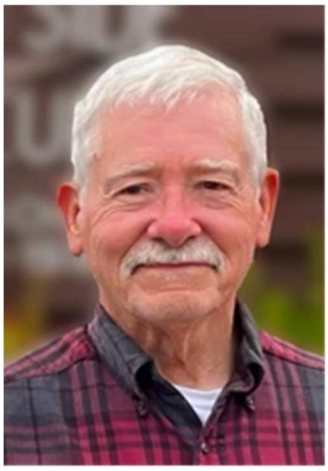
# Pacifica Historical Society

*Newsletter Volume 20 Issue 3 Winter 2026*

## *President's Letter*



During my tenure as president of the PHS for the past several years, I initiated monthly walking tours, monthly lectures, field trips for the board members, and school visitations. I had the assistance of a very active board, and each member found a niche to fill: Pat Kremer with event planning; Susan Stallard with memberships and docent scheduling; Jay Crawford with community relations; Carolyn Miller as our efficient and dedicated secretary; Laura Del Rosso with media outreach; Sue Digre, our liaison with the city; Terry McCann and Brigid Voss as loyal helpers at the rummage sales; Deidre Crow as rentals scheduler; Steve Clark as maintenance manager; Karen Bacheller as storekeeper; and Kathy McGuire as our ever-diligent event hostess.

We had a number of well attended events during this past year, namely, author's talks (Gordon Van Zuiden - Never a Dull Mile, Lee Panich – Indigenous Landscapes and Spanish Missions), lectures ("The Polynesians", "History of the Presidio"), history through music with the Wandering Bow Band, and a new exhibit and talk about the Pacifica Pier.

An exhibits committee was formed under the guidance of Raquel Iverson, and exhibits were rearranged as a timeline through Pacifica's history, with exhibit cases donated by the De Young Museum. We also were favored this year with a grant by the AlessioGe Foundation, which funded a professional archivist to convert many documents into digital files. They will then be entered into a catalogue for easy retrieval.

The train committee has been meeting regularly to advance the work on OSRR Car 1409. Earlier this year they purchased a set of trucks (train wheel undercarriages) from the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society in Petaluma, and they are close to being fully restored. The train committee is hoping to move the car next year to its permanent site on the eastern side of the lot across the street from the museum.

We are still grieving over the passing of Kathleen Manning, who spearheaded the acquisition and ongoing restoration of car 1409. She was also the president of the PHS for 11 years, and dutifully helped run the monthly rummage sales to fund the work on the train car. Her family recently organized a beautiful day of remembrance at the museum, and many who attended spoke of Kathleen's kindness, dedication to the community, and devotion to scholarship.

We just had a party celebrating the 50th anniversary of the PHS, during which David Malloy gave a fine slide presentation on the Little Brown Church and its transition into a first-rate city museum. Later, a plaque dedicated to the late Shirlee Gibbs was displayed to those attending; it will be placed by the tree planted in her memory, next to the museum.

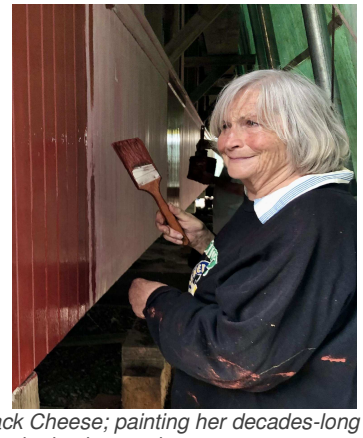
I hope you can join us for the Christmas party at the castle, as we celebrate another year of bringing the story of our beloved city to residents and visitors alike, in an historical setting.

With thanks to all our members, donors, volunteers, and fans,

I remain faithfully yours,

Steve Johnson







*From left, Kathleen celebrating her "find" -- Pacifica Jack Cheese; painting her decades-long labor of love, OSRR Car 1409; with Arcadia Publishing's OSRR book, and Kathleen's OSRR museum display in the background.*

# *Kathleen Manning — Pacifica's "History Queen"*

July 1, 1939-Oct. 11, 2026

**By Pacifican Jean Bartlett, longtime Bay Area News Group Writer**

"It is the end of an era with Kathleen gone and also with her husband Bill gone," said Dave Alonzo, Kathleen Manning's friend and employee, as well as the artist and muralist Kathleen talked into designing, leading and completing the Crespi Drive Historic Art Project — an award-winning mural which celebrates the late Ocean Shore Railroad and its once dream-ride through the small coastal towns that became today's Pacifica.

"With Kathleen's passing," Dave went on to say, "so many people will have to change their lives because she did that much. She was an incredibly giving person; always giving so much of herself. I will always remember her."

For anyone who knew Kathleen Manning, it is nearly impossible to take in her passing. She absolutely did do "that much" for this city that she and her late husband Bill Hall — her equal in history curiosity, love and preservation — called home since 1990.

So, what are just a few of the things that Kathleen did for Pacifica?

In 2001, she joined other dedicated PHS members to spearhead the successful ballot measure to save the Little Brown Church from being torn down, moved or encumbered. That was a 4-year effort and in October of 2005, the PHS was awarded the keys to the building by the City of Pacifica — and the real work began.

Working side by side with her friend and full-speed-ahead get-the-job-done twin, the late Shirlee Gibbs, and an unbelievably dedicated group of PHS volunteers, these things, and so many more, were taken care of: work with historic preservation architects; acquire general certificates of liability; attract grant money; destroy the building's subterranean termite infestation and wood boring beetles ($15,000); install a new roof ($34,580); restore the bell tower ($50,000); replace severely damaged lathe and plaster; replace the wiring; get the rough-in plumbing work done; replace the old sewer line from the street to the building; install an energy-efficient furnace complete with new registers, grills and thermostats; replace the front doors; and install a three-story lift as required by the ADA (American with Disabilities Act).

By the time the Pacifica Coastside Museum at the Little Brown Church opened in August of 2015, more than $500,000 had been raised and spent.

"We started out with some scrimmage," Kathleen told me in a January of 2014 interview. "Contributions from individuals gave us our first down. Our second down came through all the great businesses that have helped. All of our extraordinary (PHS) volunteers through rummage sales, concerts, Sam's Castle tours, partnering events and so many other ingenious fundraising events to pay for the work needed, brought us to the 70-yard line. Now the fabulous Pacifica Lions Club has given us a golden football ($200,000) which will take us through the goal." Kathleen also gave a heartfelt thanks to Shirlee, calling her, "Our great quarterback."

What else was Ms. Manning up to? She served as President of the PHS for 11 years. She found the old recipe for the smooth, buttery cheese made at Ray Mori's Place at Pacifica's Mori's Point  a recipe dating back to 1888 and a recipe that was stolen and taken to rancher David Jacks in Monterey. Jacks then named it Monterey Jack Cheese. Kathleen found a professional cheesemaker to recreate it, labeled it Pacifica Jack, started selling it immediately (you can buy it at the Museum) and coined the phrase, "If You Don't Know Pacifica, You Don't Know Jack." She also created Pacifica Jack-themed tasting events by local chefs.

Kathleen saved the last passenger car of the Ocean Shore Railroad, Car 1409, another extraordinary Pacifica save and a project that, after decades of beating impossible odds, has an ending in sight. (This needs a further read: https://pacificahistory.org/ocean-shore-r-r.)

Kathleen came up with the idea of a mural "Ocean Shore Railroad at the Beach," and then got the 72-foot long, 12-foot high mural that depicts the era of the OSRR, 1908-1920, done.

While she was at it, she co-authored "Pacifica (Then & Now)" with Jerry Crow, Arcadia Publishing, 2010. She also produced and created the multi-award-winning community television show, "Footprints of Pacifica." You can view many of these episodes on https://pacificahistory.org/footprints-of-pacifica.

This article hasn't even mentioned: her decades-long, 100 percent involvement with the San Francisco History Association; or the other books she penned; or her business, Prints Old & Rare / Manning's Books (sellers of rare antique maps, prints, charts, engravings, books and ephemera, and still very much in business). It also hasn't mentioned her bachelor's degree in history; her master's degree in social studies with a minor in economics; and her first job as an adult, teaching (grades 7 through 12) American history, European history, economics and government. Nor has it been mentioned that she was born in Detroit, Michigan, to Frank and Helen Manning, and was part of a family with six kids and that her family really got along. Nor has it mentioned much on her great love, Bill Hall, or her love of her nieces, nephews, stepdaughter, in-laws, cousins, great-nieces and nephews, and friends. She was famous for taking it all in her stride, always keeping her humor, and never having a bad word to say about anyone.

There is a longer story on Kathleen on my website: www.bartlettbiographies.com. In it, I explain why I christened her: "Kathleen Manning, Pacifica's Go-Getter History Queen." Basically, it is because of all that she has done for this town, plus she once told me that as a title for her she thought "Queen" had a nice ring to it.

In closing on this lovely human who died on October 11, 2026, from complications of pneumonia, a quote on Kathleen by her friend, Pacifican and PHS member Maxine Hines, is offered.

"Kathleen was a force. She will never, ever be forgotten. She was kind. She was intelligent and smart, and she could make a way out of no way. She was dedicated to preserving history, and we were blessed to have her in Pacifica, preserving our history. Our restoration gift to her would be to get that last car of the Ocean Shore Railroad, which she worked on for over 20 years, done!"





*Earlier this year, Kathleen (left) with Bob Vargas at the Vallemar Station, the day they brought the Vargas brothers' OSRR dioramas to the Pacifica Coastside Museum; at right, PHS's "dyanamic duo", Kathleen with Shirlee Gibbs at the museum's 10th anniversary celebration in 2025 as they recalled their years of fundraising and work to restore and transform the Little Brown Church restoration into the Pacifica Coastside Museum.*

# *Mark Your Calendars: PHS Holiday Party Dec. 6*

Join us to celebrate the holidays at Sam's Castle, Pacifica's landmark that opens just for us each year for a one-of-a-kind party. Festivities are 1-4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 6.

It's a members-only event but new members can join at the door.

Bring a dish of finger food (savory or sweet) and enjoy live music, brief presentations of our annual awards, wine and beverages, ocean views and the historic ambiance of Pacifica's 118-year old castle on the hill. No RSVPs required.



# *Our 50th Anniversary Celebration*

This year marks 50 years since PHS was founded by Pacificans passionate about local history. On Nov. 8, we celebrated all that PHS has accomplished in five decades with a look back and a party at the Pacifica Coastside Museum. Photos by Deb and Mike Wong.






*From left, Erika Rigling, past PHS president, recalls her years as head of the organization, as Mayor Christine Boles and her husband, Bob, look on; in middle, Sandy Cavallaro, niece of the late Kathleen Manning (11-term PHS president) and Robert Twigg, who filmed many Footprints of Pacifica documentaries, tour OSRR 1409; on right, the family of the late Shirlee Gibbs.*





*From left, David Malloy of PHS's Exhibits Committee, discussed his research into the Little Brown Church and Pastor Harkins; in center, Rena Azevedo, daughter of the late Paul and Lydia Azevedo (both instrumental in early PHS), shares what PHS meant to her family; at left, Craig Blackstone, PHS docent and son of two PHS presidents.*






*Left photo, PHS Board Member Steve Clark, with Pat Kremer, PHS VP and daughter of Grace McCarthy, a two-term PHS president. In center photo, some of the team that makes PHS run; from left, Brigid Voss, Steve Clark, Deb Wong, Horace Hinshaw. In right photo, Susan Stallard (left), PHS VP; docents Raquel Iverson and Michelle Trausch.*

# *PHS Annual Meeting and Election*

On October 18, the Pacifica Historical Society held its Annual Meeting. President Steve Johnson gave his State of the Society address, listing the many accomplishments of the previous 12 months.

The election of officers for 2027 was held. We held elections for the members of the Board of Directors and for the Executive Board. Usually, there are five of the fifteen board members elected for three-year terms, but this year we had a couple of extra openings, a one-year and a two-year term. Elected for three-year terms were returning members Jay Crawford, Sue Digre, Terri McCann, and Brigid Voss. Newly elected was Mike O'Neill. Later, the board approved the appointment of Jean Brink to the two-year term. Currently there is one opening on the Board, a one-year term.

The Executive Board members, all of whom serve for one year, were elected without being contested. For 2027 the Executive Board members are President Jay Crawford, Vice President Laura Del Rosso, Vice President Pat Kremer, and Vice President Susan Stallard, and Treasurer Steve Johnson. (Jan Ang remains our Accountant, not on the Board.) The office of secretary remains unfilled as of press time.

# *Membership Renewal Time for 2027*
## *Or join as a new member*

Membership dues in the Pacifica Historical Society expire at the end of the calendar year. Unless you paid for multiple years or have a courtesy membership, your dues are good through December 31, 2026. Consider renewing for 2027 now, or at the Castle Holiday party on December 6. Membership dues levels remain the same for 2027 as for 2026.
Membership can be started or renewed by cash, check, online or by credit card. See https://pacificahistory.org/join for details. Join at the Silver or Gold level and you will get a gift certificate.

Membership Levels

| | |
|---|---|
| $25 (Senior or Student Individual) | $100 (PHS Patron) |
| $30 (Individual, Senior Couple) | $250 (PHS Silver)* gift certificate for $25 at gift shop |
| $40 (Family, Couple) | $500 (PHS Gold)** gift certificate for $50 at gift shop |

We thank you for your past and/or future support of the Pacifica Historical Society!

# *Pacifica Jack Cheese at the Winter Art Faire*

The Art Guild of Pacifica's annual Winter Art Fair will be on December 12 & 13 at the Sanchez Art Center, 1220 Linda Mar Blvd, from 11-5. This event features art and gifts just in time for the holidays! This year – for the first time – PHS will be there (on Saturday the 12th only) with our famous Pacifica Jack Cheese!
Admission is free. Come check out the art, jewelry, ceramics and other creations and stop by to say hello to PHS and pick up a pound or two of delicious cheese that makes the perfect gift! There's a rumor that Mrs. Mori herself may make an appearance!

# *Pacifica's Past: Rockaway's Snug Harbor*

By Deb Hagler Wong

**Snug Harbor** was a Rockaway Beach resort from the early 1920s to the late 1980s. Built and maintained by **Captain Lawrence Dunnigan** and his wife **Laura,** the small cluster of cabins drew vacationers; some camped on the beach in tents.

**Lawrence Dunnigan was born on April 6, 1871** in San Francisco. He first went to sea at age 13 and later was a crew member on whale boats and Alaska vessels. He was captain of the Ocean Wave, a stern wheeler, and ran a ferry in San Francisco Bay. Like depictions of pirates in movies, the Captain carried a parrot on his arm that was known around Rockaway as a linguist. Bought from a Frenchman, she spoke French. However, the bird's favorite phrase was in English: "Does she talk?"

The captain met **Laura Blanche Richardson** in 1918 when she was a stewardess on the Alameda, a bay ferry. Laura lived in Berkeley at the time, and Captain Dunnigan lived in Rockaway Beach. They lived together for several years before marrying on September 29, 1925. He was 55, she was 37. Both had been married before; the Captain had three previous wives and two daughters by one of the marriages. Laura was married once before to a man named Richardson, which earned her the nickname of "Dick" by many Rockaway residents.

**The Captain and Mrs. Dunnigan visited the seashore often.** As Laura recalled in a Pacifica Tribune interview: "We used to hike all over we went to Bolinas Bay, Princeton, and Rockaway Beach for dinner. That's how we met my future boss, Herbert. When he found out I was a waitress, he wanted me to work for him. At the time, there were only four other buildings in Rockaway Beach, including Rockaway School, the White House restaurant (later home to Romano's), a blacksmith shop, and a small house behind the White House restaurant that the Prohibitionists burned down (the restaurant was also a bootlegging operation).

Laura commuted from San Francisco on the Red Star Bus, a tourist vehicle with planks for seats. Herbert's Place was a restaurant and bar located on Old County Road. Herbert and his partner anchored a boat at sea and sent liquor in on a cable. Laura wore an apron with big pockets to keep liquor bottles in. Prohibition agents would inspect the premises often, but miraculously, Laura was never searched. That job didn't last for long.

Soon after, the Dunnigans bought a parcel of land at the end of Donaldson Avenue in Rockaway Beach, and built a cottage in 1924.




They hired Alvin Hatch and Manuel P. Dutra of Half Moon Bay to construct their home. The house cost a total of $750.

After the first cottage was completed, the rest were built and named after ferries: Ocean Wave, San Pablo and San Pedro. The Captain called the resort: "Snug Harbor", a name that reminded him of a sailor's home in Alaska.

Laura went to work in 1938 at the age of 50 at Reese's Dude Ranch (later Vagabond Villa on Pedro Point). A full course dinner with oysters on the half shell was $1. "After Pearl Harbor, the mood along the California coast was fearful,” she recalled in a Tribune interview. “Irene Reese and I signed up to spot planes” we went over to Mussel Rock after working in the middle of the night and were to report anything suspicious. If you were not an American citizen, you were restricted” not allowed out of your house after dark."

**When Reese's closed, and Laura took** an offer to work for Charles Gust in his restaurant. "I knew how to make mixed drinks, like a Golden Fizz. I taught Charlie and Nick how to mix drinks. That Nick, he didn't want to measure things," she laughed.

**The Captain died after a long illness on November 10, 1954 at the age of 83.** He and Laura had been married for 34 years. Laura continued to manage Snug Harbor. A celebrity guest was actor Dick Powell, who became acquainted with Rockaway Beach while filming at the Tanforan race track. "He used to bring a lunch from the Palace Hotel," she says, "I'd set it up for him” place linen on a tray, knock on the door and leave. He'd bring wine and he'd always tip you heavy."

Later in the 1950s, the cabins became permanent rentals. Many of the tenants became like family to her, including their children. One was Florence Graziani. Florence became Laura's family; she and her family took care of Laura in her final years.







*From left, Laura. At Snug Harbor; Captain Dunnigan (middle), unidentified woman (left), Laura (right).*

**In retirement, Laura** enjoyed quiet days in her cottage near where she had spent half a century. She had a soft spot for the down-and-out. One was a young man that she met at church. His name was Carl Casperson. They were friends for about a decade after he graduated from Terra Nova High. Carl became a tenant in one of the Snug Harbor cottages, doing maintenance in exchange for rent while he attended technical school.

**Tragically, on Monday, March 3, 1976, at 5:30 a.m., 28-year-old Carl murdered Laura.** He told the police that he had been unable to sleep for several days and went to Laura’s cottage. She always left her door unlocked, so he sat in her living room for a couple of hours, praying. After that, he went into Laura’s bedroom to talk, then went to the kitchen, got a knife and stabbed the 87-year-old to death. No motive was found. After his arrest and arraignment, Carl Casperson was deemed mentally unstable and confined to Atascadero State Hospital. While waiting trial, Casperson died suddenly on March 22,1976.

**Epilogue:** Snug Harbor was inherited by Florence Graziani. In 1984, the Pacifica Historical Society put Snug Harbor on a list of ten buildings to be protected as "historically significant.” Graziani was not happy about Snug Harbor's inclusion on the list; she had plans to demolish two of the cottages. The City Council denied the historical society's request to include Snug Harbor among the protected structures, and the buildings were eventually demolished for new construction.

# Pacifica Historical Society

A Non-Profit Organization
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Visit our website https://PacificaHistory.org for news and materials, including links to historical resources and videos.
Subscribe to our Facebook page: Pacifica Historical Society

President: Steve Johnson, incoming Jay Crawford
Vice President: Laura Del Rosso
Vice President: Pat Kremer
Vice President: Susan Stallard
Secretary: Carolyn Miller
Treasurer: Janet Ang

Board of Directors: Karen Bacheller, Jean Brink, Steve Clark, Jay Crawford, Laura Del Rosso, Sue Digre, Steve Johnson, Pat Kremer, Terri McCann, Kathy McGuire, Carolyn Miller, Mike O'Neill, Susan Stallard, Brigid Voss
Emeritus Member: Jerry Crow
Newsletter Editors: Laura Del Rosso, Susan Stallard

The Pacifica Historical Society welcomes everyone to join our organization and our committees. We hold monthly Board Meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, 4 pm in winter, 7pm in summer. The Planning Committee for events and activities meets monthly on the last Thursday of each month, 4 pm.

The Pacifica Coastside Museum and gift shop are open Thursdays and Saturdays, 1 to 4 PM. The shop features books, postcards, and other items of interest, including the famous Pacifica Jack cheese. The museum is free to the public and ADA accessible, and our docents are there to assist.

The museum (aka The Little Brown Church) is a wonderful venue for meetings, weddings, parties and events, and it's a revenue generator for the PHS. Please spread the word that it's available. For rental information, contact the museum at 650-355-1909.
Bargains are available at PHS's popular rummage sales, usually held during the second Fridays and Saturdays of each month. Donated items are welcomed for drop-off on Thursday mornings before the days of each rummage sale.

To join the Pacifica Historical Society, see https://PacificaHistory.org/join. Dues are good for the calendar year. Donations are always gratefully accepted. Our Federal Tax ID # is 943117665.



Pacifica Historical Society
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