

THE TATTLER

JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY-COLMA

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

For our May general membership meeting we welcome Vanessa Garcia, owner off the historic 7 Mile House in Brisbane. She will share the amazing history that is the 7 Mile House, which traces its origins back to circa 1858. Please join us as we learn how it derived its revered name, famous and infamous origins, and how it today functions as a popular bar, eatery, and entertainment venue. Vanessa has co-authored a book about this legendary institution entitled "See You at the 7, Stories From the Bay Area's Last Original Mile House," which will be for sale following the presentation.

I want to share some exciting updates with all of you. We have just completed our first major project of the last few years, which is a photographic display of vintage iconic images of Daly City. These giant and nearly life-size images adorn all the upper walls of the main room or gallery. If you haven't visited the museum of late, you will definitely want to check out these over the top-of-the hill photos and more. This was both a major undertaking and expense to the Guild. We believe that you will agree that it is money well spent in preserving our shared local history and making it that much more visible and accessible to generations of young and old alike. Hopefully it will spark a penchant for wanting to either learn for the first time or anew about the venerated history that is Daly City. Please see the picture in this *Tattler*, however, they can't nearly do justice to viewing the actual images in person. For that, you'll need to stop by the museum; we await your visit! Special thanks go to sisters Dana Smith and Judith Christensen for managing this project and seeing it through to completion.

Another change that we are excited about is the long-overdue tweaking of our name. We were incorporated in 1982-83 as the History Guild of Daly City-Colma, an offshoot of the long defunct Daly City History, Arts, & Science commission at city hall. In those early days, neither community of Daly City or Colma had an official history organization. Our legion of mostly late founders felt that both municipalities should be joined together as they are next door to one another and equally historic.

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HISTORY EVENING

**Wednesday, May 16th
at 7 pm**

VANESSA GARCIA
owner of the historic 7 Mile House in
Brisbane presents

HISTORY OF THE 7 MILE HOUSE

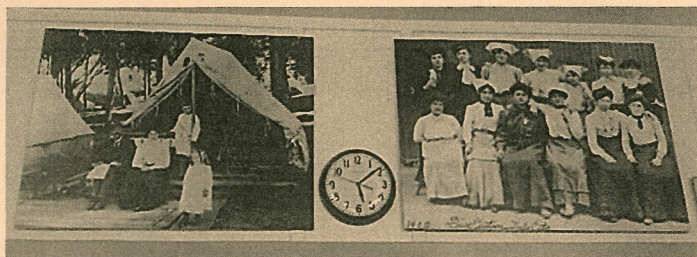


**101 Lake Merced Blvd, Daly City
Doelger Center Cafe**

Free to the public - Everyone welcome!

Refreshments will be provided by Annette Hipona, **Judith Christensen**, and **Dana Smith**. Hospitality hostesses **Annette Hipona** and **Grace Gonzalez** will preside over the always grand and glorious refreshment table.

INVITE A FRIEND!



Large photo murals above the entrance to the Gillespie Room (4'x5.5')

Some ten years later, the residents of the Township of Colma created their own organization, the Colma Historical Association, to better showcase their unique history. Some have mistakenly believed that the "Colma" in our name was meant to include the unincorporated areas of Broadmoor and Garden Village, which are situated within the city limits of Daly City.

The reality is that the contents of our museum and archive focus exclusively on Daly City, with a very few donated items relating to either Colma or Broadmoor. We respect and treasure all items and both communities, but almost ten years after acquiring our permanent home at the top of the hill, the time has come for a necessary name change. While we will continue to maintain the History Guild of Daly City-Colma as our official, legal name for government reporting purposes, we have come up with a name which we believe better reflects who we are in the 21st Century. Your board has voted to submit to the membership for approval the following name change: Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive.

The benefits of this change are substantial. It will better help distinguish us from our sister organization in Colma. [I cannot begin to tell you how many times folks confuse us with the museum in Colma: "Where is the blacksmith shop?" "Why is 'Colma' in your name!?"] We believe that this name change, referred to as 'branding' in the world of business, will better define who we are, what we offer, and help to add new members to the Guild. This new name pays tribute to our founders and historic roots by retaining 'Guild,' clarifies that which we are not by removing the confusing 'Colma,' and much better defines us by including 'museum' and 'archive' in our name. A third of our floor space in the museum is an archive, used by both professional scholars and lay historians alike. Pending an affirmative vote of the membership at the May meeting for this bylaws revision, the new name will be used for all printed materials, web site, etc. and will become the public face of the organization. The board respectfully and unanimously asks for your approval.

THE GUILD REMEMBERS JULIA LOUISE PADREDDII, who passed away peacefully, April 10, 2018, at the age of 96. Julia was the wife of the late Alfred Frank Padreddii and a member of both the History Guild and the Colma Historical Association.



Ryan and Katherine Moeller on a search for lost ancestors

UNCOVERING THE STORY OF THE MITCHELL MURDERS

By Dana Smith (Research materials provided by Katherine Moeller)

The story of the Mitchell murders in 1900 in what was then known as Colma (now a part of Daly City) was lost to history until a recent coincidence brought several historical researchers together. I had come across a brief mention in transcribed oral interviews while reviewing our archives back in 2014 when I was creating a timeline exhibit for the museum. Tom Hickey, who had come to this area in 1892 to work for the Swift Company, was quoted in notes from an Old Timers meeting in 1951 conducted by the county Historical Association at City Hall in Daly City:

"I remember the Mitchell family feud. Mitchell had a hog ranch and another man did too. One man was killed when he went to bring in food for the hogs and the neighbors accused Mitchell. Some of the whites got together and shot Mitchell's wife and son. There was a trial but nothing came out of it."

I had never found any mention of the incident in any historical writings and wondered if this was a case of suppressed history. At the beginning of 2018 when our board of directors went around the table stating our priorities for the year, I mentioned that I wanted to bring the Mitchell family murders to light and would begin a research effort. Fast forward to a Colma Historical

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Association lecture by Richard Hansen, which included some newspaper articles on the Mitchell murders from 1900 in the *San Francisco Call* newspaper. Not long after Hansen's lecture, Richard Rocchetta was substituting for another docent at the Colma Museum when a relative of William Mitchell (Katherine Moeller) visited the museum to research the murders and locate gravesites. Rich remembered that I was planning to write an article on the murders in the History Guild *Tattler* newsletter and put the two of us in contact.

When I mentioned the turn of events to Katherine, she replied "My mom used to say there were no coincidences in life - it is all by design.... To be honest - your reply made me cry. We were so worried that no one else would see these murders in the light that we saw them in. Thank you for standing with us in uncovering the injustice that the Mitchell's endured, all for the color of their skin... this family is deserving of the recognition of being one of the 'first' families of Colma. I am humbled to have revived this family back into memory - and excited for others to learn of their existence."

Since 2007 Katherine has been on a voyage of genealogy discovery for her husband's family since they began to wonder about the family's ethnic origins after discovering old photographs. Katherine began searching census records which eventually led to William Mitchell who was listed in the 1910 census as "white," but in the 1920 census his race was listed as "black."

Katherine writes: "So, now I had some verifiable information to widen the search. I eventually came across some voter registration files that listed this William, a William (Sr.) and a Henry and a Rudolph from Colma. I'd found the Mitchell Family. About 2-3 years ago, I subscribed to Newspapers.com to see if I could obtain more information beyond census, voter registrations, etc, and came across all the articles of the murders of the Mitchell's, as well as Joseph Imsand - and all the conflict that the Mitchell's had with the residents of Colma. "

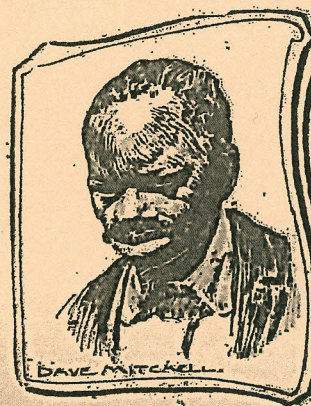
William Mitchell, Sr. was likely born into slavery in North Carolina and freed under the emancipation proclamation of 1863. Katherine was able to trace William Mitchell Sr. as far back as 1869 in San Francisco, where he married Catherine Luke, a white woman from Australia in the same year and shortly moved to the Colma area after the announcement of the Abbey Homestead lots being available for purchase. Interracial marriage was illegal in California until 1948, so William Sr. marrying a white woman in 1869 is astounding. William and Catherine divorced and in 1893

William married Elizabeth, who was referred to as white but William Sr. was quick to respond to call her 'white' was an injustice, as she was an octoroon (1/8th Black).

Rich Rocchetta researched the location of the Mitchell family pig ranch to be approximately where today E. Moltke intersects with Price Street. The Imsand family lived just across Colma Creek from the Mitchells. The two family homes were in sight of each other, and in this case the proximity led to a long brewing feud. Rich Rocchetta remembers where Colma Creek ran west from Guadalupe Canyon (San Bruno Mountain): "Some of the creek was exposed when I was attending Colma Elementary School in the late 1950s." Both families ran pig farms. Imsand and William Mitchell had engaged in a land dispute which went to court several times in attempts by Imsand to claim some of the Mitchell ranch. A few years before the murders, there was an altercation between Joseph Imsand and William Jr. which resulted in a gun fight between the two households. William Jr was shot through the jaw. The wound was not life threatening though he was scarred for life. A few weeks later the Imsand family claimed they were poisoned by drinking the water that flowed between the Mitchell and Imsand ranches.



ELIZABETH MITCHELL



DAVE MITCHELL



WILLIAM MITCHELL THE FATHER

PRINCIPALS IN THE DOUBLE MURDER AT COLMA.

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In 1899, shortly after losing his latest court case over disputed property with the Mitchells, Mr. Imsand was found murdered. When the authorities went to the Imsand house to inform his wife, she blamed the Mitchell's for the crime. When the murder took place, William Sr. was in San Francisco preparing for a meeting of the Colored Mason's (he had been a past Grand Master two separate years in the 1880s), son David was at home, and son William Jr. was returning from a swill run in San Francisco. All three were taken to jail and later freed when no evidence was found linking them to the crime.

On July 5, 1900 the *San Francisco Call* newspaper printed the headline "DOUBLE MURDER RECALLS A TERRIBLE FEUD - Mrs. Elizabeth Mitchell and Her Son David Shot Down in a Mysterious Manner - Suspicion Falls on the Husband of the Woman."

William Mitchell, Sr. was walking into town to report the shooting deaths of his wife and son when he was met by John Roper and Thomas O'Malley driving along the country road. Mitchell asked the men to report a shooting at his ranch to the Constable and Sheriff. The article cast suspicion on William for murdering his own wife and son and then wrote in length about the unsolved murder of Joseph Imsand a year earlier, casting suspicion for that murder again on William Mitchell. The *Call* reported, "The Mitchells and Imsands had been at war for some time." William Mitchell later testified that he saw Caesar Ehlers fire the shots that killed his wife and son from the Imsand's kitchen window.

The headline of the *Call* on July 21st read "COLMA MURDER SUSPECTS HELD TO STAND TRIAL - Web closing Around the Men Accused of Double Murder of Negroes." When asked in court proceedings if she had given a twenty dollar gold piece to Mr. Frank Lemascher to buy rifles for himself and Caesar Ehlers, the widow Imsand refused to answer to avoid incrimination.

The court was crowded with people from Colma and the neighborhood. The *Call* reported: "At the close of the testimony the court made the following remarks. 'The court has noticed during the holding of the proceedings that a spirit of levity was manifested by some of the parties connected with this alleged murder, as if the fact of the taking of a human life was a matter of small moment, not to be considered a thing worthwhile. Now this court has no sympathy whatsoever with any persons, be they black or white, who will deliberately and willfully take human life, and this continuous killing that has been going on at Colma must be stopped. The court believes that the evidence warrants the holding of these

defendants.'" [Frank Lemoscher, Albert Gayer, and Caesar Ehlers] The *Call* reported: "Bachman, the San Francisco gunsmith, and Lemascher, who purchased the rifles of him the day before the shooting, both identified the rifles with which the shooting was done and which were offered in evidence. The sympathy of the town is with the suspects, and their detention is causing much adverse comment here."

A reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner* posed as a constable just after the murders and spoke to the three accused. All three confessed and the reporter ran those confessions in the *Examiner*, along with the testimony of the man who sold them weapons. Katherine Moeller comments: "Despite the mountain of evidence, testimony and confessions, the townspeople rallied together and offered alibies for the three accused." Charges against the three accused murderers were dropped.



Wood engravings were used in newspapers because they could be printed at the same time as type. Halftone images in didn't become common until the 1880s. Halftone is a photomechanical process in which a photo is converted into dots of varying sizes to appear like a photograph. In 1900 the *Call* was still using wood engravings to illustrate the news..

William Mitchell continued to write letters, including to his Masons Lodge, protesting the miscarriage of justice. The Moeller family is continuing to search for copies of William Mitchell's letters following the release of the suspects. A further tragedy befell the Mitchell family just nine months after the murders when 18 year old daughter Rose Etta Mitchell died in 1901 after having an illegal abortion after being raped. Rose Etta's attacker was named to the police, and charges were brought against the man, a local barber. Rose Etta was scheduled to testify against him, but died a few days before the trial. Katherine Moeller comments, "We do

Mitchell, cont'd

not know what happened to the attacker, but if Rose Etta was not able to testify, I would conclude that the charges were dropped and he was freed.”

In 1936 Henry Mitchell died after suspicion of being pushed into traffic, but the death was never investigated as anything other than an accident. William Jr. died in 1932 in a house fire that a newspaper article indicates was set by unknown people with incendiaries around mid-night.

Katherine Moeller comments: “From what I can determine, the Mitchell Hog Ranch was willed to Rudolph and Henry, and sometime between 1909 and 1920 the ranch was sold and Rudolph and Henry moved to Price Street and continued Ranching there, until Rudolph left Colma in 1949 and was hospitalized in Stockton until his death in 1954. William Sr., Elizabeth, David, Christopher and Rose Etta are all buried near each other at Cypress Lawn. Sara Elizabeth and Rueben are also in Cypress Lawn, but are in separate potter's graves. Henry is buried at Cypress Lawn as well, but does not have a grave maker, as far as we've been able to tell.”

William Sr. was a man respected by many in the African-American community in San Francisco and the Colma area. He was the Grand Master of the Colored Masons Victoria Lodge in San Francisco two separate terms in the 1890's. It was the Victoria Lodge that paid for William Sr.'s funeral and burial in 1909 and they also paid to have Rose Etta moved to be laid to rest near her father, step-mother and brothers. African-American Freemasonry constituted its own parallel system of Grand Lodges and membership through what is called Prince Hall Freemasonry. Prince Hall Freemasonry was founded in Boston by an African American man by the name of Prince Hall in 1784 when he was denied membership in Masonic lodges of Massachusetts.

Ryan Moeller is the 2x Great Grandson of William Sr., William Jr. is his Great Grandfather. William Jr's daughter, Elizabeth Mitchell, is Ryan's Grandmother. Ryan and his father had DNA tests to confirm their African ancestry, of which they are proud. The library at UC Berkeley inherited all the back issues of the Examiner, where the Moeller family plans to conduct further research. Dana Smith is in communication with the Masons to seek information on William Mitchell, Sr.'s activism in the African-American community in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the Bay Area.

THANKS TO: Perky Ramroth for donation of the Gillespie archive of 'Westlake Times' bound compendiums; Michael Rocchetta for repainting the

museum door after a graffiti incident; Russ Brabec for donation of a matchbook cover from the Villa Mateo, John Marchbank's gambling club, Vaughn Jones for a Doelger Homes matchbook, Jefferson High School yearbook from 1944, Westmoor High School yearbook from 1959, and a 1976 photo of crowds gathering at 37 Northridge during the Patty Hearst trial; Rich Rocchetta for a Westlake Furniture Gallery mug.

THE PHOTO MURAL PROJECT

By Dana Smith

21 photos from the Guild archives were rescanned at a very high resolution and enlarged up to 4 feet by six feet. Some of the photos were over 120 years old, of all sizes as small as 3"x6", and most were copies of originals made in the early 1970s. Not all were in good focus and many of the copies had not been properly chemically fixed and were severely faded. Photos were examined to see if they had enough visual information to be enlarged and many of our favorite photos did not make the cut. Three times we found replacement photos to get the total number of 21 that could be successfully enlarged. We were astounded by the results, as we believe you will be when you come to the museum to view this new display entirely encircling the large front room of the museum. Installation was done by professionals who have done other museum exhibits including a recent one for the Asian Arts Museum in San Francisco. The installation was particularly difficult because of vertical battens (slats) on the walls above the pine paneling. Hanging devices had to be sawed to fit around the battens. All in all, the project was more time consuming and challenging than anticipated, but thankfully the final results were far more successful than we had hoped. Initial response from visitors: "Wow!"



**DOELGER CENTER
LIBRARY TO BE
NAMED IN HONOR
OF ELINOR
CHALESTON
AT 1 PM,
WEDNESDAY, MAY 2**

Our dear Guild friend and volunteer Elinor died last November at the fantastic age of 101. Active to the end, Elinor was our gracious hospitality hostess for many years and was a celebrated volunteer of the Doelger Senior Center. Join the brief ceremony and celebration!



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.



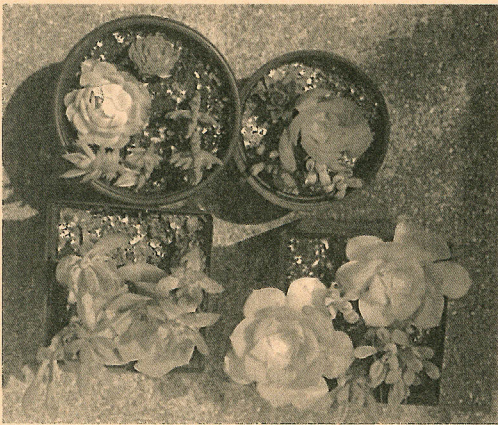
Please visit us on Facebook at "Daly City History Museum"

www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org



PLANT SALE!

FIRST CLASS MAIL



PLANT SALE PRIOR TO GUILD MEETING

6:30 PM, Doelger Center Café, May 16th

Succulents and dahlia bulbs will be offered for sale at very reasonable prices just prior to the regular Guild meeting and lecture. Every couple of years, succulents need to be divided and reported. Same thing for dahlia bulbs. Judith Christensen will be donating for sale 40+ potted succulents, nearly all have several varieties per pot. Guilder and dahlia expert Fred Stevens will be offering a selection of dahlia bulbs and offering advice. All proceeds go to the Guild.

Here's your chance to treat your green thumb and save money!

GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Mark Weinberger, President 650/757-7177

president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org

Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President

Dana Smith, 2nd Vice-President/Museum Director

Judith Christensen, Treasurer

Algis Ratnikas, Secretary

Directors: Michael Rocchetta, Marcus Gonzalez

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus, Bunny Gillespie (1926-2017), Secretary-Emerita, Annette Hipona, Hospitality Chair

Board meetings are held as necessary. 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

After this May meeting, we have a short break over the summer before our next meeting on Wednesday, September 19th.
Have a great summer!