



JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY COLMA

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

We're happy to announce that our film, *Daly City: Growing Up in America*, will be screened at City Hall in Daly City in June. This is a free event open to the public, though seating will be limited. The 50 minute film will be shown at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, June 18. No RSVP is necessary. Filmmaker Bryan Kingston will be in attendance to discuss the film and the Guild will be selling copies of the DVD. If you are unable to attend

and haven't yet seen the film, DVDs are available for purchase from the Guild for \$20, which includes tax and shipping. To purchase, simply send a check along with a note to the museum requesting the DVD or drop by the museum during open hours. We have just learned that the documentary has received a Telly award for merit in the professional field of cable TV, video, and film.



With our upcoming May election we are saying thank you and farewell to four of our board members. Director Marilyn Olcese formerly served on the board for many years, took a hiatus, and then rejoined us four years ago. She is a member of a pioneer Daly City family and longtime Guild member, who has worked in the Mini-Museum, overseen our gift shop, and worked diligently on our first dinner as well as our cookbook lunch fund raiser last year. Last summer Marilyn coordinated the painting of the museum's Mission Street facade. Director Marian Mann joined the board in 2004 and has coordinated our member meeting raffles; she also worked on both the dinner and luncheon. Marie Brizuela joined the board in 2007, first as treasurer and later moving over to secretary. She chaired our successful 2010 dinner.

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HISTORY EVENING

Wednesday, May 15th at 7 PM

*History Guild Member and
Timeline Historian Extraordinaire*

Algis Ratnikas

Will lecture on his Internet Universal Timeline



101 Lake Merced Blvd. Daly City
Doelger Center Café

Algis began his timeline while a graduate student at Wayne State University (1972) on a 20 ft. roll of paper to help him visualize and remember various art movements, major dates, artists, events etc. The scroll quickly filled up and the paper fell apart from the frequent erasures. In 1995 he revived the project using the computer, the World Wide Web, his own background and interests, and search engines and other assorted web page tools. The project quickly grew to a large collection of files. The "Timelines of History" web site, a map to the past, was first posted to the Internet in 1998.

www.timelines.ws

THANK YOU TO REFRESHMENT

DONORS - Thank you in advance to **Mark Weinberger, Dana Smith, Michael Rocchetta, and Richard Rocchetta** for refreshments for our May meeting. **Elinor Charleston** is our gracious Hospitality Chair.

NEXT GUILD MEETING IN SEPTEMBER

The History Guild takes a break over the summer. Our next member meeting will be in September. Have a great summer!

(President's Message Cont'd)

Marie, along with Marilyn and Marian, also undertook the Memories Recipes cookbook and cookbook luncheon, which required a great deal of coordination. [We have copies of the cookbook for sale at the museum.] Director Dave Crimmen joined the board in 2011. He is a professional musician, a rock music historian, and the author and co-author of two Arcadia books, one on *Broadmoor Village* and the other with Bunny Gillespie on *Daly City Then & Now*. All four have been regular docents who have helped to keep the museum's doors open to the public. We thank them for their longtime service to the Guild and wish them well.

We're also excited about the nomination of Algis Ratnikas to join the board as secretary this time around. He is a longtime member of the Guild who has been actively engaged in history at various levels. He also happens to be our featured speaker for the May meeting, and will discuss his Timelines of History. This timeline is a virtual compendium of events that have transformed the world over the millennia. Definitely take a look prior to the meeting if you have access to the Internet; the site is: timelines.ws. Once you start to peruse, we guarantee you'll be hooked. Algis is also an active member of a performing jugband.

If membership approves of the recommended slate, we hope to extend warm welcomes to Algis and returning board members Richard Rocchetta, Dana Smith, Marcus Gonzalez, Judith Christensen, Michael Rocchetta and yours truly for the 2013-15 term.

SLATE FOR 2013-2015

President, Mark S. Weinberger

First Vice-President, Richard Rocchetta

Second Vice-President, Dana Smith

Treasurer, Judith Christensen

Secretary, Algis Ratnikas

Director, Michael Rocchetta

Director, Marcus Gonzalez

As a follow-up to my last message, I had written about Doug, a resident of the Sunset District in San Francisco who owns a Doelger home. Doug had contacted our

museum about interior murals which adorned early Doelger homes in San Francisco. Doug is in the process of attempting a restoration of his mural which has been covered in several layers of paint. He was kind enough to send us this photo of a similar Doelger mural by Harry Tyrrell in the home of a neighbor. The original murals were often a selling point in Doelger's advertisements for his San Francisco homes. It's interesting to note that the murals painted directly on the walls above fireplaces are framed with a molding. The mural in the photo below (and Doug's mural) are pastoral in subject matter. I would love to hear if anyone knows of murals in Doelger homes in Daly City.



We learned that on March 31st Elio A. Fontana (1919 – 2013) passed away peacefully at the age of 94. Our condolences go to his wife Louise Chessman Fontana, his children Mark and Valerie, and the entire the Fontana family. Elio took a personal interest in preserving local history and son Mark has been a very generous supporter of our Guild and museum. Elio returned from service in World War II to take over the family memorial monument business. He was very active in the community. He served as a member of the Jefferson Union High School District Board, San Mateo County Community College District Board, San Mateo County Arts Commission, San Mateo County Board of Education, San Mateo County Grand Jury, Daly City/ Colma Chamber of Commerce, Daly City Rotary Club,

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(President's Message, cont'd)

and the Olympic Club Board of Directors, in addition to a number of Italian cultural and professional organizations. An accomplished accordionist, he was a long standing member of the Musicians Union Local 36.

We're sorry to report another passing. Selma Riba died on April 8th. She and her late husband George were longtime Guild members. Selma Riba resided in San Francisco and Daly City from 1949 until 2010. She was a Registered Nurse and an award-winning artist, a member of the Society of Western Artists and Daly City's Visual Arts Guild. Her portrait works are in private collections around the world. Our condolences go to the family.

INQUIRY FROM THE FAMILY OF FORMER DALY DAIRY PARTNER by Dana Smith

This past month we received an Internet inquiry from Candy Gianetti of New York City. She is researching her family's history and discovered that her relative Irad G. Coldwell was a former partner in John Daly's dairy business. With help from our Guild researcher Russ Brabec we began to piece together the story. Irad and a brother had followed a cousin Trueman Coldwell from Nova Scotia to San Francisco. Irad lived on Valencia Street a few blocks from the Daly mansion. They became partners for a short while in the milk bottling and distribution business (Dairy Delivery Co.) in San Francisco before Irad's untimely death in 1896, at the age of 42.

RON ORDONEZ VISITS THE MUSEUM

by Dana Smith

Recently photographer Ron Ordonez, related to one of the earliest Filipino residents in the area Jose Ordonez, visited the museum. I found an extra copy of the First National Bank historical calendar featuring a 1936 photo of early immigrants from the Philippines to give to Ron, including Jose Ordonez as a young man. Jose worked first on a cabbage farm owned by Jack Castangnetto located in what is now the Westlake, Skyline Boulevard area. While working on Italian farms, Jose met Emma Vallarino, a young Italian woman whom he married in 1939 in Tacoma, Washington. At that time interracial couples had to go out of state to marry. Despite facing discrimination, Jose and Emma had a happy and successful life together. They had five children and he worked for the Federal Government for 32 years.

In 1986 at the Fiesta Filipina celebration Jose was honored with an award from Daly City for being the longest residing Filipino resident in Daly City. He died in 1998 at the age of 87.

Ron mentioned how proud Jose was and the Ordonez family continues to be of this award. Ron offered to help find family photographs for the museum collection.



Early 19th Century Filipino farmers (unidentified) in Colma area.

OTHER HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Colma Historical Association – 1500 Hillside Blvd., Colma. 650/757-1676.

Saturday, May 11 from 8 am – 5 pm Garage Sale at the Colma Museum.

Tuesday, April 30 at 7 pm quarterly meeting with special program by Colma police on how to protect homes from recent home robberies in the area.

June 18 – Free Screening of our documentary film, *Daly City: Growing Up in America*. City Hall, Daly City, June 18, 7:00 PM. No RSVP is necessary. Filmmaker Bryan Kingston will discuss the film and the Guild will be selling copies of the DVD.

Free Cypress Lawn Lectures:

2nd Floor, Administration Building, 1370 El Camino Real, Colma, 2 pm. - 4 pm. **May 19** – Michael Svanevik *Assassination! Murder! Execution! – The Decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire*; **July 21** – Michael Svanevik *A Man Called Larkin – Torch Bearer of Manifest Destiny*; **August 18** – Woody LaBounty *Ingleside Terraces: SF Racetrack to Residence Park*.

HELP US PRESERVE YOUR HISTORY

The Daly City History Museum welcomes your donations of photos, news clippings, and artifacts pertaining to local history. Contact: director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org



THE SAGA OF THORNTON BEACH

By Russ Brabec

Why was this beach named for a prominent Colma Pioneer? Was it because of his fame or because he lived on the land that became state beach or because the Ocean Shore Railroad named its station at the site "Thornton"? The consensus is that he lived on the land, however Robert Sheldon Thornton owned 160 acres on which he settled in the early 1850's which today is roughly bounded by Rockridge Avenue, Mariposa Avenue, Woodside Avenue and Higate Drive. In addition, he built a fashionable home on 1.5 acres along San Pedro Road at Dunks Street on land that he purchased from Peter Herman Doncks in 1868.

Benjamin Green settled upon 143.44 acres at Thornton Beach about the same time Thornton settled on his ranch. Benjamin and his brothers suspected that there was coal and/or minerals under the land and formed a corporation to extract them. But in Benjamin's day there was little interest in developing these resources. The 1868 Official San Mateo County Map notes that a coal pit existed on Benjamin's property.

Thornton, a blacksmith from Rhode Island, quickly learned about real estate law while shepherding his fellow pioneers through five years of lawsuits to reclaim their land from the illegal confiscation by the owners of the Laguna de la Merced Rancho. In the spring of 1866 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in favor of the settlers, and they were all awarded patents for the land that they originally owned. Benjamin, for some reason did not receive his new patent until August.

Green lost his land by a court judgment in November 1871 and he lost this land again in January 1872 due to defaulting on a 1869 mortgage. With a number of people now claiming legal title to his land, Benjamin Green gave title of his land in August 1872 to Robert Thornton for safe-keeping until Benjamin could clear his title to the land in court.

Benjamin AGAIN suffered another judgment against him in 1880, and now the numerous owners and subsequent owners were suing each other claiming that they were the owners. Robert Thornton remained in the background and paid the property taxes, which gained him the designation of property owner on the Official San Mateo County 1894 Map.

Benjamin died in December 1883, and a son of his died in 1886, and both were buried at the ranch. Thornton refused to relinquish the "Green" property, and Benjamin's widow Hannah turned to the courts to regain the property. A lengthy battle of almost 20 years, with

victories and appeals on both sides, finally culminated in 1908, with the court awarding Thornton legal title to the "Green" property.

Thornton immediately sold the land in July 1908 to William G. Henshaw of Oakland, California. Hannah followed by handing over a deed to Henshaw in September of 1908, probably to assure Henshaw that there will be no further court filings, probably encouraged by Thornton. Hannah died in 1910, and Robert died in 1916.

The County of San Mateo agreed to purchase the beach land, comprising five parcels totaling 24.88 acres, from W. Griffith Henshaw and his wife Irene in February of 1824, and in June 1954 conveyed the land to the State of California for beach, recreation and park purposes.

(*Editors Note:* The 1982-1983 El Nino storms caused erosion at Thornton Beach resulting in the closing of the State Park in 1983. The parking lot, entrance kiosk, picnic tables, restrooms and stairs to the beach were all damaged beyond repair. In 2004 a vista viewing platform with interpretive signage opened overlooking Thornton Beach where 20 years ago Daly City lost its only beach access.)

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPHINE GREEN DE PERRIO

GRANDDAUGHTER OF ROBERT AND SARAH THORNTON

In 1971 Daly City Librarian Samuel Chandler interviewed Josephine Green for his book, *Gateway to the Peninsula*, published in 1973. Josephine recounts how her mother and a brother, who died in infancy, were born on the first ranch house overlooking the beach what is now Skyline Boulevard. "In those days there was no way to get a doctor too quickly so he passed on." Josephine, who had a very close and loving relationship with her grandfather, recounts how she was disowned by Robert Thornton when she fell in love and married a Green.

"When I was in my teens, he [Robert Thornton] had a little office built on the home property where he could have his law books and where different people would come in and talk with him. I know he still had it when I was married. I ran away with Mr. Green. Mr. Green was taboo in the family on account of Mr. Green's grandfather and Mr. Thornton having a land feud for 20 years. You may have heard of that.

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(Interview with Josephine, cont'd)

He was a great man. I just idolized him. He thought there was no one like me, but I was taboo when I married Mr. Green until the day he [Grandfather] died.”

Josephine recounted another story about her grandfather’s prediction of the future development of Skyline. “We lived three blocks from Belli Company and he talked to the men up there, you know how men gather and talk. Grandfather used to walk with a gold-headed cane and he pointed with this cane toward Skyline and said ‘this is going to be filled with homes someday.’ They just looked at each other and said, ‘Old man Thornton is going crazy.’ ”

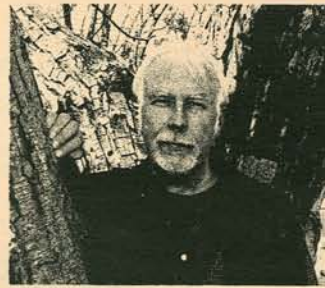
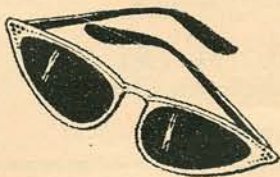
ED FREYER’S CASTLE

1974 Notes from the late George Kirchhubel

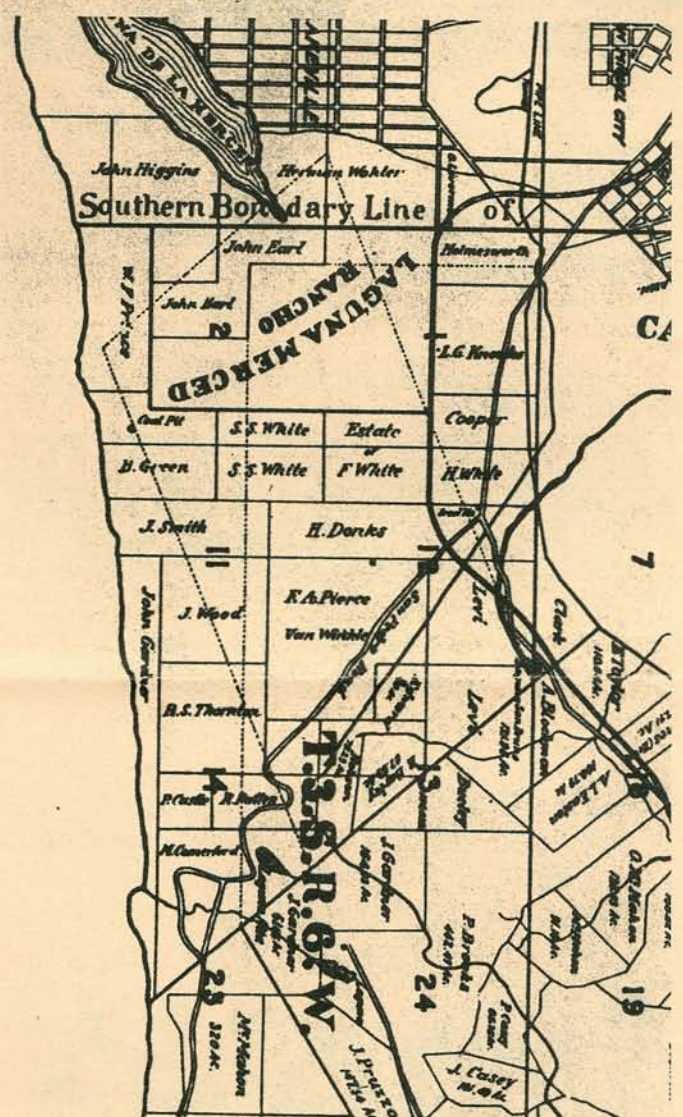
“He [Ed] had built his house, a rectangular two story building, at the bottom of Los Banos Avenue...the house was finished in the inside, but on the outside the sills and trim were the only things finished. The rough 1’x10’ boards on the outside were covered by batten strips between the seams. Somewhere along the way Mr. Freyer had an idea to cover the outside of his home with corrugated metal. As we had no gas or electricity in those days, his thinking was that this would preserve the heat in the winter, and cool it in the summer. Perhaps he was the first true environmentalist in Daly City.

Every once in a while the Southern Pacific freight train would stop alongside Ed’s house and they would unload a carload of metal sheeting. Ed and a helper would then carry it to the house and the task of nailing it to the building would begin. This took quite a few years. The kids that played around there would say when the freight train pulled alongside his house, “Ed got paid again.” In time the house was finished, and because of its appearance, they named it “The Castle”. It was a sad day when the bulldozers undid his years of work to make room for BART and the Knowles Corridor. This famous landmark was not even considered [for preservation].

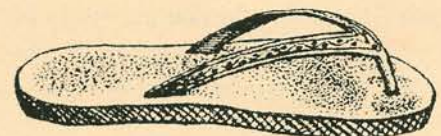
(Editor’s note: Ed Freyer was an unemployed tinsmith when he became the first Mayor of Daly City in 1911. Mr. Kirchhubel, owner of a popular saloon at the Top-of-the-Hill, was an avid history buff.)



Guild member and history expert Algis Ratnikas will lecture on his Internet universal timeline at our May 15th meeting. His project has been ongoing for nearly twenty years.



Early map showing northwestern area of what is now Daly City. Can you find the parcels for Benjamin Green and R. S. Thornton? Can you find the acreage for Israel Knowles and the Holmesworth farm in what became the Top-of-the-Hill area? In 1868 John Donald Daly and wife Lilly Carrick of the Millbrae area acquired the 250-acre dairy of M. Holmesworth [Holenworth] near the "Top of the Hill," and named it the San Mateo Dairy.





THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY/COLMA

DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM

6351 Mission Street, Daly City, CA 94014650/757-7177

Current Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, and the first and third Saturdays of the month from noon to 3 p.m.



Please visit us on Facebook/

Daly City History Museum

FIRST CLASS MAIL



This photo shows Daly City Greenleaf Club ladies on a summer outing down the coast on the Ocean Shore Railroad. [Date unknown, but probably between 1911-1915)

GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Mark Weinberger, President 415/750-1939

president@dalcityhistorymuseum.org

Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President 650/992-9144

Guild Program Director

Dana Smith, Vice-President & Museum Director

Judith Christensen, Treasurer

Marie Brizuela, Secretary

Directors: Marian Mann, Michael Rocchetta, Marilyn

Olcese, Dave Crimmen, Marcus Gonzalez

Board meetings are held as necessary and are open to the membership. Please call Mark for further information.

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus

Bunny Gillespie, Secretary-Emerita

Elinor Charleston, Hospitality Chair

Michael Rocchetta, Member Chair

Tattler Editor & production: Dana Smith

director@dalcityhistorymuseum.org

Contributors: Dana Smith, Mark Weinberger, Russ Brabec, the late George Kirchhubel and Josephine Green De Perro.

Thanks to Michael Rocchetta, Richard Rocchetta, Judith Christensen and Dana Smith for mailing the previous *Tattler*.

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

Memberships are \$25 per year.