

THE TATTLER

JOURNAL OF DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

As you'll see in this edition, we have embarked on one of our biggest changes ever--going to **all Sunday afternoon meetings**, third Sunday of the month in January, March, May, and September. We heard from many of you over the last few years that daytime meetings are preferable to evenings. After reviewing the matter and receiving accommodations from Daly City--Thank you!--we decided that making the switch at this time is most prudent. Our membership continues to age, and it has become very difficult for many to attend at night; some no longer drive or have mobility issues. We hope that you will agree that this change will work better for our membership, also allowing us to expand to new audiences that otherwise have been excluded from learning about and celebrating our shared local history because they found it difficult to attend on a work day. From this point on, we will now be meeting in the Larcombe Clubhouse, the stand-alone building immediately to the left of the Doelger Senior Center--a distance of no more than an additional few hundred feet.

For our September meeting we welcome back our friend and fellow historian, Monika Trobits, who has spoken on the Broderick-Terry Duel and other subjects in the past. For this meeting she will speak about her latest book, *Bay Area Coffee: A Stimulating History*. To quote from Arcadia Press publishers:

"San Francisco was booming in the mid-nineteenth century, and along with adventurers seeking their fortunes came sacks of green coffee beans. The old Yerba Buena Cove swiftly filled with ships, and the city emerged as the third-largest coffee port in the United States. What followed was the rise--and local demise--of the "big three" coffee roasters: Folger's, Hills Brothers and MJB. Specialized Bay Area roasters like Peerless, Peet's and Blue Bottle sprang up in their wake, while places such as Tosca's, Café Trieste and the Blue Unicorn blazed the way for modern coffeehouses. Join author Monika Trobits as she traces the historic voyage of the humble coffee bean to the shores of San Francisco Bay."

We're sure you won't want to miss this exciting lecture on the definitive history of the Bay Area coffee industry--for both our caffeinated and decaffeinated [and tea-loving!] friends alike. Monika will autograph copies for sale following her talk.

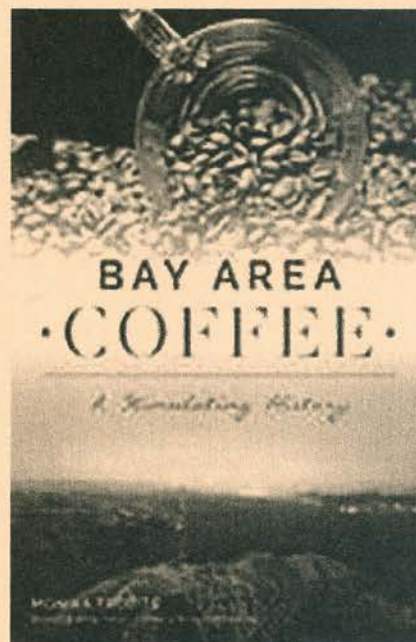
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DAYTIME HISTORY LECTURE

**Sunday, September 15
at 2 pm**

**BAY AREA COFFEE:
A STIMULATING HISTORY**

BY MONIKA TROBITS



**101 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City
Larcombe Clubhouse - New Location!
(just west of the Doelger Center Café)**

Free to the public -- loads of free parking
light refreshments

Thank you to our gracious Hospitality Crew,
Grace and Marcus Gonzalez.

We are saddened to have lost four friends of the History Guild these past few months, three of whom were renowned historians (see "The Guild Remembers").

Finally, I want to update everyone that at this time the Cow Palace is momentarily safe from redevelopment. I have to emphasize "momentarily safe" because this has been and continues to be a constant conflict with those who want to condemn the property for use as high density residential housing. Our organization strongly believes that the property is best utilized by continuing to function as an exhibition/exposition facility; the Cow Palace performs its mission as ably and splendidly today as it has for almost the past eighty years. This historic edifice might be threatened again early next year by new proposals by State Senator Scott Wiener. Along with our friend and fellow Guild Member State Senator Quentin L. Kopp [ret.], our friends at the Great Dickens Christmas Fair and others, we will continue to fight for historic preservation.

Please check for updates on our Facebook page as well as the Save the Cow Palace Facebook page. We need YOU, each and every one of you, to make your voices heard by letting Senator Wiener and Assemblymen Phil Ting and David Chiu know that you support the Cow Palace as it is now--an exhibition/exposition facility and vital community resource that supports the economies of Daly City, the San Francisco Bay Area, and California. It is a historic gem replete with a storied past, vital present, and vibrant future; we cannot afford to lose it.

HISTORY OF THE DALY CITY COW PALACE

The following is a continuation of Colma Councilmember Diana Colvin's definitive recitation of the history of the Cow Palace before the Guild a few years ago. She is also the Rentals and Operations Officer for the Cow Palace. Further installments will appear in subsequent "Tattlers." Prepared by Mark Weinberger.

Progress was slow. In 1933 Mayor Angelo J. Rossi reported that the City could not come up with the \$250,000 to match the State appropriation and the dream appeared doomed. The City's Board of Supervisors finally appropriated the \$250,000 in 1934 due in large part to the swing vote provided by Robert P. Holliday, publisher of San Francisco's afternoon newspaper, the *Call Bulletin*.

The Public Works Administration granted \$199,000, San Mateo County contributed \$50,000, and private subscriptions came to \$19,000, making total available funds \$668,000 which still fell short of the \$950,000 needed to meet the cost of the main pavilion. The

"Angel" from heaven turned out to be the Works Progress Administration [WPA], one of the largest and most ambitious of Roosevelt's New Deal agencies, employing millions of people [mostly unskilled men] to undertake public work projects. The project was finally on its way to becoming a reality.

Ground breaking ceremonies were held November 3, 1935 and the first spade of dirt was turned over by Lt. Governor George J. Hatfield. Location of the cornerstone laid by Governor Frank Merriam remains a mystery to this day. Funds for the project ran short and the WPA contributed an additional \$1,000,000. Progress was painfully slow as hand labor was mandated in order to make work for the WPA workers and machines were used only when necessary.



Poster from 1997 with an entrance fee of \$4

Funding issues continued to arise, but through it all the project prevailed and the Cow Palace hosted its first Grand National on November 15, 1941. Patrons responded enthusiastically to the product of years of planning and effort. They saw the finest livestock from eleven states--2,163 animals and a horse show that matched Madison Square Garden's and drew 255 entries as well as the International Rodeo Association's Finals. The facility was packed daily and was a huge success up to the last day of the seven day run on November 22, 1941. A week later the Cow Palace closed its doors and it would be four years before it reopened.

With Word War II declared, the U.S. Army took over the facility and troops destined to go overseas were housed in the box stalls originally intended for horses, and the arena became a vehicle depot. The rental fee? One dollar
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per year! The Cow Palace was turned back to the state in 1945.

THE TURNING POINT – YEAR-ROUND USAGE OF THE FACILITY

The decade of the 1950s was one of significant change. It was a period in which the facility's facial appearance was transformed. Once primarily almost exclusively used for livestock exhibitions, the building was recast as a mammoth, multi-purpose complex that could draw great numbers of people with diversified interests.

In 1964, a little under one and a half million people came to attend events of one kind or another. The record attendance year, of course, included the 1964 Republican National Convention and the first Beatles concert.

That year of record attendance was preceded by the efforts of specific people, involved in making visionary decisions that would shape the future of the Cow Palace. Getting construction projects completed by show date deadlines was daunting due to bureaucratic delays and Sacramento's view of the Cow Palace as a 'white elephant.' But the perseverance and practical wisdom of broadminded members of the board and management who envisioned what the Cow Palace could be, turned the tide. From that point on, improvements really began to gain momentum and the proof that the tide had turned was some of the notable moments that took place in those ensuing decades. To be continued.....

Editor's Note: The Cow Palace Board voted in April 2019 to no longer host gun shows after this year when the exhibitor's contract expires.

SAN FRANCISCO SCALE MODEL FINALLY HOME AFTER 77-YEAR ABSENCE

Excerpts from an article by Sam Whiting January 14, 2019 SFGate

The San Francisco scale model finished in 1940 has been mostly hidden away ever since — until now. [It represents landscape and buildings existing in 1938].... The scale model, commissioned by the City Planning Commission to put artists to work during the Great Depression, ranges from San Bruno Mountain to Yerba Buena Island to the Presidio... Assembled, it is 37 by 41 feet... Since May, the model has been in a South of Market warehouse owned by the library, being cleaned by a horde of volunteers. The free exhibit in the libraries, called "Public Knowledge: Take Part," was organized by SFMOMA. On a scale of 1 inch equals 100 feet, the model city is 11 inches tall at its highest point (Mount Davidson) and composed of 6,000 removable

little blocks, each one corresponding to a city block. The blocks are formed into 140 sections, each on a stand.



... The scale model was a federal project under the Works Progress Administration. San Francisco architect Timothy Pflueger suggested it in 1935, and the City Planning Commission sponsored it. Plans were drawn using aerial photographs and surveyors. Constructed in a church that has not been identified, it took 300 craftspeople two years... The completed model was displayed just once, intact, in the Light Court at City Hall. It cost \$102,750. and its dedication in the registrar's office was announced by a picture in *The Chronicle* in April 1940.

When World War II broke out, that space was suddenly in demand for the mobilization effort, and the model was disassembled and crated up... It found a home in the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley... From there it moved to another UC warehouse in Richmond, and it would probably be sitting there still but for an education outreach program called Public Knowledge, which involves SFMOMA and the public library.

The genius of the model is that it literally fits together like building blocks, with wooden pegs. Each city block can be lifted out of place and held in hand. The problem with that is that 175 city blocks have disappeared.... Even without all of its pieces, this is considered to be the largest and most intact of any of a number of city models built across America by the WPA.

When the exhibition in branch libraries ends in March, "the hope is to put the model back together," Lochman [Stella Lochman, Project Manager says. She has identified three locations big enough to hold it: the Light Court at City Hall, the Roberts Family Gallery at the new Howard Street entrance to SFMOMA, and the Ferry Building. One location she did not mention is Treasure Island.

GUILD REMEMBERS RUSS BRABEC, ED GRAHAM, FRANK MAFFEI, AND DAVE ZEFF

RUSSELL BRABEC



Guilder and history buff extraordinaire Russ Brabec passed away at home in South San Francisco on April 29th after battling cancer for two years. Russ was a past Board Member and officer of the Guild and a generous volunteer consultant who was always willing to share his knowledge and conduct special research. For many years

he volunteered at the mini-museum in the Serramonte Library basement before we opened our full-sized museum on Mission Street. You may remember Russ serving our bubbly at our January meetings and his spectacular performance as David Broderick in our reenacted duel in 2009. In 2007 he began a project to research 30 early pioneers of northern San Mateo County, 1850-1860's, for the San Mateo County Genealogy Society and the History Guild of Daly City/Colma. His research topics have been published frequently in the *Tattler* and are a part of our permanent archive.

Russell was born in 1937 in Illinois. In 1939, his dad's job was transferred to San Francisco. Russ graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in 1956 and started working for the City of Daly City's Engineering Department in November 1959 and retired in October 1999. Russ then joined the Daly City Retirees Association, and he composed their newsletter from 2005 to 2019. Russ and wife Eunice have been active in Broadmoor Presbyterian Church since 1964. He and Eunice loved to travel, especially by ship including 14 ocean voyages and 4 river cruises. They visited 45 countries and all 50 states.

ED GRAHAM

Ed Graham was also an avid traveler and was on a trip to participate in the 150th railroad anniversary of the Golden Spike in Utah when he became ill and passed away on May 19th. Ed was a member of the Board of Directors of the Colma Historical Association, which he joined in 1994 because CHA was working to save the Colma train depot, where he had worked while going to college at Stanford in 1949. Ed had a career as a Traffic Engineer for CalTrans and when he retired he caught the travel bug, riding trains in 99 countries on all seven continents.

This editor remembers Ed as a quiet gentleman. He was also a member of the History Guild and attended a Guild

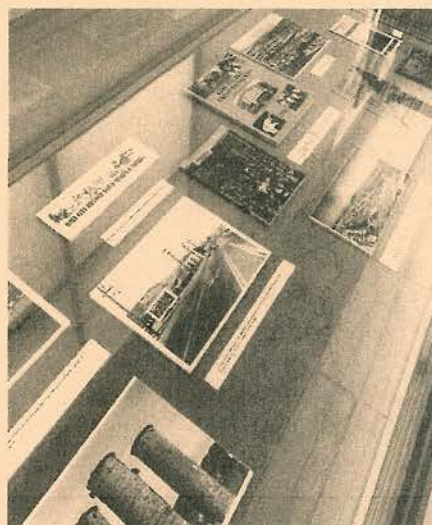
hike to Mussel Rock to view the Tobin tunnel a number of years ago. I was walking with Ed on the steep, gravel trail (now much improved) talking about traveling when I slipped and fell, Ed picked me up, and then he slipped and I picked him up. And then we slipped and slid all the way laughing.

FRANK MAFFEI

Frank Maffei died August 14th at age 88. He was born in San Francisco and graduated from Jefferson High School in Daly City. He served in the US Army from 1952 to 1960. He married Rosemary Maffei (née Dini) in 1959 and they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary this past April. He worked for Pacific Gas & Electric and retired after 41 years of service. Frank was a lifelong rail fan and historian. He was a Board Member of the Colma Historical Society and served as their railroad historian. He was also a member of The History Guild of Daly City/Colma, and the National Railway Historical Society. Frank was also an avid gardener and grew many of his own vegetables, giving many away to family and friends. Many remember Frank driving his 1972 Ford F-100 pickup that he converted to propane fuel and outfitted with a train whistle.

DAVE ZEFF

David Zeff, former longtime assistant superintendent of the Woodland School District died Aug. 7, at the age of 90. He and wife Shirley were active in the local Democratic Club and our History Guild. Dave was known for his energy, appetite for food and life, and his sense of humor. *This editor remembers running into Dave with his floppy hat at the Hardly, Barely Bluegrass Festivals in Golden Gate Park.*



Bayshore Library Creates History Exhibit

Patricia Delara of the Daly City Bayshore Library collaborated with Michael and Richard Rocchetta to create a display with photos and local books. She has ideas for future exhibits that expand the

knowledge of Bayshore History. The library is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10-6.

65 VOLUMES OF *THE DALY CITY RECORD* NOW AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCH

Perky Ramroth (the daughter of Ken and Bunny Gillespie) has delivered 65 years of bound copies of the *Daly City Record* newspaper to the Colma Museum. They are now located in the shelves in the climate controlled storeroom, safe and sound. The Colma Museum has agreed to store the archive on behalf of the History Guild, with the archive being accessible to the public on a more frequent basis than we can provide. The Colma Museum has professional storage units and can better preserve fragile newspaper documents. In 1993 the collection was donated by the San Mateo County Times and stored in the Gillespie garage until recently. The volumes go back in years to 1913. In March of 2004 the final edition was published after 93 years in print.

The Guild thanks the Gillespie family for safe storage of the collection in their garage for many years and for Perky's efforts to move the volumes to the Colma Museum. This is a true treasure trove of local history!



MARCHBANK BUILDING LIVES ON!

John Marchbank made a fortune in operating Klondike gambling houses and saloons during the Alaska Gold Rush and when he arrived in what would become Daly City in 1905, he purchased the Knowles Dairy Ranch. The ranch was later given to the city and is now known as Marchbank Park. He became great friends with the older John Daly and together they donated the first library in Daly City in 1920 (the smaller room in our current museum, later moved back and expanded with the 1938 WPA addition of a larger front room.)

Marchbank was quite the entrepreneur, owning several gambling halls, a movie theatre, a racetrack, and the newspaper known as *The Daly City Record*. His house on San Jose Avenue was also the headquarters for the newspaper and the building originally behind was The

Northern gambling house, named after his former gambling house in Fairbanks, Alaska. It was moved across the street and is now the old Eagles Hall. After his death, the home continued use for the publication of the *Record* until its demise in 2004.

The property had been neglected in recent years and used as a storage unit, despite holes in the roof. The History Guild had contacted the owners several years ago to inquire about the plans for the building, but received no response. As one of the few remaining historic buildings in Daly City, we were interested in preservation. When we heard the building had been recently sold, we feared that it would be demolished for high-rise, infill housing. Fortunately, the building has been totally renovated and will be used for several housing units and a possible retail/office space in the area that was formerly used for publication of *The Daly City Record*. According to an article in the *Daily Journal* by Joan Levy, the building is said by some to be haunted by the ghost of John Marchbank, wheeling around in his wheelchair. Marchbank had lost one leg in a mining accident in Alaska.



Note from the editor: The color scheme on the outside of the building (grey with black trim) echoes the color scheme of our own museum (colors chosen by Marilyn Olcese, former board member known for her sense of style.) The old Bank of Italy (Bank of America, Goodwill) building at the corner has also been recently painted in similar colors. It is now a pet sitting business. Let's hope this is a style trend for the Top-of-the-Hill.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

All Guild general membership meetings (2019-2020) will now be held on Sunday afternoons at 2 pm: September 15th, (no meeting in November), January 19th, March 15th, May 17th and September 20th. Our new location is the Larcombe Clubhouse at the Doelger Center.



DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

6351 Mission Street Daly City, CA 94014

650/757-7177

Open: Tuesdays and Saturdays from noon to 3 p.m.



Please visit us on Facebook at "Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive"

www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Colma Historical Association – 4th Quarter Meeting on Sunday, October 27 at 2 pm. Colma Museum, 1500 Hillside Blvd., Colma.



GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Mark Weinberger, President 650/757-7177

president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org

Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President

Marcus Gonzalez, 2nd Vice-President/Museum Director

Judith Christensen, Treasurer

Algis Ratnikas, Secretary

Directors: Michael Rocchetta, Dana Smith

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus, Bunny Gillespie (1926-2017), Secretary-Emerita, Grace and Marcus Gonzales Hospitality Crew

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

**Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive is a
501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization
Memberships begin at \$25 per year.**

Tattler Editor & production: Dana Smith

At the May meeting and lecture, an election was held and the current board was reelected for a term of two years. Dana Smith stepped down from her officer position as 2nd VP/Museum Director to be replaced by Marcus Gonzalez – she remains as a board member. Thank you all for your continued dedication to the Guild and Museum. – Mark W.