

# THE TATTLER

## JOURNAL OF DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

### GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK-

Happy new year to all!

The board would like to thank you for your past membership and looks forward to your continued support. This is annual member renewal time. We depend on you, our loyal and devoted Guilders, so that we can carry on each year. A reminder that the Guild is an all-volunteer nonprofit that receives no outside funding at all—not from Daly City, the County of San Mateo, nor any other group nor entity. Due to your continued generosity, we are able to pay the monthly PG&E, water, telephone, and Internet bills—which continue to go up just like everything else. Liability coverage and officer insurance is costly, but just like your homeowner's policy, we must maintain it. Publishing the *Tattler* four times a year; exhibit display expenses; updating our web site... it all adds up. So once again, we thank you for your continued patronage. If you like what we do and it is within your budget, please consider giving at the next level of membership. At the end of the day, we want you to feel that you are receiving a quality publication, engaging lectures, and enjoying a museum that preserves our shared history and welcomes the community.

We are excited to welcome back our own Monika Trobits, who has presented to us in the past about both of her books, *Antebellum and Civil War San Francisco* and *Bay Area Coffee: A Stimulating History*. Both were wonderful lectures and fantastic reads. This time around, she will explore a more nefarious topic involving murder most foul. To quote the author:

*Murder and Vengeance in the South Bay:*

"During the 1930s, kidnappings became the "felony of fashion." During that era, kidnappings occurred all over the United States for enormous amounts of ransom money. Just about a century ago, a particularly horrendous version of this type of crime took place in the Bay Area.

In 1933, a then little-known agricultural town in the South Bay became nationally known for all the wrong reasons: a notorious kidnapping; a senseless, cruel

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### IN-PERSON LECTURE & MEETING

**Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**

**2 pm**

**Merced Room, Westlake Park Pacelli Gym**

**Monika Trobits**

*Presents*

*Murder*

*and*

*Vengeance*

*in the South Bay*

**Everyone welcome to this free event!**

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

**Lots of free parking – refreshments – raffle**



murder; and an outraged citizenry. My illustrated talk will explore this momentous series of events. (Please note that several images of male nudity will be projected during the talk.)”

About the author, historian, and presenter: Monika Trobits has lived in San Francisco for more than 40 years. She’s been studying local history since the mid-1980s and has evolved into a historian, a walking history docent and a published writer of non-fiction works about San Francisco and the Bay Area. Her transition to the creative world of historic fiction is underway. In November 2023, an excerpt, “The Silent Spirits,” derived from her novel-in-progress was published in OLLI-SF’s (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) *Vistas & Byways*, an on-line literary journal:  
<https://www.vbreview.org/trobits-silent-spirits.html>.

Monika earned a B.A. in political science and history from San Francisco State University. She’s been teaching San Francisco history classes for OLLI-SF since 2016 and later this month will present her 16<sup>th</sup> course: *San Francisco in Film and Literature: Crime in the City II*.

In September the Native Sons of the Golden West dedicated their replacement plaque for the one long-missing that told the story of the Broderick - Terry Duel of 1859. It was stolen sometime in the mid to late 1970s, never to be seen again. This time around, the plaque is



comprised of a slate composite [the original had been cast in bronze], mounted on a solid concrete base, and tells a fuller story with greater narrative than the original plaque. At the time of the dedication, the plaque had been completed but not yet mounted as the base had yet to be installed, which has since been poured. The project is now complete. We don't anticipate any thefts

only the unfortunate possibility of vandalism, which we hope doesn't manifest itself. Please be sure to view the marker the next time you visit the Broderick - Terry Duel Site Park just off of El Portal Way in the Westlake area and very close to Lake Merced.

## Day at museum Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup>

Judith Christensen

Only 2 visitors and then medium rain with intermittent down pours. Spent more than an hour with one visitor who is a student at Lincoln high school in SF doing a community outreach interview project for school. We talked about DC history and exhibits. After talking about our photo exhibit, he shared that he is taking a black and white film photography class. In the early 1980s, I took every photo class offered in SF City College photo department. This Lincoln student is very interested in learning more. We spent almost another hour talking about photography. I will be contacting his photography teacher to donate equipment to his class. Not museum related but great to be able to mentor a young person. Sent him off with a list of famous photographers to look up. We will be talking more in the future. We never know what opportunities will present themselves when we docent. – Judith

(Judith is our board treasurer and a retired school teacher. While teaching high school physics at Galileo HS, she volunteered to teach photography for the Photo Club she initiated).

## WHY AN ULTRA-WEALTHY BANKER BLASTED A HUGE HOLE IN A BAY AREA CLIFF

By Sam Mauhay-Moore, Nov 28, 2023

Tucked along the coastline 5 miles south of San Francisco sits one of the Bay Area’s most unsung parks, one that is a historical relic, geologic wonder and the evidence of what happens when an ultra-wealthy banker decides to blast a hole in the side of a cliff.

The rolling coastal hills and striking ocean views of Mussel Rock Park pop up like a present at the end of a rough cliffside road on the border of Daly City and Pacifica.

“Mussel Rock is a horse,” geologist John McPhee wrote in his Pulitzer Prize-winning essay series “Assembling California.” In geological terms, a “horse” is a section of rock that has split from the land surrounding it by a moving fault, and Mussel Rock’s central feature — a three-story-tall rock mass that looms off the coast, snowcapped in layers of bird poop — is a pretty impressive horse. But it’s hardly the most interesting thing about the park.



Mussel Rock originally belonged to the Ohlone people. It was used for thousands of years as a seasonal fishing village named Ompuromo, or "ocean flea place" after the Ohlone legend of Coyote and what happened to his wife: She jumped into the ocean and turned into a sand flea. The people living in or near Ompuromo were likely one of the first Ohlone groups forcibly removed from their homes by the Spanish around 1774, according to research conducted by Dana Smith, a historian and board member at the Daly City History Museum. Within 60 years of initial contact with the Spanish, all Ohlone settlements, including Ompuromo, had been destroyed.

"No one from the Mussel Rock tribelet survived relocation to Mission Dolores," Smith said. "From my research, it seems that early on, some members may have gone willingly, but then Bay Area Native Americans were forcibly sent to missions to provide a workforce for the missions. They were basically slaves."

Ancient Ohlone artifacts found near the site of Ompuromo village at Mussel Rock, now stored at the Daly City Historical Museum.



Archeological exhibit at our museum - Photo: D. Smith

By the time San Francisco existed, Mussel Rock was once again involved in a great tragedy: The park is widely accepted to be the closest spot on land to the epicenter of the 1906 earthquake, given that it sits directly over the point where the San Andreas fault line intersects California and the Pacific Ocean.

Facing inland at the base of the park, you can see on the looming cliffs above you fissures in the earth where a vast and complex series of fault lines and plate systems meet. "Almost automatically, you stand with one foot on each side and imagine your stride lengthening — your right foot, say, riding backward toward Mexico, your left foot in motion toward Alaska," McPhee wrote.

The land at Mussel Rock jolted about 20 feet during the 1906 quake, but had already been on the move since

time immemorial, and continues to shift along the San Andreas fault system.

Spanish settlers and an active lithosphere are far from the only destructive forces that have shaped Mussel Rock's history. Today, one of the park's most defining features is a large hole in a cliff at its base: the 10-foot-by-10-foot gap creates a tunnel in the earth that can be explored at low tide by those sure-footed enough to brave the slippery climb. Without knowing better, someone might think this is another unique rock formation, like the geologic "horse" sitting off the coast a few hundred yards away.

In reality, the tunnel is far from natural. Dubbed "Tobin's Folly," the hole was blasted through the cliff in 1874 using \$5,000 worth of dynamite (about \$100,000 today) and the dreams of wealthy banker Richard Tobin, who wanted a direct path along the coast to travel by buggy between his homes in San Francisco and Pacifica. Tobin was able to successfully traverse through the tunnel a grand total of three times before a large storm rendered it unusable, according to a 1981 article in the San Francisco Progress. "Tobin's tunnel is but one sad moment in the history of those who tried, and failed, to conquer Mussel Rock," the article states.

The site would see several of those moments over the following century, when it was used, among other things, as a plant nursery, potato farm, Dollar Line radio station and wartime bunker area.

1905 saw the construction of the Ocean Shore Railroad, a plan devised by several wealthy San Francisco businessmen to build a coastal railroad that would connect the city and Santa Cruz. One of the 25 stops along that route was built at Mussel Rock, cutting into the cliff face and destroying part of what remained of the Ompuromo village site.

The 1906 quake demolished the still-unused Mussel Rock Station in seconds. By 1921, the entire railroad had ceased operations. From the late 1930s to 1943, a bar and restaurant called Jak's place flourished on the cliffs at the site.

In 1945, real estate developer Henry Doelger — famous for his colorful mid-century tract homes in San Francisco and Daly City — purchased part of the site and built the subdivision that still overlooks the park. In 1957, another earthquake destroyed part of Highway 1 and the section of subdivision on the edge of the bluffs, prompting Daly City to take control of the site and lease it to the Daly City Scavenger Company to be used as a dump site through the '60s and '70s.

"My father would yell: 'We're going to Mussel Rock — load up the truck!'" Deb Wong, an archivist with the Pacifica Historical Society, told SFGATE. "Even after the dump was closed, people dumped their garbage at Mussel Rock until it was cleaned up, or covered over as landfill."



While surveying the area where the old portion of Highway 1 was damaged in 1977, Caltrans workers discovered evidence of the Ompuromo village site. A two-week-long archaeological excavation was ordered, right as the dump site was being covered with landfill. Obsidian tools found at the site were dated to around 1500 A.D., according to Smith's research. But much of what remained of the village was likely buried under landfill, along with a freshwater stream that once flowed through the area.

"Two weeks was not enough. The archaeologists were running ahead of the bulldozers, trying to grab things as the bulldozers were destroying the site," Smith said. When the Daly City Scavenger Company's bulldozers uncovered the remains of two adults and a small child at Mussel Rock, a representative from the county coroner's office reportedly made the statement that he was only concerned about whether the skeletons were "Indian or human." An Ohlone descendant was thankfully able to take possession of the remains shortly after their discovery.

"Allowing a dump site on top of eroding cliffs that sit above an earthquake fault, and on top of it all, destroying one of the most significant archaeological sites in Northern California, is just astounding to me," Smith said. The artifacts found at the site, which include obsidian arrowheads, bird bone whistles and abalone shell pendants, sat in the basement of Daly City's city hall for 30 years before being moved to the Daly City History Museum, where they remain today.

After toxins from the Mussel Rock dump site began seeping into the ocean, the Regional Water Quality Control Board ordered the closure of the landfill in 1978. The site was placed back in the hands of the city, which constructed a trail leading down to the sea wall and opened the park as an open space preserve.

Today the park is primarily used by hikers and dog walkers, though its steep, windswept cliffs are especially popular among local paragliders. At night, its parking lot occasionally comes alive as a haunt for local teenagers. Beneath it all, the earth keeps shifting.

"With regard to the lithosphere, it's a good place to sit and watch the plates move," McPhee wrote. "It is a moment in geography that does your thinking for you."

**Sam Mauhay-Moore** is a news reporter for SFGATE. He studied journalism and ethnic studies at San Francisco State. The longtime "New Yorker" staff writer **John McPhee** covers the complex geological history of California in his 1994 narrative *Assembling California*. Chronicle editor Peter Stack called the work "A delicious field manual on the creation of the Golden State going back a few hundred million years." In a span of fifteen years, John McPhee made geological field surveys in California with Eldridge Moores, a tectonicist at the

University of California at Davis. Editor: Sounds like a good read!

**What is SFGate?** Launched in 1994, SFGATE.com served as the digital home of the San Francisco Chronicle for 19 years and was the first news site to offer searchable archives, classifieds, and open public forums. SFGATE also published content from KRON-TV and the San Francisco Examiner up until the early 2000s.

Over the next six years, varying amounts of free and premium Chronicle content appeared on SFGATE, then in 2019, the Chronicle and SFGATE officially became two separately run entities with their own editorial staffs and independent newsrooms. Since that split, SFGATE has won 29 San Francisco Press Club Awards, three North American Travel Journalists Association awards, and a Society of American Travel Writers Lowell Thomas award. SFGATE currently has a staff of 52. Online subscriptions are free, just sign up at SFGate.com

## WESTMOOR GRAD WHO ALMOST MADE IT TO THE BIG LEAGUES

By Rich Rocchetta



Bruce Hix

The *Tattler* has spotlighted two Jefferson High School graduates who made it to the Big Leagues in Major League Baseball. Today, we look at the baseball career of a Westmoor High graduate who didn't quite make it to the Major Leagues, but had a promising minor league career with his hometown team, the San Francisco Giants. Bruce Hix was born in 1946 and attended Daly City's Westmoor High School. He not only

excelled in baseball but was quarterback for their football team. In three varsity seasons with Westmoor (1962-64) he batted .471, .552, and .400. He had played for the SF Giants' summer youth team and eventually signed a minor league contract with the Giants. First playing for the Decatur, Ill. (Giants Class A team), he advanced to Fresno in 1965 where he batted .316. He played for Fresno (Class A) and in the Arizona Rookie League in 1966, the Giants AA team in 1967, and finally for the Class A Fresno team in his final year in baseball in 1968. All of these teams were San Francisco Giants' minor league team.



An extensive article on him from the *SSF Enterprise Journal* in 1977, stated "In 1968, instead of being placed with Phoenix where (he'd) be one step away from the parent club, Hix was sent to the Double A team in Waterbury, Conn. That was more than he could take, so he quit."

In 4 minor league seasons, his batting average was .293 playing in 427 games. A standout player who never made it to the Big Leagues. At that time there were fewer major league teams than today. It is quite possible that this local high school baseball player and star athlete could have made it up to the San Francisco Giants big league team if he had come upon the scene in today's world. He passed away in 2013 from complications of ALS.



## SMOKEY ON MISSION STREET

By Dana Smith

Driving down Mission Street, when I see the Smokey Bear billboard, I start singing a childhood ditty "Smokey the Bear". *Warning:* This tune can become an obsession for a few days causing embarrassment as you break out in song in a grocery line, or at dinner with friends.

### Lyrics:

With a Ranger's hat and shovel and a pair of dungarees,  
you will find him in the forest always sniffin' at the breeze.  
People stop and pay attention when he tells 'em to beware,  
'cause ev'rybody knows that he's the Fire Prevention Bear.

### Chorus:

Smokey the Bear, Smokey the Bear,  
Prowlin' and a growlin' and a sniffin' the air.  
He can find a fire before it starts to flame.  
That's why they call him Smokey,  
That was how he got his name.

You can camp upon his doorstep and he'll make you feel at home;  
You can run and hunt and ramble anywhere you care to roam.  
He will let you take his honey and pretend he's not so smart,  
but don't you harm his trees for he's a Ranger in his heart.

### Chorus

If you've ever seen the forest when a fire is running wild,  
and you love the things within it like a mother loves her child,  
then you know why Smokey tells you when he sees you passing thru  
'Remember...please be careful....it's the least that you can do.'

### Chorus

(Including excerpts from a US Forest story by Steve Nix, 2019):

At the beginning of World War II, Americans feared that an enemy attack or sabotage could destroy our forests. In the spring of 1942, a Japanese submarine fired shells onto an oil field in Southern California near Los Padres National Forest. Government officials were relieved that the shelling did not start a forest fire, but were determined to provide protection. The USDA Forest Service organized the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) Program in 1942. Walt Disney's "Bambi" character was first used on an initial anti-fire poster in 1942. The success of this poster led in 1944 to the Forest Service and the War Advertising Council introduced a bear as their campaign symbol. Smokey Bear's living history began early in 1950 when a burned cub survived a fire in the Lincoln National Forest near Capitan, New Mexico. When the media picked up the story, the tiny bear won the love and imagination of the American public and was chosen to be the real-life Smokey the Bear as part of the advertising campaign begun six years earlier. After being nursed back to health, Smokey came to live at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Two years later Steve Nelson and Jack Rollins, the songwriting team behind "Frosty the Snowman," wrote an ode to Smokey.

After many years of popularity, the original Smokey died in 1976 at age 26. His remains were returned to Capitan and rest beneath a stone marker in Smokey Bear Historical State Park. *The Wall Street Journal* included an obituary for Smokey Bear. *The New York Times* published one as well along with many newspapers nationwide. Today, the Ad Council estimates that 96 percent of adults recognize Smokey, the sort of ratings usually reserved for Mickey Mouse and the president.

Dana Smith comments: "Numerous artists contributed to Smokey's image we know today, beginning with a more realistic bear and gradually morphing into the human-bear hybrid image we now see on the billboard in Daly City with human hands and paws. It appears that Smokey has been working out at Planet Fitness."

**Special thanks to:** Michael Rocchetta for purchasing and installing our new software; Vaughn and Glorian Jones for vintage homeowner association photos, Daly City Maintenance for dryrot repair to the museum front door; and volunteer Grace Gonzalez for her ongoing hostessing at our general meetings.

**It's membership renewal time for 2024!**





**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

Notice what's on the newspaper ad that Jimmy Stewart is holding.



**Memories Of Joe's Of Westlake**  
Richard Huang · 9h · 🌐

I recently saw Vertigo at the Stanford Theater and can confirm that the Original Joe's Westlake newspaper ad in the movie was legit which I saw when Jimmy Stewart was waiting for Kim Novak in her apartment. Movie was produced in 1958 with the restaurant opening in 1956.

## 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)

Ken Gillespie (1924-2010) President-Emerita  
Bunny Gillespie (1926-2017) Secretary-Emerita

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.

Tattler comments: [dana@vikingsmith.net](mailto:dana@vikingsmith.net)

*Thank you for your continuing support!*