

# THE TATTLER

## JOURNAL OF DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

### GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

On behalf of the officers and board of directors, I want to wish everyone a happy new year. We hope the holiday season was a festive, happy, and healthy one for you and yours.

For our January Birthday Celebration, we are pleased to welcome Jack Palmer, longtime Daly City resident, elder statesman and historian of the venerable Crocker Masonic Lodge 212 at 17 Hillcrest Drive; the lodge, dedicated in 1936, is located across the street from the museum at the corner of Hillcrest Drive and Mission Street. Jack is a wealth of knowledge about both the formation of the lodge and the historic structure that houses it. While Daly City has no official historically landmarked or protected properties, this building is most worthy of such designation. It is a classic example of an art deco edifice, with onyx ceramic tile adorning the main entrance and ornate insignias placed toward the roofline. Also, there are leaded stained glass windows that capture the various Masonic emblems. Fluted and Doric linear lines in the facade, both vertical and horizontal, grace the Hillcrest Drive and Mission Street sides of the building. Finally, there is a commemorative granite plaque that was dedicated in the 1980s by Yerba Buena Chapter No. 1, E Clampus Vitus and Crocker Lodge No. 454 & A.M. This plaque, with artwork by our late President Emeritus Ken Gillespie, was prepared at the pioneer Colma monument shop of Donohoe & Carrol. It is secured to the Hillcrest Drive side of the property and reads: Near this site from 1868-1907 was the 250 acre San Mateo Dairy ranch operated by pioneer resident John Donald Daly, for whom Daly City was named upon incorporation of the city in 1911. Among his philanthropic gestures was the opening of his Daly's Hill property to refugees of the disastrous 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. We believe this will be a most stimulating meeting, highlighting both the art deco lodge and the illustrious history of one of our nation's most indelible fraternal orders, which can trace its roots all the way back to the founding of our nation and indeed even earlier.

Thank you to everyone who either renewed or joined the Guild for the first time. An extra special thanks if you chose to increase your level of membership support. It really does help us to keep the museum operating as best we can. Our recent efforts to increase membership with an exchange

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### DAYTIME HISTORY LECTURE AND CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 2 PM

**JACK PALMER**

Presents

### *HISTORY OF CROCKER MASONIC LODGE 212 AND DALY CITY MASONS*

Masons Stephen Buck and Jack Palmer [right]



Doelger Center Café  
101 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City

Everyone welcome – loads of free Parking –  
Refreshments

*The Guild is celebrating our 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary since  
incorporation as a non-profit organization!*

mailing with the Daly City Library Associates and our special gift membership offer have resulted in 20 new members! A reminder that your board is the volunteer staff that keeps the doors open. Seven of us strive to make sure that the museum is accessible every Tuesday and Saturday of the year [except legal holidays] and that your questions, whether asked in person, by telephone, or email, are answered in a timely manner. We are always looking for additional volunteers to help us with docent duties and special projects. Slots are available either Tuesdays or Saturdays, noon to 3pm on both days. We promise a fun experience while pairing you with one of our regular docents. If you would like to help out, please contact Museum Director Dana Smith,

director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org.  
Please mark your calendars for our remaining 2019 general membership meetings: March 20, May 15, and September 18.

Finally, we want to give a GIANT thank you to newly retired Council Member Judith Christensen, our Treasurer. Judith served two non-consecutive terms on the city council where she was our greatest advocate. [A non-conflict of interest as we receive no city funding and have a license agreement entered into prior to Judith joining our board.] She always led the way on matters of historical significance as well as a great many other issues that have been of concern to the community. Judith would always lead by example, and her voice will be much missed. Thank you, Judith, for your advocacy of local history!

*Editor: Thank you to Rich Rocchetta, who discovered this article in a 1977 edition of The Post.*

## FREE FIREWOOD FROM RAILROAD

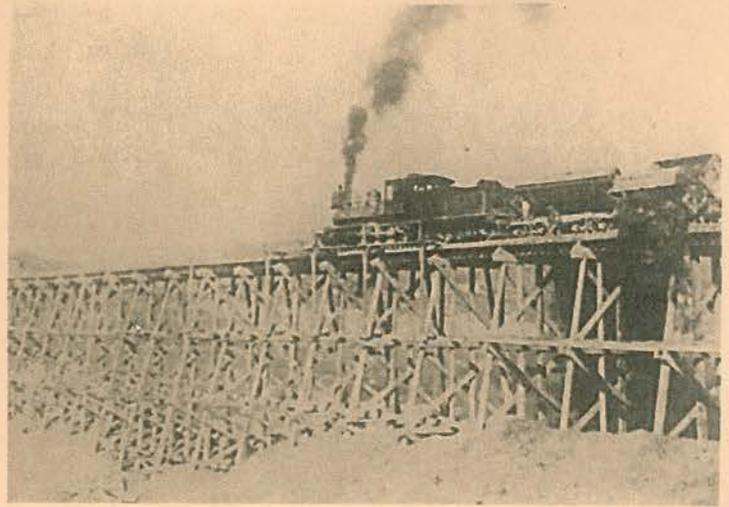
"I Remember" by George Kirchhubel

Joe "Pops" Brown was an operator. He had more angles than a redwood tree has rings. I remember one day Pop was pretty upset about an old wooden trestle that blocked the view from a house he was living in on Willits Street near Vista Grande Park (now Marchbank Park). He came up to me while I was walking my dogs near the park and asked, "What's that wooden thing built over that gully down there on the Lake Merced Golf Course?"

"That's the trestle built by the Ocean Shore Railroad Company."

"What's it used for?"

"It's not used anymore. The company abandoned it a few years ago. Back when it was in use, people rode it between San Francisco and down there near Half Moon Bay along the coast."



Ocean Shore Railroad trestle

"What the hell kind of a railroad doesn't have a train on it? All it's good for now is blocking the view," Pop commented as he walked off shaking his head.

It was that same cold winter [1928] that Pop took to chopping down George Rehaune's house, the house he was suppose to be taking care of. [story in November, 2018 *Tattler*]. I can't remember a colder winter in Daly City. Fuel was scarce and people were walking miles to get wood to burn in their stoves.

One late afternoon I was out walking my dogs on the golf course and spotted a sign leaning against the north end of the trestle. "FREE FIREWOOD...Railroad Company," the sign read in bold letters. As I walked homeward, I chatted with a couple of people who asked me if I was going to go down to the trestle and get some of that good firewood for myself.

"How'd you hear about this 'free' firewood so quickly? There wasn't even a sign up on that trestle yesterday," I asked. All agreed that they first heard it from Pop, who had told them not to utter a word of it to anyone, that there might be a stampede of people trying to get some of that firewood once the word leaked out. By nightfall, the whole town had heard about the free wood.

According to Pop, the railroad company had to get rid of the trestle because it was a dangerous structure. Unless it was immediately torn down, the company's insurance would be cancelled, Pop said.

The following morning, shortly after daybreak, I was walking my usual morning walk past the trestle. There were so many people scrambling over and around the structure it resembled an army of ants at work. Men, women, and even children were tearing up and lugging off railroad ties and beams used in the construction of the

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Firewood, cont'd.

trestle. The scores of people went about their task cheerfully, apparently delighted with this chance to get free wood, practically in their own backyards.

Along the north side of the trestle was a dirt road that ran through the golf course. People were streaming along the road with horses and wagons and even sleds. Saws and wrenches were going full blast as the crowd tore up the railroad ties one after another. In only two days the trestle was gone. Only an empty space was left.

As I surveyed the scene, I saw Pop standing in front of Rehaunes' home with an approving look on his face.

"You put that sign there, didn't you Pop?"

Pop merely shook his head and said "George, look at it this way. The people needed wood. And like I said before, What kind of a railroad doesn't have a train running along its tracks?" Of course, Pop didn't go down to the trestle and get any of that wood. I wrote before about how Pop chopped down Rehaunes' house piece by piece for firewood until a vacant lot was all that was left when Rehaunes returned from New York [after being one of 55 men who completed the Los Angeles to New York Transcontinental Footrace known as the Bunion Derby].

#### **Colma Historical Association:**

Sunday, February 10 at 2 pm first Quarterly Meeting at the Colma Museum. Saturday, March 9 Annual Fundraising Tea. For more information call: 650-757-1676

#### **YESTERDAY'S CRIMES: PG&E AND THE PREPAREDNESS DAY BOMBING**

How PG&E's private cops framed union organizers for the worst terrorist attack in San Francisco history

By Bob Calhoun  
reprinted from SF Weekly, Nov, 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Dynamite was popular with both sides of the Pacific Gas and Electric labor dispute that started in 1913. Striking workers used it to blow up power transformers on the outskirts of the Bay Area, and the private investigators hired by the power company — who were more concerned with union busting than solving crimes — used well-planted sticks of dynamite to frame the labor leaders.

Framing was the go-to strategy employed by Pinkerton detective Martin Swanson, but it didn't really get results; a trio of union men in Berkeley sent to San Quentin for plotting to sabotage power lines were all pardoned by the governor after union officials recorded an ex-Pinkerton agent bragging about the frame-up. In January 1914,

San Francisco union organizer and militant socialist Thomas Mooney and two other electrical workers were arrested in Contra Costa County, after a team of PG&E detectives found explosive devices and several pricey firearms on board a leaky skiff the workers used to travel around the Delta. Mooney was charged with plotting to blow up a pair of giant steel towers at the Carquinez Straights.

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Swanson was let go by the Pinkertons but was soon hired on as PG&E's head detective with an office in the company's HQ at 444 Sutter St. Humiliated in court, "Swanson tracked Mooney as intently as Javert followed Jean Valjean" according to Fremont Older, the rabbleroxing editor of the *San Francisco Bulletin*.

Swanson's attempt to pin the June 10 dynamiting of two electrical towers on San Bruno Mountain in Daly City on Mooney also came up empty. While railroad company spies reported that Mooney had left a union meeting that night, he had just called a recess and quickly returned to the hall to address some 200 Wobblies.

With Mooney being well-alibied for that night, Swanson offered a \$5,000 reward to anyone who would implicate the labor leader in the bombing, but no one came forward despite that reward being worth today's equivalent of \$117,000. In the end, Mooney was able to enjoy an anarchist picnic in Colma on the 4 of July as if the biggest power company in Northern California wasn't out to get him.

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Having failed twice now to bust Mooney, Swanson couldn't resist the opportunity to use the high number of casualties from a grisly bombing to realize his obsession.

The Preparedness Day Parade of July 22, 1916 was a jingoistic spectacle sponsored by the city's Chamber of Commerce and other business interests to gin up enthusiasm for the U.S. entry into World War I. The parade started near Market and Steuart streets by the Embarcadero at 1:30 p.m. The bomb went off on that corner at 2:02 p.m., killing ten people and hospitalizing 40 more.

A 2015 *Examiner* article on the tragedy noted that "no other single act of violence" in San Francisco history "would match it in sheer body count."

Suspects were many. Mexican patriots angry over the U.S. Army invasion of Mexico in March and German espionage agents trying to keep America out of the war were possible culprits. Witnesses described the man they saw leave a suspicious suitcase next to the brick wall of the Ferry Exchange Saloon at the scene as "a Mexican" and "dark complexioned." The explosive itself was the nasty type of shrapnel bomb similar to ones used by the Germans on the European front.

None of these leads were investigated however after District Attorney Charles Fickert — who owed his political career to the largess of PG&E — put Martin Swanson in charge of the bombing investigation.

As with the San Bruno bombing, Mooney had an alibi during the tragedy. He was seen by several people watching the parade from his roof when the bomb went off. He was even photographed with a clock visible in the background, but it hardly mattered. After illegal searches and warrantless arrests, Mooney and his compatriot Charles Billings—who had served time for being caught with dynamite in Sacramento—were charged with the slaughter. Billings was sentenced to life and Mooney received the death penalty.

Swanson had finally won it seemed, but questions surrounding his investigation — or lack thereof — led President Woodrow Wilson to ask California's governor to commute Mooney's sentence to life in 1917.

In 1920, Draper Hand of the San Francisco Police admitted that he helped Swanson and Fickert to frame Mooney. John McDonald, one of Fickert's star witnesses, confessed that police had forced him to commit perjury during the trial. Despite the revelations, Mooney and Billings rotted in prison for nearly 20 more years until liberal Gov. Culbert Olson pardoned Mooney and commuted Billings' sentence to time served in 1939. Swanson died before he could see the

undoing of his well-orchestrated miscarriage of justice. Mooney lived to stick it to the city by marching in a union parade up Market Street, but he died at St. Luke's Hospital in 1942.

PG&E caught little or no blowback for their role in framing Mooney and allowing the real bomber to go unpunished, but now when the company blows up a swath of San Bruno or sparks the fires that ravaged Napa and Paradise, there just aren't enough anarchists around to blame anymore.

*Note from Bob: There was an Anarchist Picnic in Colma on the 4th of July in 1916. Copies of the complete works of Nietzsche were given away to the winners of sack races or horseshoes or whatever: It's hard to believe this kind of thing went on in Colma. I do want to write up a short piece on this for the Tattler after I get moved. Please let everyone know that Rosie and I have enjoyed being members of the Historical Society and our hearts are still in Daly City even though we're moving on.*

#### GUILD NEWS AND THANKS:

**Michael Rocchetta** finished his project to update postings of all *Tattlers* up to the current time on our website. **Judith Christensen** took on a membership drive project of a one-time mailing exchange with the Daly City Library Associates and a special gift membership offer that has netted the Guild 20 new members! **Mark Weinberger** reports that we now have 836 Facebook followers.



Does anyone have some interesting memories or history to tell us about the Motorville Motel in un-incorporated Colma?

#### THE GUILD REMEMBERS LAWRENCE CASERZA

Lawrence J. Caserza passed away on December 21 at age 95. Born in 1923 in Colma, he was the first of two children of Giovanni and Emma Caserza and the devoted husband of Lena (deceased) and father of Ronald and the late Pamela Pizzorno. Lawrence is also survived by his sister, Delores Foppiano. He worked at the San Francisco Flower Market and had a career as a florist. He was a lifetime member of the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club, several social clubs, American Legion, Post 410 and a member of Holy Angels Parrish for 95 years. Lawrence served as a medic in the U.S. Army during WWII. Lawrence married Lena in 1948 and spent 52 years of married life in Daly City. He was a longtime member of the Guild.

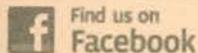


## DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

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



### DEMISE OF MOTORVILLE

The 1930s vintage motel will soon be sold and demolished to make way for a likely condo development. Sellers are reviewing offers on the 2.07-acre parcel. Recently renting for \$65 a night for overnight guests, the yelp reviews were, as you might imagine, pretty harsh.

It's one of the last reminders of the early days of motor vacationing. In 1900, there were 8,000 registered automobiles in America. By 1930, that number had jumped to an astounding 23 million! With travelers abandoning trains and horses in favor of the Model T and the lure of the open – if often times bumpy, unpaved, and poorly marked – road, demand grew for campgrounds and affordable lodging for average Americans, rather than expensive downtown hotels for the rich.

### GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

**Mark Weinberger, President**

650/757-7177

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

**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 (1926-2017), Secretary-Emerita, Grace and Marcus Gonzales and Annette Hipona Hospitality Crew

*Board meetings are held as necessary 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,**

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

Thank you for your renewed membership. If you haven't mailed in your renewal, do so now and you won't miss a single copy of the Tattler!