

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

Many of you commented during the recent Rob Keil and Monique Lombardelli presentation of their feature film: "Little Boxes: The Legacy of Henry Doelger," that you also would be interested in viewing Monique's award-winning film "People in Glass Houses: The Legacy of Joseph Eichler." We are excited to have our friend and fellow Guild member showcase her film at our September meeting and discuss the work of renowned architect Joseph Eichler. While Eichler did not build in Daly City, his homes are very much prominent on the peninsula, and we believe that you definitely will enjoy this offering which complements our March program on distinctive forms of San Mateo County architecture.

We want to let you all know that in addition to the Guild's very own web site and Facebook page, we now have a YouTube page as well. The reason for this addition is that YouTube is a site where one can watch short videos. We're just starting to flesh it out, but we already have about a dozen videos including: interviews with Bob St. Clair and John Madden [both featured in the Daly City Centennial DVD]; recollections of the 1942 Ghost Blimp crash mystery; Daly City PAL 50th Anniversary; closing of Joe's of Westlake; and more. YouTube can be accessed in several ways, including through the Guild's own web site--click on icon in top right-hand corner of home page; clicking on our YouTube Videos tab--a new feature--on our Facebook page [We've surpassed 400 Likes and have one of the highest ratings achievable for a Facebook page!]; or going to YouTube directly and simply typing 'DalyCityHistoryMuseum.' Please note: because of imposed space limitations, all the words run together and we were forced to drop the second 'm' of museum. Another feature of the Guild's own web site with which you might not be too familiar is our calendar of upcoming events. Simply click on the 'Calendar' tab and you will be able to find all of the information on upcoming general membership meetings. As always, we



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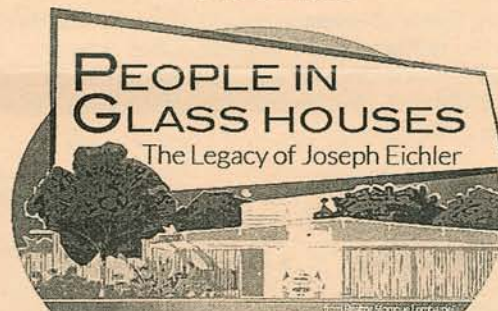
HISTORY EVENING

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 17TH, 7 PM



MONIQUE LOMBARDELLI

PRESENTS



This 45-minute documentary is the first film about Eichler homes. While Eichler did not build in Daly City, his homes are very much prominent on the peninsula and contribute to a distinctive form of San Mateo County architecture.

**101 Lake Merced Blvd. Daly City
Doelger Center Café**

**THANK YOU SEPTEMBER REFRESHMENT
DONORS:**

Marcus and Grace Gonzalez, Abby and Mel Margolis, and Pat Hatfield. Thank you to our gracious Hospitality Chair **Annette Hipona.**

have four evening meetings on the third Wednesday in the months of September, November, March, and May at 7:00 pm; we also have our Guild Birthday Bash during daytime hours on the third Sunday of January at 2:00 pm. All meetings are held at the Cafe Doelger in Westlake Park. As soon as we know who our speakers will be, we'll post that information to the Calendar; so if you want to get a sneak peek ahead of each *Tattler*, be sure to check the web site.

We recently assisted local author Monika Trobits, who was conducting research on the Davis Ranch, the locality of the 1859 Broderick-Terry Duel. She will be using this information for her new book, *Antebellum and Civil War San Francisco: A Western Theater for Northern and Southern Politics*, to be published by The History Press in Autumn 2014. We are considering her as a future speaker who could shed new insight into the duel which ended dueling in California. Also pursuing research, George Strand, landscape architect and consultant to Daly City, and Hae Won Ritchie, city engineer, visited the museum seeking information on the history of Mussel Rock for planned interpretive signage. Stay tuned... the project is now being reviewed by the California Coastal Commission.'

Amid applause, Elinor Charleston receiving a well-deserved thank-you on her retirement as Hospitality Chair from Board President Mark Weinberger and an orchid presented by Judith Christensen, Treasurer. Vice President Rich Rocchetta looks on sporting his raffle apron.



Thank you to Annette Hipona who has graciously agreed to be our new Hospitality Chair.



RAFFLE DONATIONS are welcomed at member meetings by Raffle Chair Rich Rocchetta. Your new or like-new white elephants raise funds for our Guild.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Colma Historical Association –Colma Historical Association, 1500 Hillside Blvd., Colma. **September 5th** a free presentation of the new documentary “**Colma, A Journey of Souls**” will be presented at the Colma Community Center, 1520 Hillside Blvd. at 2,6, and 8:30 pm. Call 650-985-5690 to make your free reservation. **September 20, Annual Fundraising Dinner** of delicious beef stew with polenta, antipasto, salad, bread wine and dessert. Doors open at 4:00 pm, Colma Community Center., \$40. For information call: 650-757-1676. **October 28, Quarterly Meeting**, 6:30 pm.

San Mateo County History Museum - Admission is free on the **first Friday of every month** at the History Museum, 2200 Broadway, Redwood City. Celebrate **Rancho Day on Saturday, September 20th** from noon to 4 pm at the Sanchez Adobe Historical Site, 1000 Linda Mar Boulevard, Pacifica. \$1 entrance fee, additional for food and crafts. Experience life in the 1840s.

Free Cypress Lawn Lectures and Walking Tours: Information: 650-550-8810 or send an email to lenipanopio@cypresslawn.com

Sunday Lectures: 2nd Floor, Administration Building, 1370 El Camino Real, Colma, 2 PM - 4 PM. Sept. 21 Michael Svanevik presents “Hollywood Endings (When the Stars Flicker Out),” Oct. 19th Douglas Keister presents “Stories in Stone: Holy Land.”

Saturday Walking Tours, starting at 1:30 PM: Sept. 20th Terry Hamburg leads the tour “A Celebration of Vintners and Liquor Merchants, Oct. 18th Mr. Hamburg leads “Gargoyles, Foo Dogs & More.” Nov. 1st Michael Svanevik leads “Northern California’s Fortune Builders.”

DONATIONS AND GUILD NEWS

THANK YOU TO: **Michael Rocchetta** for our new improved board business cards; **Algis Ratnikas** for organizing the purchase and setup of our new museum dehumidifier; **Cindy Espinoza** donated several boxes of documents and pictures from the Guadalupe Health Center. **Matt DeMartini** donated a “SHS” football and photos and documents from Serramonte High School; **Shirley Plank** donated a recent yearbook from Susan B. Anthony Elementary School; **Frank Risso** donated a vintage streetcar photo and memorabilia from the old

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Thank you, cont'd

Mission Bell Motel, Steak Pit Restaurant, and Hill Top Lodge; **Gary McLane** donated memorabilia from Mary's Help Hospital, two books on police subjects and DCPD softball jerseys; **Al Hipona** came with tools to remove a dead tree in front of the museum and help with new plantings. **Rich Rocchetta** managed the purchase and dressing of new mannequins in the museum and joined **Dana Smith** and **Michael Rocchetta** at our table on History Lane in the recent Victorian Day celebrations at the County Museum.



Shelly Fernandez and the late Marlene (Espinoza) Manzanares, pictured from the left with fellow board members, were founders of the Guadalupe Health Center established in 1971 in the old City Hall on Wellington Avenue. Shelly was a school teacher angered by the apathy of the medical establishment and Marlene was a mother grieving over the death of a daughter denied medical care.

THORNTON BEACH CABIN 1937-40

By Jack Damonte, 14 March 2004

Excerpted from "A story as told to me by my Uncle Jack Damonte, my Cousin Bill Damonte, and Jack's friend Tom McKeon."



Editor's note: I found this fascinating story in our archives and called Jack Damonte to see if we could find original images for reprinting in the *Tattler*. Jack, a retired architect living in Berkeley, was all too glad to share the story and we had a nice chat about our days at UC Berkeley. Jack was a few years

ahead of me in the days of the Free Speech Movement. I graduated in 1971 when the campus was occupied by the National Guard during protests against the Vietnam War. Those days now have also passed into history. This story recalls a simpler time when it was possible for regular folks to build an idyllic cabin from driftwood along the California coast.

For years my Uncle Jack told a story about a cabin he and his oldest brother Gus and their many friends built on Thornton Beach... one Sunday my Brother Steve and my Mother went to Thornton Beach with Uncle Jack to find the cabin. Steve described a pleasant day searching the bluffs along the beach, but they found no evidence of the cabin... I am going to tell the story of how this cabin came about as told to me by Uncle Jack, my Cousin Bill Damonte, and Tom.

Jack had just graduated from High School in 1935 and the cabin was built between 1939, when the framing was complete, and about 1940. A group of 8 or 9 young men, who called themselves the 'Beach Nut Club', enjoyed swimming and sun bathing at Thornton Beach during the years just before World War II. Most of Jack's use of the cabin was during the construction phase because he enlisted in the Army Air Force and then was off to war in 1942... The site they chose for the cabin is located near the bottom of an access trail that connected the beach to Skyline Boulevard just across from the Olympic Club golf course. They needed a place to change clothes, a place that provided a wind brake and privacy...

Tom remembers shoveling tons of sand to prepare for the structure, only to find that the hillside slid during the week, covering up their futile efforts. This went on for week after week until the retaining wall was finally complete. The construction process evolved and eventually they decided to build the cabin, which was about 18' x 25'. There were no drawings, no permits, just the talents of these young men. The sturdy framing was made from driftwood and from purchased used building materials. The board siding was probably from the cargo of a shipwreck. The windows were second hand salvaged materials.

There was no electricity, a fireplace provided heat and light and there was no bathroom, However, there was plenty of seawater for bathing. Fresh water was available from a shallow artesian well dug at the base of the bluff. Rough driftwood timbers interlock in a crude way to form the deck and the retaining wall to support the cabin. A similar retaining wall was required on the east side above the cabin. Looking at that bluff today it is hard to imagine how a cabin could sit up there. The guys that helped my Uncles included some strong Russian

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fellows, Jack Pudoff and Finney Fadeef, who were butchers, Jim Chickenoff, John Rudametkin, and Alex Lazootin. Uncle Gus grew up in a Russian (cont'd) neighborhood on Potrero Hill. One of the more interesting features of the cabin was the fireplace. This fireplace was built using cobblestone blocks and glazed brick, both from street paving. These materials were 'requisitioned' from a City corporation yard located on 16th Street near the base of Potrero Hill. At that time, San Francisco was in transition from block and brick paved streets to concrete paving.



My Uncles and their friends carried the cobblestones, each weighing about 20 pounds... down from Skyline Boulevard about one-quarter of a mile or so to the cabin site below. Water for the mortar was obtained from the spring dug at the base of the bluff near the site... The fellow who did the masonry work traded labor for drink and as the drink flowed the workmanship suffered.

Every New Year's Day they would have a dip in the ocean, build a fire and have a party. According to Tom, the butchers Finney and Pudoff provided meat scraps and combined with some vegetables, they created a crude soupy stew called "shash". The ingredients were cooked in an iron kettle hanging in the fireplace over a roaring fire. Combined with a few loaves of San Francisco's French bread it became a tasty treat for the "polar bears" after they emerged from frolicking in the frigid surf 75 feet below the cabin.

My Cousin Bill helped with the construction of the cabin. He told me a story about how he and his wife to be, Genny, rode rented horses on the beach and then used the cabin to dance to music from a hand cranked Victrola record player... Jack remembers playing old Caruso records in the cabin. In addition to the Victrola, Tom described the cabin furnishing as an assortment of towels, rickety chairs, a small home-made table, a coffee pot, an iron kettle, castoff utensils and as well as random cups, bowls and dishes (probably from "dish night" at the movies).

A beach bum lived nearby in a small structure that was essentially a shallow hole dug into the sand at the base of the bluff with a rough wooden cover for a roof. This fellow was a veteran of World War I and was independent to a fault. His name was Wilson Nash Gregory and he was entitled to a bonus from the war but for ethical reasons he would not accept it. He would not

take handouts and survived on what he could find on the beach. The guys left food, mostly fruit, for him to find. They would save some of the "shash" from the kettle and one day Tom delivered it to Wilson. When Wilson opened the trap door to his lair, two of his "pets" scampered out. Tom thought they were possums but in reality they were huge wharf rats. That was Tom's last delivery of "shash" to Wilson. Wilson was responsible for the water used to cook with by digging an artesian well at the base of the bluff.



The cabin was completed in about 1940 and Wilson became a casual protector for their cabin while my Uncles went off to fight in World War II. The cabin was isolated and vulnerable because this beach was off limits during the War. Ann Damonte, Gus's wife, recalled Gus describing the guys having a good relationship with police on horseback patrols of this remote beach area. Wilson had strong puritanical religious feelings and resented the people who came to this remote beach to carouse and party. It is possible that his territorial conflicts with the party crowd led to the destruction of the cabin. The cabin survived until about 1947 and there is no explanation for why it was destroyed by fire.

Tom returned to Thornton Beach after his tour in the Merchant Marines and found only the fireplace standing among a pile of ashes... By about 1950 it was completely gone. A few years ago I went to the beach and found nothing but a piece of what could be a glazed brick paver from the fireplace that I gave to my Uncle Jack. During my search, I asked horseback riders, hikers, even a Park Ranger if they knew of the cabin or had seen remnants of one. They all looked blankly at me as if to say what an amazing story but no one had seen anything.

RECALLING VERN'S

In November of 1993, Vern's Coffee Shop closed after 29 years as a landmark Mission Street Restaurant, a victim of redevelopment. Vern's was known as the regular eating place for families and seniors and was

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open 24 hours. Breakfast at Vern's was a local tradition. Vern's provided the main course at Lincoln Senior Center's annual Operation Santa Claus party for needy families. Quoting from the 1993 Daly City Record, "Vern's may very well have been the largest and most popular independently owned coffee shop in the North County since the day in September 1964 when Vern Berkowitz moved to Mission Street [next to the old Mission Bell Motel demolished in 1994] from his skyline Plaza ice cream store" " In 1991 Ray Dutton bought the business at age 35 after a career at Vern's starting as a 14 year old busboy, and after a stint at a culinary school he was a partner at Vern's for years. In its heyday, the restaurant employed as many as 28 people. Nothing was out of a can, even sauces and gravies were made from scratch.



At the time of closing Berkowitz commented about the mid-morning crowd around the horseshoe counter and at the front booths, "everybody you see here is here every day. And now they're all asking where they can go after we close." During the closing weeks patrons wrote farewell messages on the walls, some had to be painted over because of "strongly worded feelings about the circumstances leading to the closing."

During this past summer Mark Berkowitz, Vern's nephew from St. Paul Minnesota, visited the museum and researched some family history. Mark remembers the best times of his youth spent working summers at Vern's.



Mark Berkowitz remembering his family's coffee shop, looking through the museum's files.

SHARE YOUR MEMORIES - Do you have a memory to share about Thornton Beach or Vern's? Contact the editor at: director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org, or drop a note in the mail to the museum address to "Tattler Editor."

TIMELINE QUIZ - Visit our museum timeline exhibit covering 12,000 years of local history!

Q What was the name of the roadhouse built around 1850 in the area later known as Daly's Hill (now Top of the Hill, Daly City)?

The answer is the "Abbey House." How it got its name is unknown, but it was well-established by 1853 in the V formed by San Jose Avenue and Mission Street. In 1856 San Mateo County held its first election and the Abbey House was the polling place for the Colma precinct, which included most of the north end of the county. There were about 50 eligible voters and 500 ballots were cast. Later a judge filed a lawsuit charging election fraud by the Chris Lilly gang of racketeers who were then the owners of the Abbey Tavern. The Abbey House still existed in 1906 when refugees fled south from the earthquake and fire, but no photos have been found and no records document its demolition.

