

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

### GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

We are very pleased to have Bill and Dan Duggan as the featured speakers for our November meeting. The brothers head the longtime Daly City mortuary business which opened in 1963 and bears their family name. Duggan's Serra Mortuary has a history which dates back to 1880s San Francisco. Bill and Dan will share their memories of the family business, the move to Daly City, construction of the funeral home/mortuary on the site of a long ago well-known Daly City swimming hole, Knowles' Pond, and much more.

The brothers will also discuss the only other mortuary in Daly City, the former W. C. Lasswell & Co. The late former Daly City Mayor Bernard "Bud" Lycett was married to Edna "Bunny" Laswell, a pioneer female embalmer along with her sister, Ida. Just like Duggan's, Laswell was a family affair, where everyone was involved, whether born into the founding families or marrying into them. Both of the Duggan's late parents, Edwin "Bud" Duggan and Madeline, ran the family business; over the years, numerous generations of the Duggan family have entered into and assisted with an operation that traces its roots back to long ago, and all began with the brothers' grandfather, William, who originally emigrated from County Tipperary, Ireland. Duggan's is the largest family owned firm in Northern California, and it has continued the tradition started by matriarch Madeline of cooking a turkey and sending it back to a family's home after each service. We are in for a special evening when the President [Dan] and Vice President and Chief Financial Officer [Bill] share all of this history and more of an institution that is truly woven into the fabric of Daly City and performs one of the most necessary and noble functions and callings possible.

In the last *Tattler* we mentioned that Richard Di Giacomo, who just wrote *Historical Gems of the San Francisco Bay Area: A Guide to Museums, Historical Sites, History Parks, and Historical Homes*, has included the Daly City History Museum. This is an excellent resource guide to all of the smaller and less well known history museums in the Bay Area. While we have no plans to stock it in the museum gift shop at this time, as we don't generate enough walk-in business, we definitely do recommend it. *Historical Gems* can be found in many book stores and is available over the Internet.

I also want to remind you to occasionally check our great web site. There's a lot of valuable information on it, including links to the other history organizations in San Mateo County and

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## HISTORY EVENING

Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM

101 LAKE MERCED BLVD., DALY CITY  
DOELGER CENTER CAFE

EVERYONE WELCOME!

### BILL AND DAN DUGGAN

The brothers head the longtime Daly City mortuary business which opened in 1963 and bears their family name. Duggan's Serra Mortuary has a history which dates back to the 1880s.



Photo from Duggans-Serra.com

Refreshments will be provided by: **Marcus and Grace Gonzalez, Pat Hatfield, and Elinor Charleston.**  
Thank you to our gracious Hospitality Chair,  
**Annette Hipona.**

NOVEMBER IS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

*Your continued generosity inspires all our efforts. Support your local history!*

those in the immediate Bay Area that we believe you will enjoy, too. Guild Secretary Algis Ratnikas has a site called *Timelines of History*. You might remember Algis presented a program a couple of years ago, and he has a great timeline of Daly City going all the way back to prehistoric times! There are other web sites that deal with genealogy and back issues of former newspapers as well. There is definitely something for everybody. Just click on the 'Resources' tab. Also, remember to check out our calendar--top left-hand corner of our home page. While we don't have many events to list outside of the general membership meetings, we usually post our next meeting speaker and topic ahead of the *Tattler* being mailed. This is a great way to stay in the know ahead of time. All of this information and more is located at [dalycityhistorymuseum.org](http://dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

And finally, it's that time of year again! Time to renew your membership in the Guild. We have enclosed a return envelope and renewal card for your convenience. Remember, the Guild is an all-volunteer organization so all of your contribution goes directly to supporting the organization and our museum. We are entirely supported by your private donations. Thank you!

## ART & HISTORY

"Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition" at the de Young Museum in SF's Golden Gate Park marks the centennial of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the San Francisco world's fair that celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal, the city's reconstruction following the great earthquake of 1906, and the 400th anniversary of the discovering of the Pacific Ocean by the explorer Balboa. At the heart of the exposition was one of the most ambitious art exhibitions ever presented in the United States with more than 11,000 paintings, sculptures, prints, and photographs, and murals. The exposition helped establish SF as a world cultural center. The centennial exhibit showcases works of art not seen together since the 1915 world's fair. Through January 10, 2016. Regular museum entrance fee.



View of the grounds of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition looking north. San Francisco Bay and Marin County in the distance. (Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley)

Mud flats at the northern end of the city were filled to build the fair in the location later known as the Marina. Most of the buildings were made of a temporary plaster-like material, but the Palace of Fine Arts and surrounding lagoon were not torn down. A major rebuild in 1965 was followed by improvements and a seismic retrofit in 2009.

The Lagomarsino family of Colma employed dozens of women to pick violets at their farm and fashion them into bouquets and boutonnieres for the Panama Pacific International Exposition in SF. (The next generation of the family branched into real estate.) A pyramid of Lagomarsino violets sprouted in the rotunda of the California Building at the Exposition. White-dressed youngsters from San Mateo County schools, so-called Violet Girls, wandered the fair grounds waving tiny American flags and distributing over 12,000 bunches of Colma-grown violets in purple streamers in one day.

After a San Mateo County bond measure of \$1.2 million for highway funds passed, the 28-mile Ocean Shore Highway from Colma to Half Moon Bay was completed in 1915, less than 60 days before the Panama-Pacific Exposition closed. The new 16 ft. wide road was known for its tortuous curves which followed the old Ocean Shore rail-bed. The highway, also known as Highway 1, was permanently closed in 1958 after being the most expensive stretch of highway in the state to maintain.

Lincoln Beachy, one of the best known stunt pilots of the day, crashed and died in an experimental monoplane during one of his shows at the fair. He is buried in Cypress Lawn Memorial Park in Colma.

## EL NIÑO HISTORY



The term El Niño refers to a rapid, dramatic warming of Pacific Ocean sea-surface temperatures which can cause dramatically increased rainfall on the west coastline of North and South America.

The 1982-83 El Niño was the strongest and most devastating of the century, perhaps the worst in recorded history. California had very high rainfall and the year was characterized by extensive flooding and land sliding. In January of 1982, torrential rains fell in Daly City causing severe erosion on the coast and the closing of Thorton Beach access due to extensive damage. Thus ended Daly City's beach access.

In February of 1998, heavy rains caused the street to collapse into the sea on Avalon Drive. Another collapse followed in December. President Clinton declared counties in California hit by El Niño storms federal disaster areas. One of the worst-hit areas was the Broadmoor hillside where trees were blown down and mudslides ripped into a number of homes. A storm drain on the Daly City coast

broke in January and city repair attempts failed causing chunks of Avalon Drive to fall into the ocean. Seven households were forced to evacuate. Two thousand tons of rock were placed below Avalon Drive by Daly City.



## MASSAGLIA AUTO SHOP & CREST THEATRE

Massaglia & Co. auto shop 1920 at Mission and School streets (above) was first built in 1920s as a blacksmith shop and garage. The building to the right is the Peter Benassini blacksmith and automotive shop. Photo and information is provided by Frank Maffei, whose uncle built and owned Massaglia & Co. where trucks were made and repaired. Frank commented, "The depression in the 30s done him in. He rented the back portion to some shady people to make moonshine. The feds found out and busted the boiler and the booze ran down the street." In 1935 the building was sold and in April of 1948 it opened as the Crest Theatre. The opening film noir feature "Body and Soul" costarred John Garfield and Lilli Palmer and is considered to be the first great film about boxing.

## GUILD NEWS

We have just learned that enhanced, colorized photos from the Guild archive used in the Wells Fargo photo mural at the Lucky California store in Mission Plaza will be made available to the Guild for non-commercial use in the museum. These photos are spectacular in their improved condition and would make great subjects for the large photo murals we have been planning to put above the pine paneling in the front room. Many thanks to Wells Fargo Bank. The museum has loaned a pressed plant collection made by Daly City Girl Scout Troop 8 in 1942 to San Bruno Mountain Watch as part of their research for a new book on mountain flora. Elaine Cohen was the troop leader and the project was part of a Spring Nature Study Course led by a Mrs. Pleas. In the early 1940s the mountain was known as "Black Mountain." (Does anyone know why?) Guild Emerita Bunny Gillespie gave a lecture on the history of our Guild to CHORA (Council of Homeowners and Residents Association) and received their annual citizen recognition award. The Guild was approached by NBC to



assist with a tribute to the late Bob St. Clair at a 49ers game that would include photos of his service as a councilmember and mayor of Daly City.

## LIVING IN THE EMBRACE OF A CALIFORNIA OAK - THE STORY OF BESH AND THELMA



Responding to an open invitation by David Schooley, founder of the environmental group Mountain Watch, two Guild board members hiked up San Bruno Mountain

recently. Schooley was the guest lecturer at our September general Guild meeting. Marcus Gonzalez and Dana Smith took advantage of Mountain Watch free guided tours of Owl and Buckeye Canyons. On separate hikes, both Dana and Marcus visited the mountain sites where Dwight Vernon Taylor, a former SSF music teacher, and Thelma and Besh, a married couple, lived and became known as the hermits of San Bruno Mountain. Only the oak tree remains, scarred from a fire on the mountain in 2008.

Taylor lived for 10 years on the mountain before being evicted at age 44 by the county in 1990. He went to live with his new love, Barbara, in her home in Pacifica. Barbara, a kindergarten teacher, had first met Dwight on a Mountain Watch hike with students. Several years after Dwight left the mountain, Besh and Thelma moved into his hut built around a 300 year old oak tree. Here is their story, based on an account by Besh published in the Mountain Watch magazine and widespread media coverage in the *San Mateo County Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *National Enquirer*, and *The New York Times*.

Besh had been a street person since the 60's in San Francisco, riding his bicycle collecting recycling and living out of dumpsters. He was known all over SF by the nickname "Bicycle." At the soup line at Martin de Porres, he met Thelma. After knowing each other for twelve years in an off an on relationship, Besh enticed Thelma to join him on the mountain. Besh recalled, "I didn't want to be up here by myself and I said, 'Oh, this is a beautiful place and I gotta get married'... The day after I proposed to Thelma I brought her up here. I showed her, I said, 'Look, this is where we live. Look at this beautiful place, compared to the city.' This is my big selling point, you know, wow, look at what I got. So she said, 'Well, ok.' "

In 2002 after 12 years on the mountain, at age 50 Thelma and Besh received their eviction notice. David Schooley, then the Director of Mountain Watch, led

protest efforts, but to no avail. The *Chronicle* reported, "Thelma Caballero and Besh Serdahely have lived in an oak tree for 12 years, but the cops say they can't live in their oak tree anymore. In San Mateo County, it's against the law to live in a tree... For 12 years, the married couple have lived in a homemade hut built into the side of the tree. The hut masterfully incorporates branches of the tree with various bits of discarded building materials fished from Dumpsters. Some call it a homeless encampment. Others say the tidy, tucked-away dwelling could pass for the tree house of Swiss Family Robinson. 'We have the trees and the sunshine and the sky,' Caballero said."



Besh and Thelma's hut, built by Dwight Taylor, at Mud Oak in Owl Canyon. Photo by Kurt Rogers, *The Chronicle*.

Besh wrote "So you have a Monk Man and his Cinderella sitting on your mountain. We take care of Owl Canyon using *The Earth Manual* by Malcolm Margolin (who also wrote the wonderful book *The Ohlone Way* about the Indians who used to live in the incredible paradise that used to be here in the Bay Area. David Schooley continued to lead hiking groups up the mountain, dropping in on Besh and Thelma as he had previously with Dwight. "The best question was when this little kid asked, 'Is this real?'"



*Chronicle* photo by Kurt Rogers. Caballero in the kitchen.

In a chapter in the book "Ten Years That Shook the City San Francisco 1968-1978," published by City Lights Books, David Schooley writes about the mountain hermits. "There

are still those who turn their backs on the ever-expanding urban grid and its 'comforts' which surrounds the mountain's formidable wilderness. Characterized by some as 'homeless' and 'troubled,' they have, in fact, been extraordinarily sensitive to the Mountain's inner life, and found ways to live in harmony with it... Occasionally, we stumble upon hidden settlements deep in the mountain where people knew how to find water were able to handle fire secretly and to use the natural camouflage of air, wind, fog and rain, to carefully disguise the paths to their dwellings.

Among the hermits there have been hostile and troubled people, as well as friendly souls... Each of them, in their way, have sought space and healing in the shelter of wild land, leaving behind the often unforgiving judgments and pressures of the world we have made. In this way their journeys honor the earth and their experiences are a source of learning for us."

### HISTORY IN CONCRETE



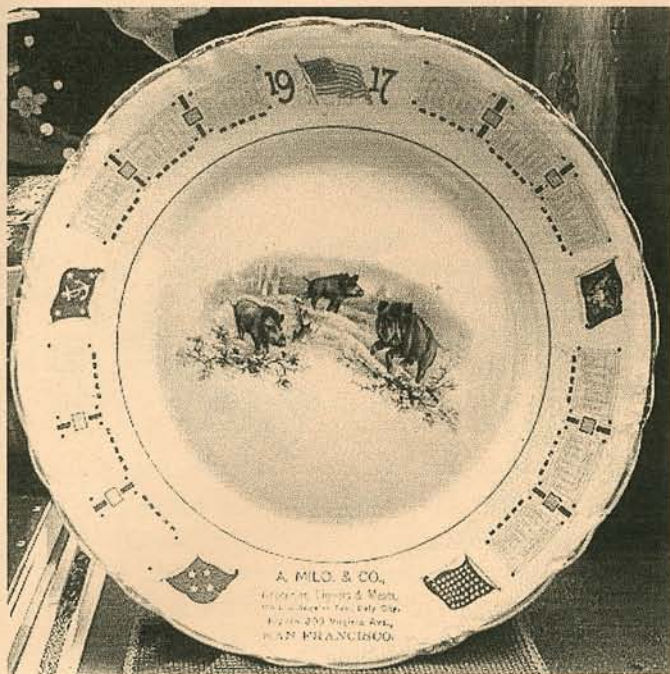
Portion of Daly City sidewalk with WPA (Works Project Administration) stamp from the days of the Great Depression

*Rich Rocchetta writes:*

A few weeks ago Gary Webber from the Daly City Streets Department contacted Dana and said he had a "piece of sidewalk" that was cut for a handicapped ramp at the NE corner of West Market St. and Mateo. The piece was stamped "WPA 1940". The sidewalks that were constructed by the WPA were quite numerous in the area of W. Market/Mateo/Vale and also across El Camino on Castle/3rd/2nd. They were stamped on the corners where the WPA had constructed sidewalks. I remember quite a few in the '60s when walking home from Jefferson High (Gary Webber was in my graduating class at Jeff and he was raised in Daly City). Today he brought up the piece. He said it was probably the last remaining sidewalk indicating WPA left in the City. Many sidewalks remain from that era in the area. It's interesting to see the existing sidewalks as the driveways from that time are "grooved" and it's easy to determine which houses existed at that time.

*Editors Note:* The WPA (Works Project Administration) was created by order of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as part of the national strategy to increase employment during the Great Depression. Work was begun in 1935 on the Cow Palace and completed five years later with mostly WPA labor. In 1935 the stately 2-story  
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Jefferson School built in 1892 was demolished and replaced by a one-story building called "Little Jeff" was built on the site with WPA funds. The building still stands today. In 1936 the second City Hall was erected as a WPA undertaking on the site of the original City Hall. In 1938 the WPA took over recreation activities at Vista Grand Park (later renamed Marchbank Park). The Daly City Recreation Department was not officially created until 1946.



### QUESTIONS ABOUT A PROCINE PLATE

Hello, Daly City history buffs! Aloha from Hawaii! I am researching a fun object that I found more than 50 years ago while cleaning out my grandparent's home on Los Olivos Avenue. Oddly enough, my dad was born in Daly City the same date as is on the plate, 1917. Here it is, in all its bizarre porcine, WW 1 and flags-a-flying patriotic glory. I'm curious about where Los Angeles Avenue once was, since it doesn't appear on any maps of Daly City any more. And, of course, if you have any records of A. Milo, & Co., Groceries, Liquors & Meats, I'd love to know that too! Thanks for the help! This is fun.

– Stephen Becker, Hawai'i

*Response from Rich Rocchetta with help from Russ Brabec:* From an old map we had at the Colma Historical Assn. that Michael [Rocchetta] scanned, Los Angeles St. is now Los Banos Ave. The numbers are different, but Milo's was probably at the very tip just off the corner of Mission St. on the then named street "Los Angeles". In the Images of America series "Daly City, Then and Now", by Daly City Historian Bunny Gillespie, there is a photo on page 22 with the following caption, words in parentheses are mine: "Looming large in the background when this 1961 photo was taken during Daly City 50th Anniversary parade (showing the east side of Mission St., where the Hilltop Beauty School is now located) was Milo's Market, 6315 Mission Street. Tony came to Daly City in 1909 hoping to

work as a boilermaker but started a grocery at 6324 Mission Street instead (numbers change through the years). In 1927, Milo moved his shop across the street (which would have been across from the corner of Los Angeles, now Los Banos) and established Daly City's largest food mart. Mrs. A. Milo's Daly City Beauty Shop occupied second floor offices. Today, a beauty school occupies the ground floor." *Editors Note: Stephen will be donating the plate to the museum.*

**A FISH WITH A WARY APETITE IS SLOW IN RISING TO THE LURE-THE GREEDY ARE QUICKLY HOOKED.**

**PETE ALSO SAYS:** Reap a harvest of satisfaction in your food purchasing — shop at Milo's where you always receive those high-quality foods at economy prices. Yes, it pays off in a harvest of nutrition and economy.

# Milo's Market

6315 MISSION STREET

Specials for Friday & Saturday, July 9 & 10

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**MEAT DEPARTMENT**

ONLY No. 1 FANCY TOP BRANDS

**SLICED BACON** lb. **65c**

1-lb. Layers

**SHOULDER** (Genuine Spring) lb. **44c**

BREAST OF LAMB lb. 15c

**LAMB ROAST** lb. **44c**

BREAKFAST - LINK OR BULK

**SAUSAGE** lb. **48c**

EASTERN

**SPARE RIBS** lb. **46c**

**BACON** lb. **48c**

Eastern - 1/2-lb. Pkg. - Cello Wrapped 25c each

**AMOUR'S BATH, CUDAHY - Tenderized** lb. **65c**

WHOLE or HALF

Fancy Idaho or Manoca Fed Beef - Properly Aged under Violet Ray

**Steak** lb. **88c**

T-Bone Porter House

WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT

All items in this ad are of the finest top grade steer beef, eastern pork, fancy bacon. With US Quality Comes First!

**GROCERY SPECIALS**

**BABY FOOD (Strained)** **3 FOR 21c**

GERBER'S & HEINZ

**OLEOMARGARINE** 1-lb. pkg. **40c**

NUCOA 2-lb. pkg. 78c

**SUGAR** 5-lb. bag **40c**

PURE CANE 10-lb. bag 78c

**SHORTENING** 1-lb. can **43c**

CRISCO 3-lb. can \$1.23

**PEAR HALVES** **32c**

SOUTHERN BEAUTY - No. 2 1/2 can

**GREEN BEANS** **2 FOR 29c**

PALACE - No. 2 Can

**CEREAL** **2 FOR 29c**

KIX and CHEERIOS

**PEACHES** **2 FOR 25c**

ELBERTA SLICED - No. 1 Tall

Free Delivery on Grocery Orders of \$3.00 or Over  
No Phone Orders on Saturday, Please

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

**CANTALOUPE** **3 FOR 25c**

SWEET - RIPE

**SLICING TOMATOES** lb. **10c**

LOCAL

**FRESH BEANS** lb. **10c**

STRINGLESS

**NEW POTATOES** **9 lbs. 25c**

SHAFTER

— FREE DELIVERY —

---

**FISH AND POULTRY**

**BROILERS and FRYERS** lb. **53c**

FRESH KILLED

**FILET OF SOLE** lb. **54c**

FRESH

**A FISH WITH A WARY APETITE IS SLOW IN RISING TO THE LURE-THE GREEDY ARE QUICKLY HOOKED.**

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Daly City Record  
July 8, 1948

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## THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY/COLMA

### DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM

6351 Mission Street, Daly City, CA 94014

650/757-7177

Current Hours: Tuesdays and Saturdays  
from noon to 3 p.m.

 Find us on  
Facebook mail

Please visit us on Facebook at "Daly City History Museum"

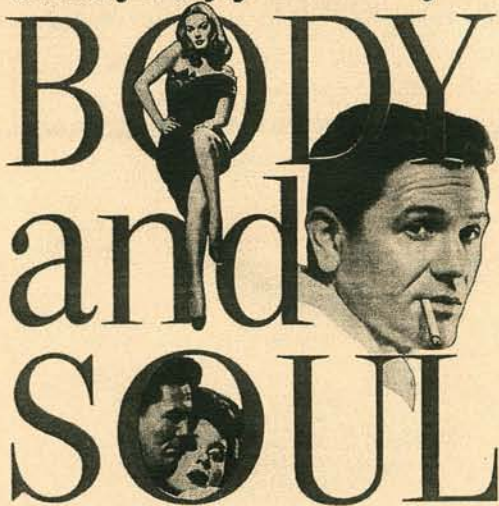
[www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org](http://www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

### FIRST CLASS MAIL



*Body and Soul* was the opening film for the Crest Theatre in Daly City in 1948. The film is considered the first great film about boxing; it's also a cautionary tale about the lure of money—and how it can derail even a strong common man in his pursuit of success.

*The story of a guy that women go for!*



JOHN GARFIELD *'Body and Soul'*  
LILLI PALMER

and introducing exciting  
HAZEL BROOKS *'Body and Soul'*  
with ANNE REVERE

*A new climax in entertainment from* THE ENTERPRISE STUDIOS

#### GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org

**Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President**  
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**Directors: Michael Rocchetta, Marcus Gonzalez**

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus  
Bunny Gillespie, Secretary-Emerita  
Annette Hipona, Hospitality Chair

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

**History Guild of Daly City/Colma is a  
501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization  
Memberships begin at \$25 per year.**

**Tattler Editor & production: Dana Smith,**  
director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org