

# THE TATTERLER

JOURNAL OF DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

## GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK-

For our May general membership meeting we welcome Carol Badran, Jefferson High School alumna, who has written a book reflecting on her years there and the issue of diversity. Carol attended local schools and graduated from Jefferson in 1972. She will share her reminiscences and engage in discussions with folks who will be accompanying her to the meeting. It will be a conversational atmosphere. Carol will have copies of *Ahead of Our Time: Reflections on Diversity-- Jefferson High School, Daly City, CA, 1968 - 1972: Reflections on Diversity* for sale and to autograph.

To borrow from the author:

*In September, 1968, during the turbulent era of school bussing, protests, assassinations, and race riots, Carol Badran entered Jefferson High School in the working-class suburb of Daly City, California. Many students arrived at "Jeff" with trepidation because "everyone knew it was a rough school." In other words, it was racially and ethnically mixed. Jeff proved to be the opposite of rough-a place where people chose their friends based on personality and fights were about plain old teenage hormones like at any high school. Race or ethnicity was no barrier to becoming class president or homecoming queen.*

*Carol looked beyond the nostalgia of the high school yearbook, asking forty former classmates and teachers to reflect on how their "rough" school-more known for its laid-back culture than its academic standards-worked so well for its school community in a time when the United States was 88% White and racial conflict was rife.*

*Jeff allowed me to be me. No one ever told me I couldn't do certain things. Fern, Class of '72*

*Jefferson . . . made me unafraid of going out in the world and being around people who didn't look or sound like me. Michele, Class of '72*

*I was lucky enough to know many cultures-my friends, their parents, their food, lifestyles, etc. We're still all the same, despite these differences. Jerry, Class of '72*

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## IN-PERSON LECTURE AND MEETING

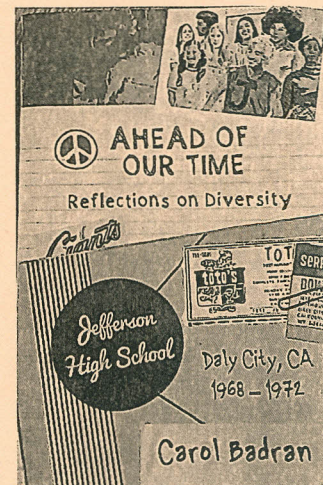
**Sunday, May 21st**

**2 pm**

**Merced Room, Westlake Park Pacelli Gym**

**CAROL BADRAN**

**Presents**



## AHEAD OF OUR TIME, REFLECTIONS ON DIVERSITY

Her book on Jefferson High School 1968-1972

**Attendees are asked to be fully vaccinated.  
This venue allows space to social distance.**

**Lots of free parking – refreshments- Raffle**



Carol Badran, MPH, worked for the San Francisco Department of Public Health for over twenty years and taught at City College of San Francisco. Today, she volunteers as a mentor with Oakland Promise, creates forms out of clay, and always celebrates diversity.

We recently received a vintage 1944 cash register from the former Val's restaurant. Local resident Caden Young contacted the museum and asked if we would be interested as he had recently acquired it. Caden works for the City of Daly City and has a great interest in local history. It is wonderful that he thought of us for a permanent home for this piece of Val's provenance. The cash register doesn't work anymore and obviously saw service during Val's earlier days, still it's a nice artifact to have on hand and a reminder of the late eating establishment that graced Daly City for more than 70 years. Thank you again, Caden. If any members have photos or remembrances of Val's to share, we would be most grateful.

Our proposed slate of officers and directors for our May elections is as follows:

- Mark Weinberger, President
- Richard Rocchetta, First Vice President
- Marcus Gonzalez, Second Vice President/Museum Director
- Judith Christensen, Treasurer
- Michael Rocchetta, Director
- Dana Smith, Director

Unfortunately, we have not found anyone to fill the slot of Secretary, previously held by the late Algis Ratnikas, nor have there been any inquiries among the membership after seeking nominations in the March *Tattler*. Nominations may take place from the floor. A quick reminder that, per the bylaws, there are a couple of requirements to serving on the board. Board members must document a minimum of three hours once a month on either a Saturday or a Tuesday [if we are to restore that day]; also, an individual must have been a member in good standing for a minimum of 60 days prior to election. The primary responsibility of the Secretary is to take abbreviated minutes at four board meetings a year.

Just a reminder, if you have a notice label that you have not renewed your membership for 2023, this will be your last *Tattler*. We hope you stay with us... every membership keeps our all-volunteer, all privately funded organization continuing. We truly value each and every member!

## GUILD TO LEAD BRODERICK-TERRY DUEL SITE TOUR FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY VICTORIAN DAYS—SATURDAY, JULY 15 @ NOON

Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive president Mark Weinberger will lead a tour of the famous but often overlooked Broderick-Terry Duel site located in the tiny park of the same name situated near Lake Merced and on the San Francisco-Daly City border. The tour will take place within this small park which abuts the San Francisco Golf Club. Visitors will view a plaque, State Landmark Number 19, and granite shafts which tell of the notorious duel that took place on September 13, 1859. A story will unfold about how former CA Supreme Court Chief Justice David S. Terry mortally wounded U.S. Senator David C. Broderick in part over the issue of slavery. This was the official final duel in CA. After the tour concludes, participants are invited to visit the Daly City History Museum located a short distance away on Mission Street where light refreshments will be served by Guild directors Dana Smith and Judith Christensen. Tour will begin just outside the park entrance at 80 El Portal Way, off of Cliffside Drive. Street parking is plentiful. Please join us! RSVPs requested: [president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org](mailto:president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org) or museum phone: 650-757-7177.

## DALY CITY'S FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER By Richard Rocchetta



MR. CURLISS



Back in March the Guild received an email from a film maker in Rhode Island, Christian de Rezendes. He is the creator of a documentary series on Rhode Island PBS called "Slatersville: America's First Mill Village". He had completed season one of the series and was in post production on season two. He wrote that part of one of the episodes will focus on a man named Doug Curliss who was from that village. He further stated that Curliss had later changed his name to Black-Eagle Sun and in the late 1950s/early 60s he became the first African American teacher in Daly City! He didn't know the name of the school and asked the Guild if we had any photos, articles or headlines in our archives pertaining to Mr. Curliss.

When Guild president Mark Weinberger forwarded the email to the board, the name sounded very familiar to me. I did remember a teacher who taught Special Education when I attended (then) Colma Intermediate School, now Pollicita Middle School. Sure enough, I went to my yearbooks for 1962 and 1963/64 and there he was, the home room teacher for the Special Education class. There are some yearbooks at the Colma Museum and Mr. Curliss is not in the 1960/61 yearbook and last appeared in the 1966 yearbook. So we can assume that he taught the Special Ed class for four years at the school.

We did send the film maker a photo of Doug Curliss and what little information I could provide. If any of our members knows any further information on this pioneer teacher in the Jefferson Elementary School District, please email the Guild at [info@Daly City History Museum.org](mailto:info@Daly City History Museum.org).

You can watch the 11-episode series at [pbs.org](http://pbs.org) and the website for the documentary is [firstmillvillage.com](http://firstmillvillage.com).



## SAN FRANCISCO STORY

San Francisco historian Woody LaBounty, longtime director of the Western Neighborhoods Project and more recently a top administrator for San Francisco Heritage, has a personal history project called "San Francisco Story," described as "San Francisco History and Tall Tales from Woody LaBounty." This is a personal side project "done for fun," and not affiliated with any organization.

At [www.sanfranciscostory.com](http://www.sanfranciscostory.com) you can subscribe for free to his online stories and also pay a fee to join special events hosted by Woody. While at Western Neighborhoods, he led the herculean effort to scan over 50,000 historical images now available online at [OpenSFHistory.org](http://OpenSFHistory.org). You can get lost for hours exploring these images.

In a recent "Tall Tale," Woody wrote about a Daly City historical character, Mother Minerva. Below are excerpts from his story. To read in its entirety, along with a fascinating trove of other tales, visit his website (and sign up for future stories)

## MOTHER MINERVA'S FORT

By Woody LaBounty, April 19, 2023

Following the April 1906 earthquake and fire, 5,610 cottages were constructed in San Francisco city parks, built to house more than 16,000 thousand people who needed shelter and services. When the camps closed the following year, most of these relief cottages or "refugee shacks" were relocated to private property throughout San Francisco and beyond. In their new locations the humble green cabins were cobbled together, added onto, shingled over, and many can still be found today.

The state was widening El Camino Real [and Mission Street] at the Daly City/Colma border... This required cutting into a hill where Mrs. Minerva Hartman's home of three connected earthquake shacks stood. The highway folks wanted her to take a buyout and move. Hartman, who made her living by telling the fortunes of passing travelers, refused. She defended her property with a Colt revolver and a masterful public relations campaign featuring an implausible but colorful life story.



Minerva Hartman beneath her home of earthquake shacks in 1927. (Emiliano Echeverria/Randolph Brandt Collection, [OpenSFHistory/wnp30.0053](http://OpenSFHistory/wnp30.0053))

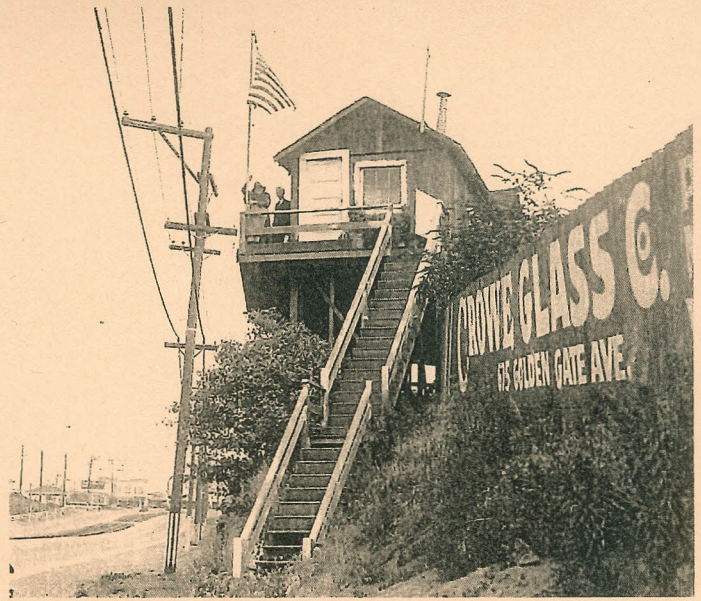
Minerva told reporters she was 94 years old and had lost all her belonging in the 1906 fire after arriving from Philadelphia just three weeks before the quake. She said she was a former nurse who had served in the U.S. Civil War, Spanish-American War, and even the Crimean War (1853-1856), where she befriended the world's



most famous nurse, Florence Nightingale. She cast herself as a pension-less veteran because the two neglectful nations she served—Britain and the United States—didn't bother to keep records for nurses. "Mother Minerva" wore an old Army campaign hat... Her oversized coat was strewn with ribbons and medals. Each morning she raised an American flag on a pole outside her door. She told tales to schoolchildren and veterans about her experiences at the battle of Shiloh and how her late husband Louis Washington Hartman commanded the USS *Cumberland* for the North. She remembered sitting on Abraham Lincoln's knee as a girl and had a doll's chair which he whittled for her as a Christmas gift in 1835. She knew presidents Garfield, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, and Harding as children. She served with General Custer and just missed Little Big Horn because a storm detained her from joining him. In 1902, Congress gave her a trip around the world for her service to the country and anointed her "Mother of the Army and the Navy." Or so she said... These stories were not fact-checked. They were too good for the newspaper reporters to try to disprove. Here was an old woman fighting for her home, which now had a sign reading "Minerva's Fort."

Minerva Hartman was probably really Minerva J. Hartzman. With that extra "z" in her last name she did seem to have done some private nursing and worked for the war department in the early 1900s as a seamstress. She reported her age as 46 years old in the 1900 U.S. Census, a bit young to have toiled alongside Florence Nightingale in the Crimea. Her maiden name may have been Ballou. She had been married at least twice, divorced at least once, and worked as a dressmaker in Philadelphia before showing up in San Francisco about 1903.

But the stories did the job. A compromise was reached, supposedly thanks to "longtime friend," Governor James Rolph. Hartman's home remained mostly in place, elevated above the excavated hillside on stilts. The arrangement certainly wouldn't comply with any modern building codes. There was a 39-step climb to get to her front door, and the rickety "shacks on stilts" hung three dozen feet above the roadside. If she lost some of her fortune-telling customers who couldn't make the climb, the indefatigable Mother Minerva at least won her house. She became a folk hero and her elevated domicile a local tourist attraction. Of course, some complained that she had slowed down a nice highway-widening project... The story of Minerva's triumph over the State of California, her unbelievable resume, and her—gumption seems the right word?—was retold from Connecticut to Australia. When she (purportedly) turned 99, then 100 years old, wire stories went out across the country.



Mother Minerva raising the flag, circa 1927. (Emiliano Echeverria/Randolph Brandt Collection, [OpenSFHistory/wnp30.0127](https://www.openSFHistory.com/wnp30.0127))

After a celebrated decade giving talks to women's clubs and school groups, being the guest of honor at mother's day breakfasts and veterans' reunions, Hartman died in her fort on March 25, 1937. An oil lamp tipped over, setting her house on fire, and she suffocated before the flames could be extinguished. Minerva was eulogized around the world with the life story she made up for herself: the oldest surviving war nurse, 104 years old, friend of many presidents, and the "Mother of the Army and Navy."

Plans to bury her in the Presidio's National Cemetery were balked when Washington said it could find no sign of her war record, so Mother Minerva was interred at Olivet Memorial Park, just a stone's throw away from her longtime home. A group of Spanish-American war veterans presided over her services. San Mateo County, unable to identify any heirs, sold the parcel which once held Minerva's Fort at public auction for \$200 in 1938.

Thanks to the late Rich Higgins at Caltrans and the late Russell Brabec, historian, and our friends at the Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive for sharing Minerva history with me.

Editor's note: The late Bunny Gillespie told Rich Rocchetta and I that Minerva had been her babysitter when she was a small child. Bunny also told me that the drainpipe from Ft. Minerva emptied under the fort to splash to the ground far below and became the site of pranks for school children. From an annexation map at the museum, it seems that the area where the fort stood was annexed by Daly City between 1927 and 1931. Previously the area was an unincorporated area known as Colma. Not to be confused with the town of Colma which incorporated in 1924.



**A SPECIAL THANKS:** To Richard and Michael Rocchetta for facilitating the delivery of the Val's cash register and a service visit from O'Kells's Fireplace Services to tune up our museum gas fireplace. The service man was the same person who installed the fireplace more than a decade ago. Thanks to Mark Weinberger for his efforts to secure an artifact donation from Val's restaurant.

**WANNA RIDE IN MY MERCEDES?**

By Dana Smith

If you are like me, you too may have just won 5 million dollars in a special Lottery AND Publisher's Clearing House sweepstakes. An excited recorded voice announced my winnings in several recent phone messages. And not only that, but I also won a new Mercedes and \$5,000 a month for life. You can't beat that! Hmmm... I've never played the lottery and I don't subscribe to Clearing House magazines... and hey isn't someone is suppose to knock on my door with a huge oversized check! My "smart" phone was even wary telling me "suspected scam." If you connect with these scammers, you will be asked to pay some fee or taxes and give private banking information to facilitate a transfer of your "winnings." I worked for 10 years in an elder abuse prevention program at the Institute on Aging in San Francisco and we frequently held seminars for seniors on how to avoid financial fraud. Our go to speaker was then District Attorney (now our US Vice President) Kamala Harris. From my experience, it seems that there has been an uptick in the number of scam phone calls lately in our area. There is a lot of information online about scams, here is one:

[www.retireguide.com/guides/senior-scams/](http://www.retireguide.com/guides/senior-scams/)

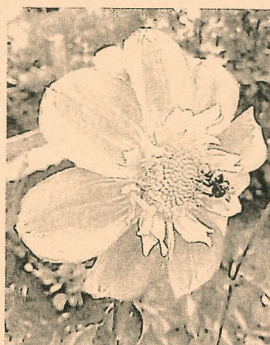


In 1957 Rudie's Redwood Room re-opened by new owner Val Connely and was later taken over by the Taylor brothers in 1975.

Val's Restaurant and Lounge welcomed diners for over half a century and was an icon for fine dining in the Bay Area with the retro-cool decor of leatherette booths, dark woodwork and great fireplace. Under the Taylor family, Val's was known for steaks, prime rib, Val's famous rack of lamb, seafood and pasta. Head chef Ignacio Anaya kept the kitchen churning for over 25 years. Members of the professional staff had all been with Val's for many

years. Almost any time of the day and night, you would see owners Jeff and Greg Taylor tending bar or turning it over to 15-year veteran bartender Don while they talked with customers. Val's was known for their Sports Bar, Happy Hour, Live Karaoke and Early Dinner Specials. The Taylor family retired in 2022. A marijuana dispensary will be opening at the site, expected in 2023.

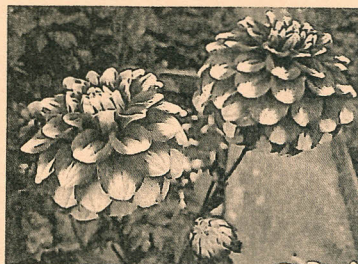
This billboard featuring Nelson Mandella just appeared above the Masonic lodge on Mission St., produced by the Foundation For a better Life, a non-profit that produces inspiring messages on donated media space.



**MAY LECTURE RAFFLE TO INCLUDE SPROUTING DAHLIA BULBS!**

Guilder and gardener Fred Stevens has been busy dividing dahlia bulbs in his garden to donate to our May raffle. These bulbs will be ready to plant for summer/fall blooms. Photos of what the bulb will look like

when in bloom and Fred's special planting and care instructions will be included. (Fred is a member of the SF Dahlia Society.)

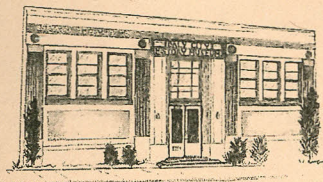


Daly City has a long association with dahlias. John Daly's personal passion was gardening. He welcomed visitors to his violet and dahlia garden in a small tract of

land he continued owning after selling nearly all his land in Daly City. The garden was located between Mission St. and San Jose Avenue. In 1911, when the newly incorporated city voted to be named in his honor, he personally presented every woman in town with one of his dahlias.

John Meussdorffer, a Swiss immigrant who made his fortune selling hats to miners during the Goldrush, had a country estate in the Crocker area which predated incorporation of the city by thirty years. George Washington School now occupies the site. The Meussdorffers displayed their prize winning dahlias at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island.





**DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM  
& ARCHIVE**

6351 Mission Street Daly City, CA 94014

650/757-7177

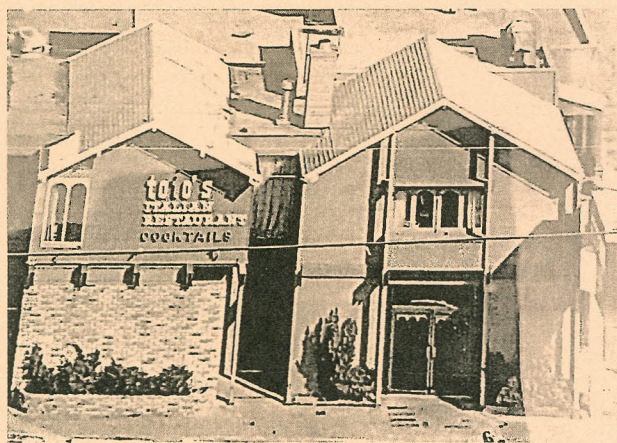
OPEN SATURDAYS NOON – 3 PM



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

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

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**



Editor: Do you remember Toto's, a long-gone iconic restaurant formerly on Junipero Serra lost to redevelopment eminent domain over 20 years ago? When my sister Judith and I moved our parents down from Washington State into a new house we built for them on San Diego Avenue, this was our go-to place. As you walked in, to the right behind the counter pizza cooks would be tossing the dough in the air. To the left was the Joe Montana Room, a cross between a shrine and a cocktail lounge where you could wait for a table to open up. Great longtime waitresses... the place was so noisy with families having a great time that my parents would take out their hearing aids. Toto's still operates three other locations: San Bruno, Belmont, and now San Francisco.

**GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

**Mark Weinberger, President** (Facebook, Programs)

650/757-7177 [president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org](mailto:president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

**Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President** (Raffle)

**Marcus Gonzalez, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President/Museum Director**  
(programs)

**Judith Christensen, Treasurer** (membership)

**Secretary – vacant**

**Directors: Michael Rocchetta** (database, mailing labels)

**Dana Smith** (Tattler editor and production)

Grace and Marcus Gonzalez Hospitality Crew

Raymond Jue photographer

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

**Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive is an  
all -volunteer 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.**

**Memberships begin at \$25 per year.**