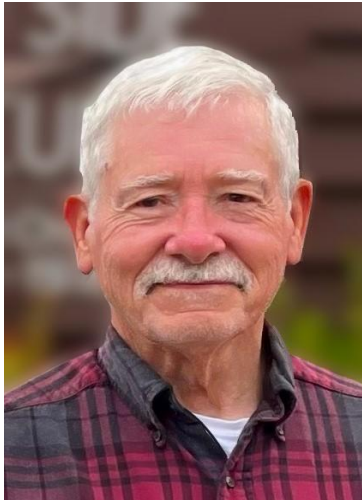


# Pacifica Historical Society

Newsletter Volume 19 Issue 1 Spring 2025

## President's Letter



Happy spring!

In February, a PHS delegation -- myself, Laura Del Rosso, Pat and Jim Kremer - visited the Spanish Consul at his San Francisco home. Consul Enrique Assorey Brey invited us to hear about the Captain Gaspar de Portolá statue. (As you probably know, the statue was removed because of protests by members of the Rumsen Ohlone tribe and is now stored in a Caltrans warehouse). Also invited were 20 members of the Spanish community, including teachers on an exchange program.

I explained to the group that I have tried to negotiate with Ohlone leaders and with the city to have the statue placed behind the museum, with panels describing the historical importance of the Portolá expedition and the impact of colonization on the native people (emphasizing the fact the Ohlone are still here and have much to teach us).

Unfortunately, Ohlone leaders do not want the statue anywhere in public, and the city agrees. Things are at an impasse regarding the statue -- which was a gift from the people of Catalonia to California (specifically to Pacifica). Some of those attending were surprised to learn that the similar Portolá statue in Balaguer (his hometown) was vandalized and was also taken away.

I told the group about our Portola exhibit, school visits and our November event each year when we commemorate the Portolá expedition by showing films at the Community Center, followed by a hike to Sweeney Ridge.

In other news, PHS has applied for two grants to restore Car 1409 of the Ocean Shore Railroad; we should hear about approval in the coming months. In the meantime, we continue with monthly rummage sales. We can really use your help on Thursday mornings and Saturday afternoons of the sale. Sometimes there are only two people working at this major fundraiser. Please help if you can spare a couple of hours.

We now have historic Sharp Park walking tours on the last Saturday of each month, at noon. The next one is April 26. Invite friends and family, spread the word to neighbors about this invigorating walk with stories of a castle, rum runners, egg wars, cheese stealers and more! It's free; donations are always welcome.

Coming up: our April 27 Scouting in Pacifica event, an April 26 lecture on the Transcontinental Railroad, and a May 18 Mother's Day Tea.

In June we are planning an OSRR fundraising event and, in August, a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the opening of our museum. As always, check out [pacificahistory.org](http://pacificahistory.org) for details.

Stop by the museum and say hello. We love to see and meet our members!

Stephen Johnson, PHS President

# Scouting in Pacifica

2 PM Sunday April 27  
Pacifica Coastside Museum  
1850 Francisco Blvd, Pacifica

*Help spread the word*



John and Patty McCarthy 1955

**There have been Scout Troops in Pacifica for more than 70 years.**

Come to this event and learn about the history of Scouting in Pacifica and share personal Scouting experiences.

There will be some short presentations by invited speakers and an open mic time for attendees to share their Scouting experiences.

This event will have exhibits and displays about both Boy and Girl Scouts, featuring a wealth of memorabilia loaned to us, and photos from private collections and the Pacifica Tribune. The displays will remain at the Museum for about 2 weeks after the event. The Museum is open Thurs and Sat 1-4 PM

\*\*\*\*\* <https://pacificahistory.org> \*\*\*\*\*

***We welcome loans of your photos and memorabilia for displays. Drop off before April 23<sup>rd</sup> at Museum gift shop during 1-4PM Thurs & Sat***

# ***Train Committee Report – OSRR #1409***

We had a busy first quarter of 2025.



In January, we submitted a grant application to the National Railway Historical Society (no word yet). We paid \$924 for insurance to cover OSRR #1409. We held two committee meetings to discuss the ongoing renovation and fundraising for the rail car.

In February, we welcomed four new members to the committee: Ken Miles, Bob Twigg, Bob Boles and Rob Wullenjohn. We received information from the Northwestern Railroad Society that trucks (wheels) for our rail car were available. They were originally from a caboose, but we were assured they would fit our passenger car. The current weight of our car is 16,000 pounds, so we need to acquire two sets to trucks. If the car weight increases by a lot, we will require three sets of trucks.

In March, Bob Boles, Rob Wullenjohn, Kathleen Manning and Shirlee Gibbs traveled to Northwestern Railroad Society's restoration yard in Petaluma to view the available trucks. Bob Twigg met us there. Measurements were taken and discussion centered on replacing the deteriorated oak and redwood bracing and the necessity of sandblasting. The price was lowered to \$4600. Because of the cost of restoration, we decided to not purchase them but research other train yards. It's difficult to locate trucks that are over 100 years old. PHS member Mike O'Neill recommended we submit a grant proposal for \$15,000 from San Mateo County for the purpose of paying for the final permit to transfer the rail car from its present location to the corner of Salada Avenue and Francisco Boulevard. PHS President Steve Johnson wrote up the proposal and it was placed on the county supervisors' agenda for the March 11 meeting.

In April, we received notice that there was an objection to our grant proposal at the March 11 meeting in Redwood City. It was referred to the county attorney's office for deliberation. We continue to look for obtaining 500 square feet flooring from a southern California manufacturer and are researching bids to move the rail car to its final destination at Salada and Francisco. We look forward to our June fundraising event (details to come) and envision that the rail car will be restored sometime soon and will be ready to begin its next journey.

--Shirlee Gibbs

**Editor's Note: Exciting news! As we were going to press with the newsletter, the Train Committee was thrilled to report a \$60,000 donation from a very generous Pacifica resident for the OSRR rail car restoration.**

**"It happened during our rummage sale," said PHS's Kathleen Manning. "There we were selling pots and pans and in walks a person with a check for \$60,000. We were just floored, and we are over the moon. This will go a long way toward the renovation." Kathleen noted that our new board member and docent Steve Clark was instrumental in obtaining the donation, having talked with the local resident about our project.**

**A big PHS thank you to this generous donor. The gift will be used for many upcoming expenses, including permits, labor costs, flooring, the move and much more!**

# Welcome IBL Students!

A group of sixth graders from Ingrid B Lacy Middle School recently visited the Pacifica Coastside Museum for a tour and some lessons in local history. PHS Board members Steve Johnson (below), Susan Stallard and Jay Crawford discussed the culture of the native Ohlone with hands-on artifacts, the Portola Expedition, the Mission era and the Ocean Shore Railroad and our efforts to restore the train car. Everyone, students, teachers, and tour guides had a great time! IBL Teacher Ms. Sosnowski wrote, "What a stellar, short and sweet field trip! We are so grateful for your time, knowledge and kindness!" PHS always welcomes elementary and high school students to come visit us and learn about local history. Teachers and parents can contact us at [info@pacificahistory.org](mailto:info@pacificahistory.org) to plan a visit.





# Pacifica's Gas Stations: A Look Back

In March, we hosted an entertaining presentation by Bruce Cumming (photo below) and Nicholas Veronico, authors of the Arcadia Publishing book "Lost Gas Stations of San Mateo County." Several of the book's photos and stories feature Pacifica. PHS's Pat Kremer and Deb Wong dug around our archives and Pacifica Tribunes, finding even more information about the quaint old gas stations of a time when they were well-known neighborhood institutions. Photos at bottom: the Mohawk station in Sharp Park and Louise's, the beloved Rockaway Beach gas station, bait shop and grocery store.



# ***New History Links on PHS Website***

Pacifica writer Jean Bartlett produces in depth biographies of Pacifica residents, a project funded by the Sam Mazza Foundation. The life stories reside on her Bartlett Biographies website, [Bartlettbiographies.com](http://Bartlettbiographies.com).

One recent addition to Jean's collection is our own PHS president Steve Johnson, a retired Pacifica schools' history teacher, historical reenactor and once a young Christian Brothers novitiate. Read about Steve's interesting life journey on the site's home page.

Steve's bio and all of Jean's Pacifica biographies are available in hard copies in binders at the Pacifica Coastside Museum. Everyone is invited to visit, take a seat and read them.

To highlight Jean's work and make it more accessible, we recently updated our website's Resources page at [pacificahistory.org/resources](http://pacificahistory.org/resources). Below, we pulled out biographies about several individuals important to Pacifica history. These are fascinating stories of early Pacificans, including Karl Baldwin, Jean Fassler, Grace McCarthy and Bob Siebert. If you haven't heard about Lydia Comerford Fahey patrolling Sharp Park and Manor on horseback with a shotgun, read on.

Thank you, Jean, and thank you Deb Wong, for your website work!

The biographies' links are:

[Karl Baldwin, Pacifica's first city manager](#)

[Bill Drake, Pacifica's remarkable newspaper editor and publisher](#)

[Lydia Comerford Fahey, gun-carrying local who kept railway surveyors honest.](#)



[Jean Fassler, Pacifica's first mayor](#)

[Dolly Fine, famous San Francisco Madam who operated a Sharp Park hideaway](#)

[Galen Hickock, the infamous "doctor" who once owned the Sam Mazza Castle](#)

[Grace McCarthy, a Pacifica city founder and mayor](#)

[Elma Oddstad Mendola, who helped her brother Andy develop Linda Mar and Park Pacifica](#)

[Mildred Owen, founder of Pacifica Performances](#)

[Bob Siebert, Lydia Fahey's neighbor and an early pre-Pacifica teacher](#)

# Take a Sharp Park Tour

PHS docents David Malloy and Raquel Iverson spent many hours researching Sharp Park history for a revised version of our Sharp Park walking tour, available in brochure form at the museum and also available on the home page of our website [pacificahistory.org](http://pacificahistory.org). We now offer guided Sharp Park tours the last Saturday of each month at noon, and also this self-guided tour, all focusing on the fascinating history of Sharp Park. Thank you David and Raquel! Here's the beginning of the revised brochure, of the first several sites, to whet your appetite for more:

The tour starts and ends at the Pacific Coastside Museum at 1850 Francisco Blvd and takes approximately one hour.

- 1** The "Little Brown Church" was built in 1910 and was the first Presbyterian Church on the coastside. The church was also used as a meeting hall, as the Red Cross Headquarters during WWII, and as a school. The congregation moved to a larger church in 1969 and the building was used as a Baptist church. The building was sold to the City of Pacifica in 1983 and used as a police station. The Pacifica Historical Society took over the building in 2003 and it now houses the Pacifica Coastside Museum and is available for special events.



- 2** To the north and west of the Little Brown Church are the recently renovated Pacific City Hall (170 Santa Maria) and City Planning Department Buildings (1800 Francisco). The City Hall was originally built in 1914 and housed the San Pedro School, a two room schoolhouse, which taught kindergarten through sixth grade. The school expanded into the rear portion of the Little Brown Church and in 1955 was relocated to the newly built Sharp Park School in the early 1950's. The building was then used a Masonic lodge and became the City Hall starting in 1957.



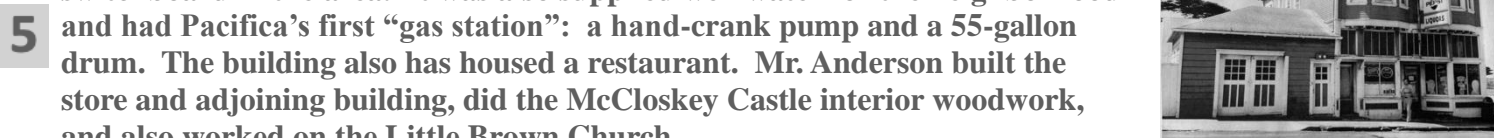
The City Planning Building was originally Sharp Park's Post Office; it became the City Planning building sometime in the 1950s.

- 3** At the northern corner of Francisco and Carmel, one house east, at 185 Carmel, is the "Collins House". This home was built in 1910 and is one of the oldest houses in Sharp Park.



- 4** At the northern corner of Francisco and Paloma Avenue is Winters Tavern. This building was originally located at Old County Road (now Palmetto) and Montecito, but was moved to its present spot in 1945, and has operated as a tavern ever since.

Looking east, across the freeway, is a two story red building which was originally Anderson's Mercantile Store, the first general store and telephone switchboard in the area. It was also supplied well water for the neighborhood and had Pacifica's first "gas station": a hand-crank pump and a 55-gallon drum. The building also has housed a restaurant. Mr. Anderson built the store and adjoining building, did the McCloskey Castle interior woodwork, and also worked on the Little Brown Church.



There are more sites and a map in the brochure at our home page.



# ***Coming Attractions - Update Your Calendar***

## **April**

Saturday, April 26, noon, meet at the Pacifica Coastside Museum, 1850 Francisco Blvd  
Guided **walking tour** of historic Sharp Park  
Saturday, April 26, 4 pm, Pacifica Coastside Museum  
**Lecture** by Steve Johnson, "History of the Transcontinental Railroad"  
Sunday, April 27, PC Museum  
**Scouting in Pacifica**

## **May**

Friday-Saturday, May 9-10, 9am – 4pm, Museum  
Monthly **rummage sale**  
Sunday, May 18, Museum  
**Mothers Day Tea**, details to follow  
Saturday, May 31, noon  
Guided **walking tour** of historic Sharp Park

## **June**

Saturday, June 28  
**Train Dinner Fundraiser**, details to follow

## **August**

Date not set, Museum  
**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of the **Pacifica Coastside Museum**

# ***Renew Your PHS Membership! Or Join as a New Member!***

A reminder: if you have not renewed your membership for 2025, this is the last newsletter you will receive. We will send a renewal notice to you shortly if your membership has expired. If it has not expired, thank you for your continuing support!  
Membership can be renewed by cash, check, online or credit card.  
See <https://pacificahistory.org/join> for details.

## **Membership Levels**

\$25 (Senior or Student Individual)	\$100 (PHS Patron)
\$30 (Individual, Senior Couple)	\$250 (PHS Silver)
\$40 (Family, Couple)	\$500 (PHS Gold)

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



# Pacifica Historical Society

A Non-Profit Organization

Mailing Address: PO Box 752, Pacifica, CA 94044

Museum Location: 1850 Francisco Blvd., Pacifica

Phone number: 650-355-1909

Email: [Info@PacificaHistory.org](mailto:Info@PacificaHistory.org)

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

Vice President: Shirlee Gibbs

Vice President: Pat Kremer

Vice President: Susan Stallard

Secretary: Carolyn Miller

Treasurer: Janet Ang

Board of Directors: Karen Bacheller, Steve Clark, Jay Crawford, Deidra Crow, Shirlee Gibbs, Laura Del Rosso, Sue Digre, Steve Johnson, Pat Kremer, Terri McCann, Kathy McGuire, Carolyn Miller, Susan Stallard, Brigid Voss

Emeritus Members Kathleen Manning, Jerry Crow, Clorinda Campagna

Newsletter Editors: Laura Del Rosso, Susan Stallard

The Pacifica Historical Society welcomes everyone to join our organization and join our committees. We hold monthly Board Meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, 7 pm. 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 Deidra Crow at 650-359-6874.

Bargains are available at the PHS's popular rummage sales, usually held during the second Fridays and Saturdays of each month. Donated items are welcomed for drop-off on the 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  
PO Box 752  
Pacifica, CA 94044