hipona.** Elinor Charleston is our gracious Hospitality Chair, assisted by Marilyn Olcese.

**NEARBY HAPPENINGS:** The **San Mateo County History Museum** is marking the 100 year anniversary of their Courthouse building with ongoing celebrations, culminating in a grand celebration scheduled for July 4, 2010. For schedule, call 650-299-0104 or visit [www.historysmc.org](http://www.historysmc.org) The **Cypress Lawn Heritage Foundation** will present a free program on military burials March 21, 2 p.m., 1370 El Camino Real, refreshments (Info.: 650-550-8811)



San Bruno, who participated in a county-wide museum tour and special exhibits for the Boy Scouts of America 100th Anniversary.

I want to report that Michael and Richard Rocchetta are making remarkable progress on renovation of the small storeroom, which will soon provide space for our small refrigerator and microwave and other items.

Thanks to all of you who have generously sent in your membership renewals for 2010. Let me give a gentle nudge to those members of our Guild family who haven't yet renewed. An envelope and member renewal form is enclosed in this edition of the *Tattler* for your convenience. Your continued support is valued and crucial to all our efforts.

### THANK YOU FOR MUSEUM DONATIONS

Four 18x24" framed water color renderings (unsigned) of historic local schools were received on behalf of the **Serramonte Library** from librarian **Cathy Scalice**. Cathy donated a color snapshot that she took of Sam Chandler and John Sullivan (his successor) at Sam's retirement in 1983. **Joseph Curran** delivered a globe, the top fitting to the original 1967 flag pole at City Hall, and a voting board that was formerly used to indicate votes by the Council with lights indicating a "yes" or "no" vote on behalf of **Daly City**. **Bryan Kingston** donated a folder of DC photos from **KM2 Communications** of South San Francisco that illustrated the 1977 Chamber of Commerce map. **Richard Rocchetta** donated political memorabilia and the 1986 pamphlet "History of Daly City Fire Service – the Early Years" and reorganized our school archives. **Helen and Dennis Fisicaro** donated Serramonte Center holiday ornaments and a poster "Serramonte Center – Making the Urban Place." **Nancy Lacsamana** of Brisbane created the museum Boy Scout exhibit.

### IN MEMORY OF GUILD FRIENDS

**Alfred O. Belotz** died January 5th, 2010 at age 82, preceded in death by his wife of 55 years, Bernice. Born in Massachusetts in 1927, he moved to California and eventually settled his family and accounting practice in Daly City in 1954. Al was active in numerous community organizations and a longtime Guild member and volunteer. He was active in the Boy Scouts of America for 70 years and referred to himself proudly as "Daly City's oldest scout." **Audrey Fambrini**, wife of Gino Fambrini who lives out of town with his son, died recently. The Fambrinis were active in the Guild, E Clampus Vitus, and the Westerners, International. Audrey donated refreshments and Gino participated in our duel reenactments as David S. Terry.



## CENTENNIAL MEMORIES

By Ken & Bunny Gillespie,  
Daly City Historians

Exactly one year from this month, Daly City will, perhaps, celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation and adoption of an official name. Over the years, Daly City has recognized its birthday with splendid parades.

In 1911, DC's populations numbered only 2,900. Reportedly, over 2,000 marched in unique celebration of DC's infant status. The route of the 1911 parade took participants along Mission Road to the SF/San Mateo County line and back to the Top-of-the-Hill junction of Mission and Wellington Avenue. In deference to a shroud of fog that covered the area that day, the start of the parade was delayed for several hours.

On Daly's Hill, a reviewing stand was decorated with American flags and patriotic bunting. Among those braving the cold and moisture, was John Donald Daly himself. A flag pole, drinking fountain, and raised concrete waiting station, presented to the town by Daly, were dedicated.

Following city officials along the parade route were members of the Civic Betterment League and Jefferson School District Superintendent William Savage. Next came several hundred school students, waving flags. Later, each child received a cornucopia of ice cream.



Also in the line of march were the Eagles' Drum Corps, Vista Grande Volunteer Fire Department, Lady foresters, Progressive Junior Socialists, Royal Neighbors, Woodsmen of America, two bands, and many celebratory citizens. "Last, but not least," a press report stated, "was the Hog Ranchers' Protective Association float featuring a cage containing a closely shaven sow and litter of pigs."

An old-timer, now deceased, once said "Daly City used to stage parades at the drop of a hat." Such are the memories contributing to our quality of life. K/BG

### PETER HERMAN DONKS

(DONCKS or DUNKS) by Russell Brabec  
January 2010

Peter Herman Donks and his wife, Johanna Elenora, were born at Berlin, Germany, in 1821 and 1823, respectively. Donks has also been spelled as Dunks and Doncks. Peter was born and christened at Elmpt, Rheinland, Preussen [Kingdom of Prussia]. His father was Henrich Doncks and his mother was Sibilla Peter. Elmpt is located in the North Rhine area, Westphalia,



near the Netherlands border and west of Dusseldorf. Why and how they made the 5,658-mile trip from Berlin to San Francisco is not known.

Peter purchased 160 acres of land in October 1859 for \$2,000. His property was bounded on the north by West Market St., on the east by Mission St., on the south by 'A' Street and on the west at a line located one-half mile west of the centerline of Annie St. A wagon road, called San Pedro Road, traversed the eastern part of the property in a Southwesterly direction, allowing traffic to go over the sand hills to what is now Pacifica and onto Spanishtown (Half Moon Bay). This 1859 mortgage was later "fully satisfied" in 1872, and released.

As the county became populated, Donks aided the development by selling a right-of-way for \$200 to the Spring Valley Water Works in 1862, and in 1862 selling an 80-foot right-of-way to the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company for one dollar for "encouraging and promoting the construction of a Railroad from the City of San Francisco to the City of San Jose." The deed was granted "upon the express condition that the company shall within six months locate and thereafter maintain on the land aforesaid, a way station for the discharge and reception of passengers and freight and in failure to do all of which the estate hereby granted shall revert back to the grantor." This way station would become known as 'Colma'.

During the early 1860's the unscrupulous owners of the Laguna de la Merced Rancho subjected the Donks to eviction during an infamous attempt to extend the boundaries of the Rancho. Peter was among thirteen northern San Mateo County landowners who in February 1864, appointed neighbor and settler Robert Sheldon Thornton their "true and lawful attorney." Thornton took this case all the way to the United States Supreme Court for a successful verdict against the Rancho. As a result, in early 1866 the San Francisco Land Office began issuing valid government land patents of various types to the settlers in the Colma area. Although they still retained their original property, most opted to file again with the government as assurance against another adverse property claim. Peter in May 1866, obtained the same "Public Lands" from the United States government as he had previously purchased in 1859 from George L. Smith. The fee was \$1.25 per acre or \$200.

Peter sold 0.92 acres to Rev. & Bishop Allemany in 1867, for one dollar "for the purpose of erecting thereon a Catholic Church School & Parsonage". The church was called St. Anne's to honor Donks' fourteen-year-old daughter Annie. It was changed to Holy Angels in 1914. Peter and Johanna Donks granted to another daughter, Rose Augusta, and son-in-law Franz Leon Guntz, the easterly 200 feet of their land between West Market Street and San Pedro Road as a gift in October 1868. A

Walgreen's now stands on this site that was formerly a new car salesrooms dating back to Gateway Chevrolet of the 1950's.

They then sold their 160 acres less exemptions, to Joseph Frank for \$44,000.00 in October 1868. Frank immediately mortgaged the property in the amount of \$20,000 payable in six months to Peter H. Donks. Joseph Frank is noted as a director of the Humboldt Savings and Loan Society at San Francisco in 1870, the year the loan was fully satisfied. The School House Land Association purchased this land from Frank in 1872, and quickly filed a record map of the School House Homestead Association subdivision.

The 1870 census notes that Peter and Johanna have moved to San Francisco and were living with their daughter Rose and her husband Franz Guntz and two grandchildren. Ten years later Rose and her family lived at 26 Dolores Street, San Francisco. Peter and Johanna lived their remaining years in the area of Hayes and Golf Streets in San Francisco, a predominantly German area of the city. The last entry for Peter in a city directory was in 1897, and in 1905 for Johanna.

"DUNKS Street," laid in a north-south direction, intersected Washington Street at the present Planet Fitness center (formally a Lucky grocery stores' grocery distribution center). It was later abbreviated by the realignment of Junipero Serra Boulevard for the I-280 Freeway during the 1960's, and its remnant is now relegated to a parking lot for the fitness center. Two small parcels totaling 1.5 acres that they deeded to Robert Sheldon Thornton, for his stately home, lie approximately where the Union 76 service station is now located at the northeast corner of Junipero Serra Boulevard and San Pedro Road.

---

*If you have knowledge of descendents of the Donks family, please contact Russell Brabec of the History Guild of Daly City/Colma at 650-583-4985 or the San Mateo Genealogical Society at 650-583-4985*

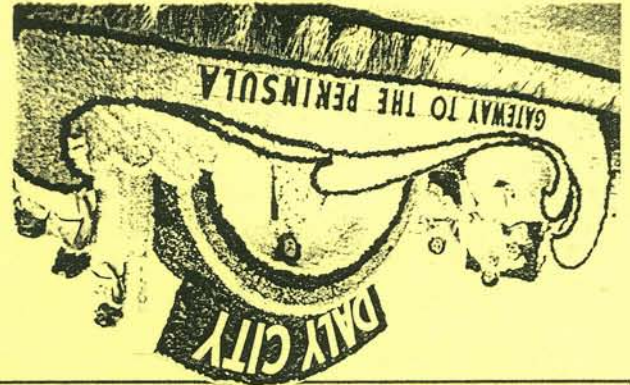
## **HISTORY BUFFS LAUD OUR MUSEUM**

*Western Neighborhoods Project posted a report on their blog after a visit to the Daly City History Museum on January 6<sup>th</sup> (excerpts) [www.outsidelands.org/category/museums](http://www.outsidelands.org/category/museums)*

*Visiting history friends down south- David Gallagher and I [Woody LaBounty] used our lunch break yesterday to go visit the relatively new Daly City History Museum...The 27-year-old organization is still in the process of creating displays for their great new home, but there was more than enough to occupy we history dudes for an hour... A trio of helpful docents, including Daly City Historian extraordinaire Bunny Gillespie, were there to greet us warmly and share interesting local lore... Go take a look!*



1961 Daly City Anniversary Parade, photo by Pearl Coffee



Current Hours: Open every Tuesday and the first Saturday of the month from noon to 3 p.m.

650/757-7177  
6351 Mission Street, Daly City 94014  
**DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM**



**Thornton House** at 1618 Sullivan Ave. & Washington St. was built in 1866, moved to Sullivan Ave. when the highway was built, and demolished in 1997 and replaced by an auto repair business. Considered a mansion in its day, it was the oldest building in Daly City. Robert Sheldon Thornton was the first settler in Daly City after arriving in San Francisco in 1852 as a 33 year-old with 50 cents in his pocket. He built a thriving blacksmith business, served as a county supervisor, was nominated several times (never elected) by the Democrats for State Senate, and won a U.S. Supreme Court decision representing local property owners in a case ruled on by Judge Field, an appointment of Abraham Lincoln. (Photo by David Zeff)

**GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Mark Weinberger, President</b>        | 415/750-1939 |
| <b>Richard Rocchetta, Vice President</b> | 650/992-9144 |
| Guild Program Director                   |              |
| <b>Dana Smith, Vice-President</b>        | 650/755-3432 |
| Museum Director                          |              |
| <b>Judith Christensen, Treasurer</b>     | 650/755-3128 |
| <b>Marie Brizuela, Secretary</b>         | 650/755-7188 |
| <b>Marian Mann, Director</b>             | 650/991-9386 |
| <b>Michael Rocchetta, Director</b>       | 650/756-3960 |
| <b>Marilyn Olcese, Director</b>          | 650/755-5616 |

*Board meetings are held monthly in the evenings at the museum. They are open to the general membership. If you are interested in attending, please call Mark or Rich for the date and time.*

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Ken Gillespie, President Emeritus</b>    | 650/755-5123 |
| <b>Bunny Gillespie, Secretary Emerita</b>   |              |
| <b>Elinor Charleston, Hospitality Chair</b> | 650/755-8267 |
| <b>Betty Schultz, Member Chair</b>          | 650/756-5324 |

*Tattler* Editor & production: Dana Smith  
Contributors: Bunny & Ken Gillespie, Mark Weinberger, Russell Brabec

Thanks to Annette Hipona, Frawley and Sylvia Alvarez-Lynch, and Judith Christensen for assistance in preparing the mailing of our last issue and to Michael Rocchetta for our mailing list.

The History Guild of Daly City/Colma is a  
501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization