

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

### GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

This will be our last meeting before the summer recess; we will resume in September. The May meeting is the first of our 'golf course-country club' meetings. We hope to bring you the histories of the other great courses in the immediate area in the near future. For our first in this series, we felt it only appropriate to start with the Lake Merced Golf Club, which is completely surrounded by Daly City as an island unto itself. [As a quick aside, I caddied there very briefly the summer before starting high school in what was one of my very first jobs.] The Lake Merced Golf Club got its start in 1922--formed in San Francisco's famous Merchants Exchange Building. It was created on 140 acres of property that was purchased from the Spring Valley Water Company. The legendary Dr. Alister MacKenzie designed the 1920s era golf course. In later years the course would be redesigned twice more. It is worth noting in this time of severe drought that in 2003 the course converted to reclaimed water for irrigation and constructed a state of the art water storage and distribution system. We hope you can join us as we welcome Lake Merced Golf Club General Manager Donna Otis, who will expand on these points of the club and reveal still more of this venerable institution's fascinating history.

If you haven't visited the museum lately I want to remind you that we have a great many artifacts on permanent display. In addition, the great Daly City Timeline exhibit is our museum centerpiece (designed by museum director Dana Smith, for which she received her Master's in Museum Studies from San Francisco State University). This fascinating history traces Daly City through the ages from prehistoric times to the present. If you haven't had the chance to view this captivating history, be sure to treat yourself but be forewarned: make sure you have some time to spend during your visit as this compelling history takes a while to completely read through. You may want to visit a few decades at a time and return to the museum for future visits. We also play a nine minute history of Daly City that takes you to the year 2001--"90 Years in Nine Minutes."

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## HISTORY EVENING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20<sup>TH</sup> AT 7 PM  
101 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City  
Doelger Center Cafe

**LAKE MERCED GOLF CLUB  
GENERAL MANAGER DONNA OTIS**

*Lectures on the History of*

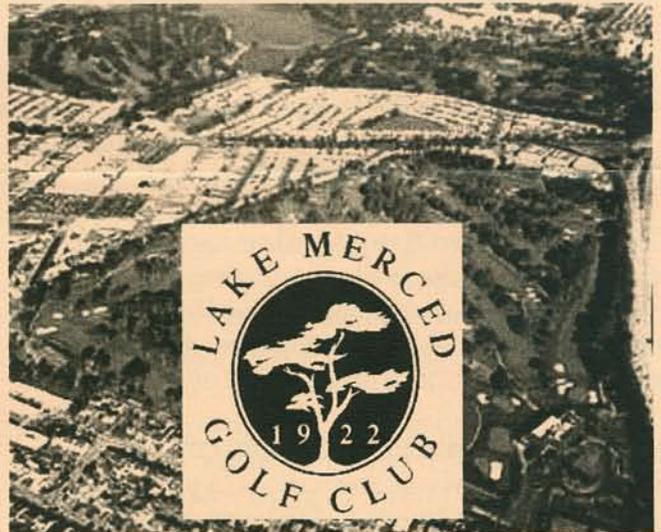


Photo showing the club surrounded by Daly City homes. John Daly Blvd. is the strip of trees at the top, with Westlake Shopping Center in the upper left corner and the southern edge of Lake Merced in the distance. *Photo LMGC.*

The Swinging Skirts LPGA Classic returned to the Lake Merced Golf Club April 20-26, 2015! Our program is closely following the excitement of this world championship competition.

Refreshments will be provided by **Thomas Galvin, June Neuhaus, and Pat Hatfield**. Thanks to these donors and our gracious Hospitality Chair, **Annette Hipona**.

This was created by the late Guild co-founder, Ken Gillespie. Portions of the 2011 Daly City Centennial DVD that we sell may also be viewed. Finally, be sure to complete your visit with a stop at our museum gift shop, which carries everything from selected titles by local authors to first-day commemorative postage from Daly City's 75th anniversary in 1986 to vintage blank note cards, and more. Remember that membership has its privileges. Guild members receive a 20% discount on all merchandise that we offer in the gift shop and at meetings. Simply show us your 2015 membership card, sent with renewals. If you've already visited the museum, why not treat yourself and a friend or two to another visit. There is always something new to discover in your community's local history. Hours and information are on the top of this newsletter and on our web site [dalycityhistorymuseum.org](http://dalycityhistorymuseum.org). We hope to see you [again] soon.

We were saddened to hear of the recent death of Bob St. Clair, former Daly City Council Member, former 49ers offensive tackle and Hall of Famer. Bob featured prominently in the Guild's documentary "Growing up in America: Daly City." An excerpt from that film featuring the interview with Bob is on our Facebook page.

## MAY IS GUILD ELECTION TIME

Thanks to all current Board Members and officers who have agreed to run for re-election and were unanimously approved for the board approved slate. No other member contacted Election Chair Rich Rocchetta to express interest in running for an office or seat on the Board.

**A CALL FOR MUSEUM DOCENTS** - We are in need of several new museum docents to pair with experienced Board Members. Minimum commitment is one three-hour docent duty per month. Call or email Dana Smith, Museum Director, at 650-892-2166, [director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org](mailto:director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

## REMEMBERING BOB ST. CLAIR

Former 49ers offensive tackle Bob St. Clair and the youngest person to serve on the Daly City Council died Monday in Santa Rosa in mid-April at age 84.

During his 11-year career with the 49ers, Mr. St. Clair, 6-foot-9 and 270 pounds, was known for his toughness, his large size and his large personality. An article in the *SF Chronicle* relates how he once played an entire quarter with a broken shoulder and stayed in a game after a blocked kick resulted in the loss of five teeth. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1990. During reconstruction of Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, former home of the San Francisco 49ers, a

replica of the original concrete arch bearing the name "Kezar Stadium" was built on the west side of the stadium with a plaque honoring Bob St. Clair who played 11 seasons (1953-63) there. Bob grew up in the Mission District and Ingleside, and moved to Daly City to raise his family.

When St. Clair attended USF and was a member of one of the best college football teams in Bay Area history, the 1951 Dons, Mr. St. Clair, running back Ollie Matson and defensive end Gino Marchetti declined to play in a bowl game because their two African American players were not allowed to play.

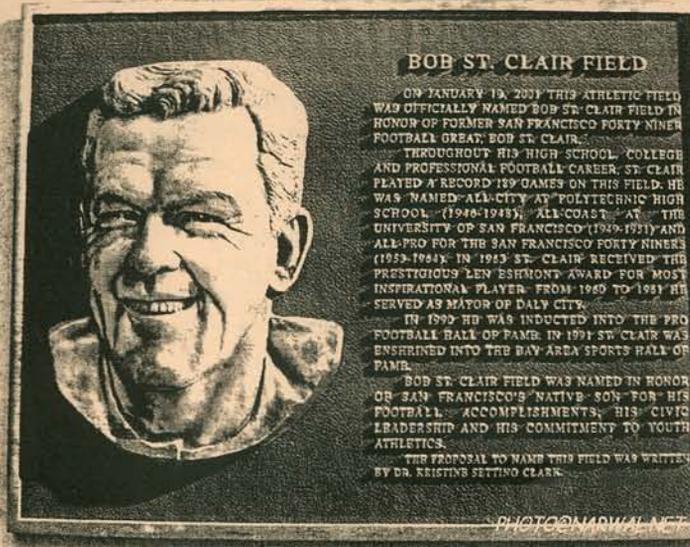


Daly City Council 1961, Bob St. Clair sitting as Mayor. Notice photo of President John F. Kennedy between flags.

In 1956 St. Clair moved to Daly City's Westlake District with his family. With his six children in Daly City public schools, he became involved in the PTA and school politics. During the latter part of his career, he served as the mayor of Daly City (1958-64) at age 28, the youngest person ever to serve on the Council. After he retired, he was an elected member of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors (1966-74) and eventually settled in Santa Rosa.

Anne Jennings (Western Neighborhoods Project) remembers Bob from 1954 when she lived across the street from in San Francisco. "Bob was like a big kid - we still tell the 'lion story.' Bob would hide in the garage - we would slowly open the garage door and he would roar like a lion. One day he thought it was us - it was the mailman. Poor guy dropped his mailbag and ran." Guild Board Member Marcus Gonzalez remembers Bob's visits to elementary school in 1961. "He was the biggest person any of us had ever seen... Bob seemed to fill up the room with his stature and his friendly, gentlemanly presence... At the time, Bob was the Mayor of Daly City. He lived with his family on Ocean Grove near Westmoor High School. Back then, football players didn't make mega-salaries. They lived among ordinary people... most had to take some other kind of job in the off-season."

Plaque at Keezar Stadium naming the playing field after St. Clair.



## OTHER HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

**Colma Historical Association:** April 28<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Meeting, 6:30 pm, 1500 Hillside Blvd., Colma.

### **Cypress Lawn Heritage Foundation:**

**Lecture Series (FREE):** All lectures begin at 2 pm at the Cypress Lawn's Reception Center, 1370 El Camino Real, Colma. Light Refreshments.

May 17 – *Convicting the Not Guilty – Lizzie Borden and Fatty Arbuckle.* Lecturer: Michael Svanevik

June 21 – *Taming the Bleak Desert—A History of Golden Gate Park.* Lecturer: John Freeman

**Walking Tour Schedule (FREE):** Scheduled tours are held on Saturdays and start at 1:30 pm near the Noble Chapel (located on Cypress Lawn's East Gardens).  
*Light Refreshments.*

May 16 – *The Magnificent Angels of Cypress Lawn*  
Docent: Terry Hamburg

June 20 – *A Celebration of Vintners and Liquor Merchants* Docent: Terry Hamburg

July 11 – *Real Estate Moguls at Cypress Lawn*  
Docent: Terry Hamburg

July 25 – *In the Footsteps of Paul Bunyan*  
Docent: Michael Svanevik

August 8 – *Victorian Days Heritage Tour*  
Docent: Terry Hamburg

August 22 – *Landmarks and Destinations*  
Docent: Terry Hamburg



### **Bear Tracks, A Local Legend**

By Dana Smith

In the Late 1920s hobo encampments were located near the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks along Junipero Serra Blvd. between

Hillcrest Avenue and the Colma produce sheds. In 1935-1939 the Great Dust Bowl in Kansas, Arkansas,

Oklahoma, Texas and other states caused a big migration to California. Poverty and unemployment led to men hopping rides on trains and living homeless near the railroad tracks – they were known as “hobos.” Recently, two visitors to the Daly City History Museum in one day mentioned a well known hobo “Bear Tracks,” who frequented the Top-of-the-Hill area in the 1950s and 60s.

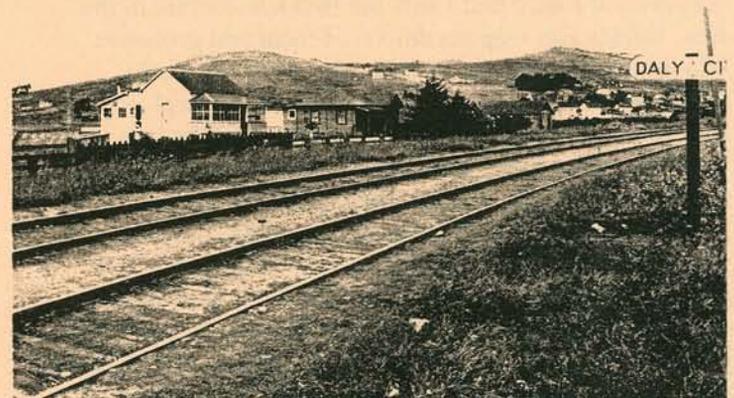
Rick Bailly, who lived on Santa Cruz Avenue, first mentioned Bear Tracks as a hobo who frequented the area from the train tracks on Junipero Serra Blvd. to the Top-of-the-Hill area in the 1950s and 1960s. Rick said that Bear Tracks was a Native American who was found dead in the doorway of a pool hall located where Centennial Plaza exists today. The Red Carpet Pool Hall was upstairs, and a meat market and hardware store was located at street level. An unusual snow fall and cold weather likely led to the death of Bear Tracks. Rick recalled on Tuesday nights the local Hells Angels had meetings at the Red Carpet Pool Hall and the doors were locked and pool contests were held with large bets on the winner. Some people would win up to \$1,500 in a night.

Later in the same day Ed Larious visited the museum. Ed is on the selection committee for the Daly City Hall of Fame for athletes. He also remembered Bear Tracks, saying that anyone who lived in DC in the 50s or 60s would remember him. “He was legendary” as a friendly fixture at a liquor store and market at Knowles and Junipero Serra Blvd., near the train tracks. At that time, Ed was a teenager who thought that the name was “Bare Tracks,” relating to the train tracks. Ed recalled that Bear Tracks was popular with the local teens for helping them buy alcohol at the liquor store.

Both Rick and Ed recalled their adventures hopping the Southern Pacific train for short rides down the Peninsula. Do any of our Guild members remember Bear Tracks and his tragic end in a snow storm in Daly City? Or hopping the SP train for adventure? Send your remembrances and stories

[director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org](mailto:director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

Southern Pacific Daly City train station in 1911, where the BART station now stands.



## OUR APPRECIATION

Thank you to: **Al Hipona** for dropping by to remove a dead tree from the front of the museum; **Don Grant** donated a copy of the book "The Last Whistle, Ocean Shore Railroad;" **Marian Mann** donated vintage cocktail glasses and memorabilia from the Gateway Festival; **Gary Speer** donated three double-drawer file cabinets; **Jimmie Farras** donated a photo and menu of the Daly City Coffee Shop, owned by his grandparents; **Michael Rocchetta** is working on a special project to catalog our entire collection of *Tattlers*, reproducing missing copies from the collection of the Colma Historical Association; and **Algis Ranikas** for taking on the upgrading of our computer system. Don't miss the article by **Bunny Gillespie** on Pop Savage, the early day superintendent of DC elementary schools in the city's spring *Fog Cutter* newsletter.

## LOOKING BACK... THE WAY IT WAS IN 1912

*Note from Editor: I am reprinting excerpts from a document in the History Guild archive dated 1984, typed on a manual typewriter, but without the name of the author.*

These are the memories of a very young child who moved to Daly City from San Francisco in 1912. My parents, three brothers and I arrived here on a dismal, foggy day. Our home at 145 Santa Cruz Avenue was a shell of a house with unfinished walls. The house was surrounded by empty lots, muddy or dusty unpaved streets and no sidewalks. There was no gas or electricity in our home (that came soon after). As far as I could see, there were truck gardens with a house here or there...and violets grown by Mr. Lungi who paid us five cents a bunch if we wanted to help pick them. We played games in the lots and yes, we sometimes built a small fire there if we were able to sneak some potatoes from home. They would be burned, but tasted so good to us!

The "Top-of-the-Hill" was the business center of the old city. All streetcar lines from S.F. ended here... I can't remember the date that I saw the first automobile in the area. Horses and wagons delivered meat and groceries... I do remember what an event it was when my uncle drove up to the house in a Model T Ford. Several saloons were lined up at the end of the streetcar line. Tired men who had worked ten to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, stopped there. I can remember several fathers weaving home some evenings. There were no unions, no health plans, no Workmen's Compensation and no vacations. Yet these men made a great effort to organize a Volunteer Fire Department and joined community organizations, attended meetings, and worked toward a city government.

In my early years, gas, electricity and paved streets finally arrived. There were no locked doors and neighbors helped neighbors. My mother and her friends

had vegetable gardens, rabbits, chickens and one or two goats that were tethered in the adjoining lot during the day. Yes, all our food was very fresh and was shared with some of the unfortunate people around us.

...We had plenty of space for playing and we made our own toys. My brothers built a bike and coasters from materials found at the dump. All children were welcomed in neighboring homes where they were offered delicious bread and butter and apples. If mothers were out or delayed, a neighbor always had an open door... Lake Merced had some small adjoining lakes where many of the boys went rafting, and often played Tarzan. Amazing that no one ever drowned.

On Santa Barbara Avenue, Santa Cruz Avenue and Hillcrest Drive, there was a small Yugoslav community. All had moved from San Francisco and had originally come from Dubrovnik. I remember the Markovich family on Santa Barbara Avenue, Jack Medo and Jack Osen, and on Santa Cruz Avenue was the Sanbrailo Family and on Hillcrest was the Cec family and others. They were a close knit group who shared their lives and customs.

All these people were determined to be good Americans. They loved America and worked hard to earn their citizenship papers. I wonder how they found time to attend school to study for those tests. I will never forget the night my father came home with his final citizenship papers. I still treasure that document. He sat us around the table, four of us and mother, and showed us the paper and then read it to us. He and his family were Americans! Sometimes during the year, probably in September, all the Slavs had tons of grapes delivered to the front of the house with a grape press. Everyone helped his neighbor with the process, it was a great neighborhood event... Kite Hill off of Santa Barbara and Hillcrest is where many children flew their kites during kite season. It is now covered with buildings. That hill was covered with lupine, buttercups, poppies and pansies in the spring. No more – all gone. We made our kites from sticks, newspaper, paste made from flour, and torn sheets for the tails. What a sight to see the water flume that was there, lined with children.



1910, wide open spaces in what would soon become Daly City.

*Note: If you know who the author may be of this history, please contact [director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org](mailto:director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org)*

## ITALIAN FARMERS IN DALY CITY/COLMA AND THE COLUMBO MARKET



Editor's Note: In Gary Kamiya's March 1<sup>st</sup> "Portals of the Past" series in the *SF Chronicle* "Arch all that's left of once-busy market" he recalls the Colombo Market where farmers from Daly City/Colma sold produce from 1874-1965. The information below is based in part on his article. Notice the horse-drawn wagons.

A new two-part, four-hour documentary series "The Italian Americans," premiered on PBS in February and has led to a renewed interest in Italian immigration to the United States. Italian nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi led the movement to complete the unification of Italy in 1871. The Italian Diaspora (large migration) in the period between the unification of Italy and the rise of Italian Fascism during the 1920s was due to the extreme economic difficulties. Half of the emigrants went to the United States. Visit the PBS for a schedule of repeat broadcasts: <http://www.pbs.org/the-italian-americans/watch>

**Italians in the Daly City/Colma Area:** In the 1860s Italian immigration to America slowly began a shopping area known as Colma developed at the confluence of Mission Trail and Old San Pedro Road where a Mr. Joseph J. Hill, County Assessor and Tax Collector, built a general store with bar, post office, and county tax office in 1861. Early farmers would haul their crops, mostly potatoes, to San Francisco with ox teams. They would change their teams of oxen or horses at Hill's store, and continue on the easier route with a team of fewer animals. When returning, they would re-hitch and continue over the mountains to the adjoining valley. Hill eventually sold to Salvatore Belli, an Italian immigrant from Tuscany area of northern Italy. The 1863-1877 potato blight in the area then known as "Happy Valley" ruined the crops of Irish farmers who sold to Italians from San Francisco. The Italians grew diverse crops with improved seed which proved more successful. By 1894 the Colma Vegetable Growers reported shipping 1,742,825 pounds of cabbage from the region. In 1895 Mansueto and Silvio Belli's Victorian two-story Colma Pioneer Store was constructed next to the original Hill property. The enlarged store sold general merchandise with a saloon where spirits and a free lunch of meats and

cheeses were served daily. Hay, grain, wood and coal were sold in a large barn behind the store. Immigrants arriving from Italy at the Ferry in San Francisco often asked for direction to Belli's in Colma. In the 1890s many Italian farmers changed from vegetable farming to hog ranching, including the Gaggero and Olcese families. (*The Belli building changed in appearance over time with stucco replacing the original wood siding. In 1970 the building was demolished and a Walgreen's now stands at the location.*)

### The Columbo Market at the San Francisco Embarcadero:

*San Francisco Call*, May 1891: "There is decidedly more of the picturesque than the genteel ... when the enclosure is filled, as it sometimes is, with heaps of cabbages to a height of eight or ten feet from the ground, alternating with red beets and vegetables of every kind and hue, the subject challenges the brush of the artist as strongly as anything in the city or county."

At first the Italian farmers set up stacks of produce on the sidewalks of Sansome Street, hauled from the countryside in two to six horse wagons. They soon outgrew this arrangement and organized the San Francisco and San Mateo Ranchers' Association to construct the Colombo Market two blocks east of the old sidewalk market. A mysterious brick arch on the sidewalk next to Front Street on the west side of Sydney Walton Square at the Golden Gateway complex near the Embarcadero is all that remains of the bustling, Italian Columbo Market. For decades this was the city's main produce market built in 1874 by Italians from Genoa in Northern Italy. This arch was a gateway to an old world style market with stalls for horses and 76 large stalls for produce lit by gas lanterns covering a one block area.

Due to the late unification of Italy, many immigrants identified more with the region or city that they had come from, rather than identifying as Italians. The local Italian community was primarily from Genoa in northern Italy, a cosmopolitan and prosperous seaport city in Liguria, compared to the more rural and poor areas to the south of Rome. Used to trading, the Genoese soon controlled both farming and food distribution in the Bay Area and hired Italians from other regions, such as Luccans from the city of Lucca, to work under them, peddling vegetables from carts or street stalls. Gas lights were needed because much of the work began in the dark at 3 a.m. It took about an hour to unload the wagons, and around 4 a.m. the Genoese dialect was replaced by the Florentine dialect of the Luccans as the Genoese returned to their farms and the Luccans sold the produce. By 9 a.m. the market was winding down.

*Note: The spirit of "campanilismo" (loyalty to a former city-state or region) was prominent among Italian American immigrants who did not strongly identify with the Italian nation.*



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

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



Below, only the brick arch of the old Columbo Market remains after 1960s redevelopment in San Francisco at the entrance to Sydney Walton Square, the private/public park of the Golden Gateway Apartments. Nothing indicates its origin. The vintage badge, superimposed over the photo of the arch, was produced by the Vegetable Growers' Association and is from the Colma Museum archive.



### GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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**Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President**  
**Dana Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President/Museum Director**  
**Judith Christensen, Treasurer**  
**Algis Ratnikas, Secretary**

**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.**

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