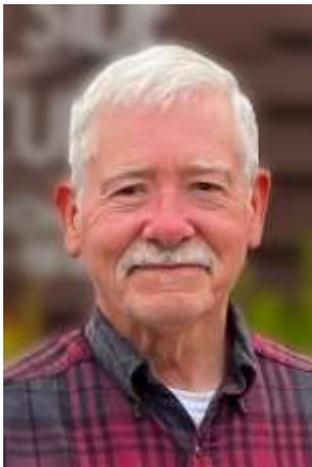


# Pacifica Historical Society

Newsletter Volume 20 Issue 1 Spring 2026

## President's Letter



It's been a busy few months for the Pacifica Historical Society.

A couple of months ago there were clues that termites were in the museum building. We had inspectors come and verify that the building was indeed infested. After receiving two bids the board decided to have Planet Orange do the treatment. This included treating the underside of the building and placing a tent over the entire museum so the chemicals could penetrate the wood. The treatment plan includes follow-up inspections for two years. The total cost came to \$9,000; some of that amount was covered by a generous donor. This is part of our mission - not only to preserve Pacifica's history, but to preserve the building which houses the city's museum and is an important Pacifica landmark.

This winter, we planted a Western Redbud tree on the south side of the museum in honor of our long-time and much-missed PHS leader, the late Shirlee Gibbs, a major force behind PHS and the restoration of the building. The tree is already budding and will grow into a large tree with pink blossoms. In a few weeks we will install a small plaque by the tree to indicate it was planted in Shirlee's memory.

PHS board members have visited three primary classes in the school district, giving presentations about the Ohlone people and the history of Pacifica. We've also had visits by classes from our local middle school. On these visits, students learn about the Ohlone tribe, the Ocean Shore Railroad, and the fascinating history of our city. We do leave out some of Pacifica's most colorful stories - those you can hear about on our monthly guided walks around Sharp Park. We encourage you to join us on the last Saturday of every month at noon. Please let your friends and neighbors know; perhaps gather a group and make a day of it, with the walk, a visit to the museum and gift shop and lunch at a restaurant nearby.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the AlessioGe Foundation for its generous contributions both to our OSRR project and PHS. We now have a paid assistant who works on a regular basis sorting and cataloguing material in our archives. This will make it easier to find things when needed and will ensure that future members will know what is stored in our archives.

We had illuminating and well-attended talks by Gordon van Zuiden, the author of "Never a Dull Mile," the story of the Ocean Shore Railroad; and Santa Clara University's Lee Panich on new discoveries of the Ohlones and the mission system. Next up, on April 12, is my presentation on how the Polynesians sailed across the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean to inhabit its many islands. These types of events carry out our mission to educate the public on local history; please support us by letting people know about PHS and [pacificahistory.org](http://pacificahistory.org).

Best,  
Stephen Johnson, PHS president

# Coming April 12 – *The Polynesians*



## The Polynesians - Explorers of the Pacific

Hear how the Polynesian peoples managed to find and inhabit Tahiti, Hawaii, Easter Island, and hundreds of islands around the Pacific Ocean in this free, illustrated talk by lecturer Stephen Johnson at the Coastside Museum in Pacifica. Sunday, April 12th, at 12p.m. 1850 Francisco Boulevard.

*A Pacifica Historical Society Presentation*

PacificaHistory.org

# ***Exhibits Committee Begins Work***

In August 2025, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Pacifica Coastside Museum. We had displays about the renovation process and the various events we have held since the opening. A panel discussed the long ordeal of fundraising and work involved in getting the building up to code to open to the public.

We are justified in being proud of what we created and the quality of the our displays. In general, visitors are impressed by our museum and the way we share our history. Nevertheless, as with any museum, there is room for improvement. As docents have helped tour around visitors, they have noticed there is a lack of flow, one topic does not blend into the next smoothly. Mostly, displays have been placed where they physically fit, rather than having been placed where related topics are close to one another.

Now it is time for us to rethink the use of our museum space and the way we tell the story of Pacifica's history.

A small committee of PHS Board members and docents have self-organized to discuss what our museum "facelift" should include. What are the topics to include, what format is effective for information to be displayed, and where the exhibits should be placed to create a better experience for our visitors and docents?

We invite you, our membership, to join this process. Specifically, we are looking for two kinds of help:

- 1) Contribution of ideas about what topics we should be sure to include in the displays. What history is essential and should not be omitted?
- 2) Hands-on help. We are confident that our committee can create a high-quality museum experience, but we need people with experience in graphic design, computer programs (e.g. Photoshop or Powerpoint), or general household workmanship. We also need others who are willing to learn whatever is needed to meet our goal.

If you are interested in helping with the exhibit facelift, send an email to [info@pacificahistory.org](mailto:info@pacificahistory.org).

Pat Kremer, PHS Vice President

## ***New Docents***

We are happy to announce that we have two new docents at our museum. Please help us welcome Pam Moore, long-time teacher in the Laguna Salada/Pacifica School District, and Maria Stone, who works in the tech field. Both went through the recent docent training class and are looking forward to greeting our visitors at the Pacifica Coastside Museum.

Susan Stallard, PHS Vice President

# ***News From Our Museum Building***

You may have noticed the Pacifica Coastside Museum seemed to disappear for a few days under a striped yellow and black tent in late February. The building was tented for work necessary after a termite inspection showed an infestation. It looks like we're all good now. We were able to have the work done on days the museum was closed and no rummage sale scheduled. PHS thanks the generous donor who helped with the cost of the work.



Spruced up landscaping outside our museum includes colorful new trees and shrubs. PHS Board Members Jay Crawford (left) and Steve Clark (who is also our building manager) oversaw the planting of the Western Redbud tree on the southern side of the museum to honor Shirlee Gibbs, our longtime PHS leader who headed up restorations of our building and OSRR Car #1409. The tree has already started to sprout pink buds. A memorial plaque to celebrate Shirlee's accomplishments is planned at the base of the tree.



# ***Lee Panich Shares Local Native Findings***



PHS drew nearly full house on March 29 for a compelling presentation by Lee Panich, a Santa Clara University professor who has done extensive studies on Native California people of northern California and their relationship to the mission system. Panich was introduced by PHS President Stephen Johnson (lower left), who noted the importance of recognizing the land in which we live, inhabited for centuries by the Ramaytush Ohlone. Panich is an archaeologist and historical anthropologist who was involved in discoveries at the Sanchez Adobe that included a Native burial ground. A video of the talk will be available soon on our website. For more on Panich and his extensive research, see <https://scu.academia.edu/LeePanich>.

And, for information and a copy of Native Persistence at a California Mission Outpost written by Panich and co-authors who studied the Asistencia de San Pedro y San Pablo (the Sanchez Adobe), see <https://floridapress.org/9781683405023/native-persistence-at-a-california-mission-outpost/>

## ***KQED Bay Curious Features Us, Again***

KQED's Bay Curious radio program spotlighted Pacifica and PHS yet again! Earlier this year, we were for the subject of an episode that – until recently – was a little-known part of Pacifica history: the raid at Hazel's, the oceanfront Sharp Park bar that became a gathering place for gay men who were forced south when San Francisco bars were targeted there in the 1950s. The 1956 arrest at Hazel's of 79 men and 10 women by 35 San Mateo County sheriff officers on "morals charges" and the subsequent ACLU court case is in the history books: it was the first time that the ACLU took on a gay rights case. Our PHS researcher, Deb Hagler Wong, did her usual terrific work piecing together the story for our website and helped in creating a display at the museum. See the website for info at <https://pacificahistory.org/hazelsinn>

To hear or read the KQED episode that includes Hazel's:

<https://www.kqed.org/news/12069545/how-the-bay-areas-gay-bars-became-a-battleground-for-lgbtq-rights-in-the-1950s>

Two other KQED Bay Curious episodes about us in the last few years, one on the Sharp Park Detention Center and the other about our famous Pacifica Jack cheese:

<https://www.kqed.org/news/11918432/pacificas-wwii-prison-camp-has-been-largely-erased-but-it-was-there>

<https://www.kqed.org/news/11916538/move-over-monterey-pacifica-lays-claim-to-iconic-jack-cheese>

- Laura Del Rosso, PHS board

## ***Surfing Exhibit Expanded, Refreshed***

Our surfing exhibit upstairs in the AV Room, which is where PHS exhibits Pacifica sports history, was recently expanded with displays about the pioneer surfers, starting from the early Keating family and featuring champion surfers, including Shawn Rhodes, NorCal surf shop owner. On the wall are historical photos from the 1930s and 40s of early surfers and an SF Chronicle article about --- brrrrr – how surfers managed before the invention of wetsuits. Thanks to our docent, David Malloy, we have a QR code at the exhibit that links to a video of the Pacifica Dog Surfing Championship. The photo of the pooch Abbie was taken by our late board member, Denise Buckley Crawford, whose postcards of dog surfing and other Pacifica images are available in the gift shop.

- Laura Del Rosso, PHS board



## ***“Never a Dull Mile” on the OSRR***

PHS and the Train Committee dedicated to the restoration of Ocean Shore Railroad Car #1409 hosted a February event featuring Gordon van Zuiden (below), author of the book “Never a Dull Mile,” which chronicles a ride on the OSRR (available in our gift shop). We had a terrific turnout of more than 50 people, including lots of train buffs, for the author talk, a viewing of the latest work on #1409, live music, a train locomotive cake by PHS’s Deirdra Crow and the sale of OSSR ephemeras. A reporter from an online magazine, Trains.com, covered the event.

<https://www.trains.com/trn/railroads/heritage-rail/preservation/restoring-the-last-ocean-shore-railroad-coach/>

Our OSRR exhibit also has a new QR code, thanks to docent, David Malloy, that links to an interview with longtime Pacifica schoolteacher Bob Siebert, who describes his own ride on the OSRR. Ask a docent and check it out next time you visit the museum.



Gordonvan Zuiden, author



Priyanka Hegde, archivist, Frederica Alessio, project manager, Christine Boles, Pacifica Mayor, and Bob Boles, train committee, enjoy seeing the interior of OSRR car # 1409, opened for visitors during this event. Note the fresh ceiling, sides, and floor.

# ***Don't Miss Our Historic Walking Tours***

If you haven't yet been, mark your calendars for our Historic Sharp Park Walking Tours, held the last Saturday of each month. The next two are on April 25 and May 30. A rotating group of our docents (Stephen Johnson, Steve Clark and Raquel Iverson) meet visitors at noon at the museum front steps for a one-hour stroll, easy and on flat pavements, through Pacifica's historic neighborhood that includes City Hall, old taverns, speakeasies, brothels, the pier and stories of local characters.



Steve Clark (right), leads a recent tour.

## ***Renew Your PHS Membership for 2026 Or Join as a New Member***

**This is your last Newsletter and event notice if your membership is not current.**

Now is the time to renew your membership for 2026! Or join as a new member, good through 2026. All memberships are good for the calendar year, so if you join or renew now, your membership is good through December 31, 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 good at our gift shop.

### **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 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: Stephen Johnson

Vice President: Pat Kremer

Vice President: Susan Stallard

Secretary: Carolyn Miller

Treasurer: Janet Ang

Board of Directors: Janet Ang, Karen Bacheller, Steve Clark, Jay Crawford, Deidra Crow, Laura Del Rosso, Sue Digre, Stephen Johnson, Pat Kremer, Terri McCann, Kathy McGuire, Carolyn Miller, Susan Stallard, Brigid Voss  
Emeritus Members Kathleen Manning, Jerry Crow

Newsletter Editors: Laura Del Rosso, Susan Stallard

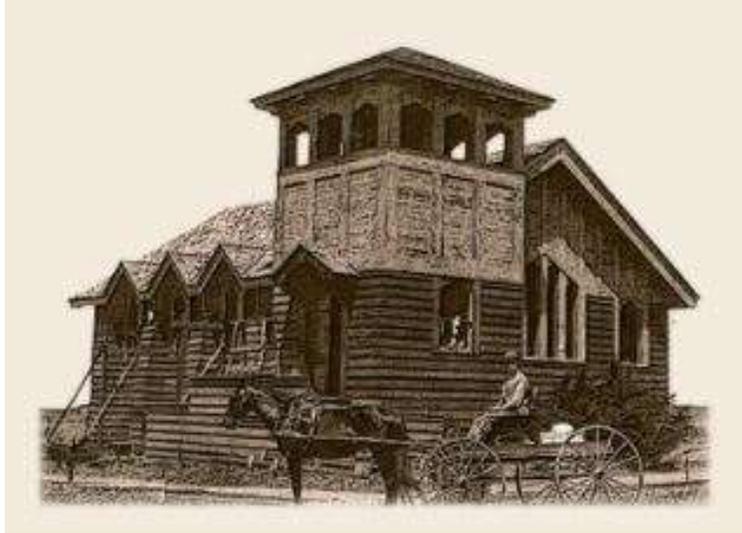
The Pacifica Historical Society welcomes everyone to join our organization and join our committees. We hold monthly Board Meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, 4 pm. The Planning Committee for events and activities meets monthly on the last Thursday of each month, 4 pm.

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 650-303-1670.

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.



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