

Pacifica Historical Society

Pacifica Coastside Museum 1850 Francisco Blvd. P. O. Box 752, Pacifica, CA 94044

PHS FOURTH QUARTERLY MEETING

JOIN US AT THE CASTLE !

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1-4PM

**Join us for our 2018 holiday party at the historic Sam Mazza Castle.
This PHS members-only event is a potluck, so please bring some finger foods.**

The castle's fascinating history reflects the history of Pacifica itself. In 1906, San Francisco attorney Henry Harrison McCloskey was shaken (literally and figuratively) by the great earthquake. An executive for the Ocean Shore Land Company (and Railroad), he bought land in what is now Pacifica's Sharp Park district and set out to build a safe haven that paid homage to the Scottish castles of his wife's youth.

As the Castle changed hands over the years, it acquired a colorful and dramatic history. Abortion clinic whose proprietor (and son) ended up in San Quentin. Speakeasy. Signaling post for moonshine smugglers. Brothel. Station for Coast Guard troops and their military dogs. Venue for fabulous parties and the eclectic art collection of Sam Mazza himself. Residence of ghosts?



COVENTRY CAROLERS PHS FUNDRAISER

WEDNESDAY, DEC 12, 7PM

Every year the Coventry Carolers are a hit at the Dickens Fair — this year they will perform in costume at the museum for a PHS fundraiser. Join us for carols & a sing-along!



President's Message

Erika Rigling (EARPac@aol.com)



Dear Members of the Pacifica Historical Society,

As another year draws to a close, this is a good time to look back at all we accomplished in 2018, and to look ahead to our plans for 2019. We can all take pride in the accomplishments of the PHS over the past year.

{ERIKA — FEW SENTENCES ON HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2018}

As we look ahead to 2019, there is much to be excited about, including our new leadership team. On Sunday, October 28, we held our Yearly Membership Meeting & Potluck, and the membership voted for the Officers and Board for 2019. Congratulations and thanks to all who have accepted the responsibility to serve on the PHS Board of Directors. They will take office on January 1.

Officers

President Erika Rigling

Vice President Diana Zollinger

Secretary Enid Ansgarius

Treasurer Melanie Talsky

New Board Members

Marlene Duschek

Judy Heldberg

Steven Johnson

Carolyn Miller

Ken Miles

Continuing Board Members

Clorinda Campagna

Rick Della Santina

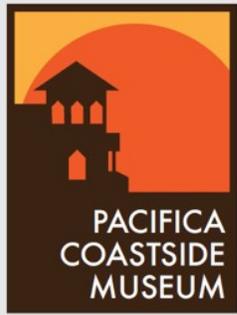
Mary Dougherty

Shirlee Gibbs

Kathy McGuire

Looking ahead, our future depends, as always, on our leadership and our members. I encourage each of you to get involved. There are so many ways to make a difference. To name just a few: Shirlee Gibbs needs volunteers to help with the rummage sales that help fund the restoration of the Ocean Shore Railroad (OSRR) car. And Kathleen could use help with the OSSR committee that she leads. We can also use someone with a green thumb who could help with our obligation to the streetscape on Palmetto. This list goes on! Contact me for more info. I hope the new year gets off to a great start for you and yours.

Erika



PACIFICA COASTSIDE MUSEUM

1850 Francisco Blvd. Pacifica, CA

Open T, Th & Sat 1-4pm ~ 650-355-1909

Grand Opening

New Exhibit on the Famed Portola Expedition

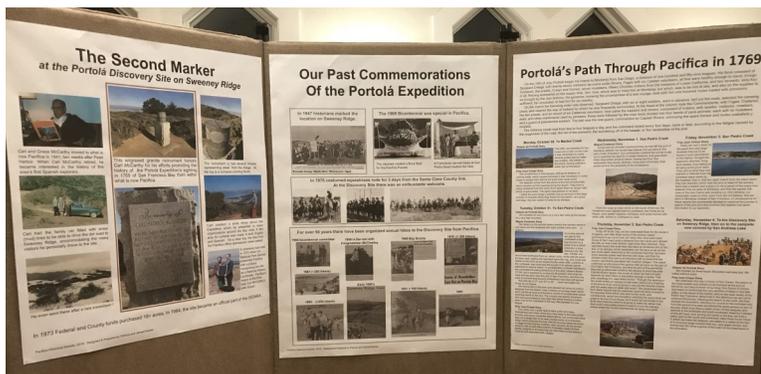
On the evening of November 1, the Pacifica Coastsides Museum hosted the grand opening of its latest exhibit — a new exploration of Portola’s famed 1769 expedition that marked the first time Europeans saw the San Francisco Bay. After unknowingly over-shooting their destination of Monterey, the Portola expedition realized their mistake in what is now Pacifica. The scrambled up what we call Sweeney Ridge, and saw the Bay. Although they were underwhelmed at the time, within a few years the Spanish colonization of California would be well underway.

Next year will mark the 250th year since the expedition, which has become symbolic of a pivotal moment in history, with all its complexities. There were, of course, thousands of Ohlone native Americans already living in the Bay Area at the time of this European “discovery.” The exhibit explores how commemorations of this event have evolved over time, and contemplates how the expedition might be viewed through the lens of today’s multicultural perspectives.

This new exhibit reflects the passion and tireless work of Museum docent Pat Kremer. A long-time friend of the Pacifica Historical Society, Pat has been the lead curator behind many of our exhibits. Pat’s interest in the Portola expedition is both professional and personal. Her father — Carl Patrick McCarthy — personally led over 11,000 people to the site, and a monument to his passion sits atop the site today!



Pat Kremer



Congratulations!

Second Class of Museum Docents Graduates

The PHS Docent Program, created and run by President Erika Rigling, graduated its second class in October 2018. Building on the success of the first docent class, the 11 students in the second class completed over 14 hours of classroom discussion and activities, spanning all of Pacifica history, as well as the art and science of being a docent. Docents also receive safety training, and learn how to operate the AV equipment as well as our newly-repaired ADA-compliant lift.

Each docent has committed to doing volunteer work for the museum at least one day each month for a year. Our docents will also act as hosts for our programs and events. We are proud and privileged to have such a passionate and committed group engaged with us!

We will have a refresher class in late January for current docents to catch up on missed or new material. And we'll have a third round of the docent program in February or March. Contact Erika Rigling for more information.



Thank You to Retiring Board Members

We'd like to honor and celebrate the long term Board members who are retiring.

Judy Barton Grants Chair

Jerry Crow, Treasurer

Deidra Kennedy, Membership Chair, Museum Director 2015-17 ?

Paul Slavin, President 2016, 2017, OSRR Committee Chair

Steve Talsky,



Paul Slavin
PHS President 2016-7



Judy Barton



Steve Talsky



Jerry Crow & Deidra Kennedy

Streetscaping Update

The City of Pacifica is engaged in a long-term effort to further invigorate our neighborhood. The Museum contributes to this effort by “adopting” a portion of Palmetto Avenue, and upgrading it as part of the Palmetto Streetscape Project led by city’s Beautification Advisory Committee. Our next planting session will be November 17. Contact Kathleen Manning at manningsbk@aol.com for more information and to volunteer.

Membership Report

Let's give a hearty welcome to our newest members:

May they attend our events and be greeted by all

Deidra Kennedy, Membership Lady, 650-303-1670

TO RENEW:

Please make your check payable to Pacifica Historical Society and mail to PO Box 752 Pacifica, CA 94044

DUES:

Individual \$20.00 / Family \$25.00
Student or Senior Individual \$15.00
Senior Couple/Student Couple \$20.00

Pedro Valley: Today's Linda Mar

by Laura Del Rosso

The history of Pedro Valley – today's Linda Mar – is fascinating because almost the entire story of California seems to be contained in this one small valley.

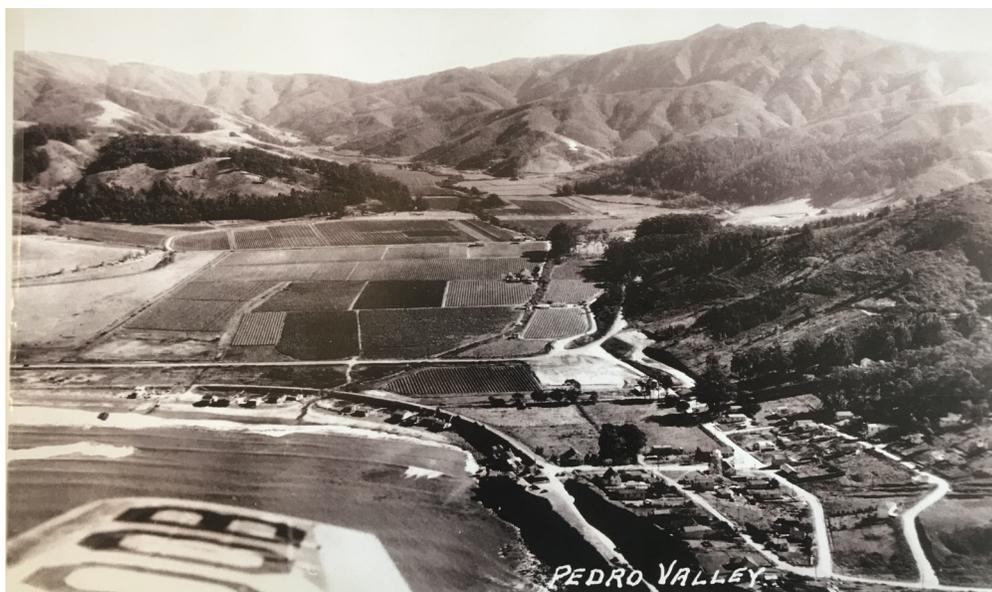
It was the home of Native Americans, the Ohlones, followed by Spanish who founded the Mission Dolores outpost and then Francisco Sanchez who owned the entire land that is today's Pacifica and ran vast cattle ranches. After Sanchez' death, the valley was shaped by late 19th century-early 20th century immigration from Europe to California and later dramatically transformed by the post-World War II suburban development boom.

While there's been research published about the Spanish and Mexican periods, there isn't as much information about what occurred in Pedro Valley during the roughly 100 years that followed. According to the late San Mateo County historian Alan Brown, after Sanchez' death in 1862, his widow Theodora leased the valley to Francis Sievers who sub-leased it to immigrant farmers, mostly Irish, who planted cabbage and potatoes. In 1871, Theodora sold the ranch to James Regan, a partner of wealthy San Francisco bankers Richard and Robert Tobin, founders of Hibernia Bank.

Eventually, the Tobins owned the biggest chunk of the western part of Pedro Valley and built a large summer estate, today's Shamrock Ranch. They leased long narrow tracts that ran north to south up and down the valley to dairy and vegetable farmers. One of these strips – where the Sanchez Adobe stands – was acquired by General Edward Kirkpatrick in 1878 and was owned by his widow until 1946. The author Jack London once lived on one of the tracts as a young boy; his stepfather leased 75 acres from the Tobins. Eventually, the potato blight that had devastated Ireland also hit California and potato and cabbage crops were replaced – as were the Irish farmers – by Italians who found that artichokes thrived on the cool coast.

I knew my own family history growing up in Linda Mar but by the time I was born in 1957 (one day before Pacifica was born) the days of artichoke fields that stretched as far as the eye could see were long gone, replaced by rows of houses built by Andy Oddstad. However, I had cousins who were a generation older and I heard their stories of growing up in Pedro Valley. My uncle, Abramo Del Rosso, immigrated from an Italian town near Lucca and Pisa to Half Moon Bay in 1914. He married Susie Benedetti, who graduated from Half Moon Bay High School in 1924 and was the daughter of immigrants from the same Italian region. My father, Silvio, arrived from Italy in the 1920s. He joined his brother and Susie's father, Louis Benedetti, on a farm they leased in San Gregorio. Sometime in the 1930s they moved to Pedro Valley, leasing a part of Tobin-owned land in roughly what is today the area between Peralta and Adobe roads and between Linda Mar School and Linda Mar Boulevard. They were familiar with Pedro Valley because Susie's cousins, the Barsotti family, had long farmed in the valley.

Lately, I've been inspired to delve a little deeper in this history. I found online a remarkable master's thesis (Shell Mounds to Cul-de-Sacs: The Cultural Landscape of San Pedro Valley) by John Culp. It was written in 2002 for San Francisco State's geography department (and available at <https://geog.sfsu.edu/person/john-culp>). In it, Culp referenced valuable books and articles that shed light on the valley's history. I also read Julia Gervais' self-published manuscript "The Best to You: Based on the Lives of the Lenci, Lotti and Michelucci Families, who Emigrated to the U.S. From Italy at the Turn of the Century." (The PHS has a copy).



Pedro Valley: Today's Linda Mar (con't)

It's an interesting memoir because the family of Gervais, who was born in 1912 in Pedro Valley and died in 2010 at age 98, seems to have been part of the first wave of Italians. Her family, the Micheluccis, arrived some time around the turn of the century. She recalled her parents telling about sending a wagon to Telegraph Hill days after the 1906 earthquake to bring relatives to the safe haven of the ranch. Gervais describes, as did my cousins, Georgia and Leo, who attended the two-room schoolhouse in Rockaway Beach (with beloved schoolteacher Mrs. Wallace), that living in Pedro Valley was like being in a Garden of Eden. They all recalled a lush place with gushing creeks, fruit and willow trees, plus lively Sunday dinners, bocce ball games and picnics on the beach.

Pedro Valley became the center the country's artichoke cultivation by the early 1900s. Today, we think of Castroville as the artichoke capital but in the early 20th century it was Pedro Valley. The late Paul Azevedo, former president of the Pacifica Historical Society, wrote that it may have been a man named Giuseppe Silicani who first brought an artichoke cutting from Italy to the valley. (The 1880 census shows a Selacini living in the valley). The late Half Moon Bay historian June Morrall quoted a unpublished National Geographic article from 1927 that stated that artichokes were first planted in Pedro Valley and later expanded south to Half Moon Bay. Regardless of where they first sprouted, artichokes thrived in the cool coastal climate. According to the local paper, the Coast Side Comet, by 1912 there were 500 acres of artichokes planted in San Pedro Valley, Salada and Brighton Beach.

However, as my cousins always said, life wasn't easy. The men toiled long hours in the fields and spent hours packing artichokes in crates by size and quality and trucking them to San Francisco. (Our family's old barn, still visible on Peralta Road next door to the former farmhouse on the corner of Dell Road, was the packing shed. The Sanchez Adobe was also used for packing, by other farmers). The women worked even harder than the men because their work was never done. Ranch hands who lived in bunkhouses had to be fed three substantial meals a day and piles of laundry washed by hand. The farmers raised their own chickens and livestock and grew vegetables besides artichokes to feed the hungry crews.

According to Azevedo, the farmers made the artichokes more marketable by cutting off the buds in late spring, forcing the plants to set buds in early fall and late winter so that there would be a bounty of artichokes in the winter, when there weren't many other green vegetables. Most of the artichokes were transported to New York City by refrigerated rail cars. John Barsotti, a grandson of the Barsotti who farmed in Pedro Valley, told me that his family lore is that his grandfather Ernesto, who owned a San Francisco produce transport company, oversaw Pedro Valley and other ranches on the coast and may have been the first to send artichokes by rail to New York.

When World War II erupted, the Italians faced difficulties. Those who were not citizens, like my father, had to register as "enemy aliens," were restricted to a five-mile radius of their homes and to an 8 p.m.-6 a.m curfew, preventing them from driving to San Francisco's produce market. In Sharp Park, there was a grim reminder that Italians were under scrutiny: the U.S government held Japanese, Germans and Italians in an internment camp. But while they suffered under the stigma of being labeled as "enemies," the farmers also turned bigger profits during the war because of demand for food. In 1941, my family was able to buy the land they had long leased from the Tobins.

By the early 1950s, as the Bay Area's population boomed and growing families looked south of San Francisco, developer Andy Oddstad turned his sights on the valley. Oddstad began courting the Italian farmers aided by Ray Higgins, a San Francisco businessman who in 1927 had bought parcels of former Ocean Shore Land Company property, anticipating a housing boom. (Higgins also purchased the Sanchez Adobe in 1946 and sold it to San Mateo County the following year).

My family was reluctant to end their farming days but, as their friends sold and concerns grew about water rights with encroaching tracts of homes, they agreed. Like most of the other farmers, they kept a few acres around their own homes. In one 48-hour period in 1952, Higgins and Oddstad struck their biggest deals. They acquired my family's property and that of the Bernardi, Lazzarini, Malavear, Magrin, Picardo, Pitto and Rovai families. Soon after, utility lines started going in at the corner of Rosita and Adobe and the first of Oddstad's houses were built. His company, Sterling Terrace Corp., renamed the valley Linda Mar and a new era began.



Winter Calendar



Rummage sale

Second weekend of every month

Setup on Thursday morning before the sale

**Fri & Sat
Dec 9 & 10
9am to 4pm**



PHS History Book Club

4th Saturday of every month

No meeting in Nov/Dec

At the Museum. We'll be reading *There There* — the new best seller exploring Native American identity and culture. The title is a reference to Gertude Stein's often misinterpreted quote about Oakland: "There is no there, there"

Jan 26

10:30am



Coventry Carolers

Special PHS Fundraiser

At the Museum

Dec 12

7pm

Pacifica Historical Society

PACIFICA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P O Box 752, Pacifica, CA 94044

www.PacificaHistory.org

Facebook: Search "Pacifica Historical Society"

OFFICERS

President: Erika A. Rigling (Erika @PacificaHistory.org)

V-President: Kathy McGuire (Kathy@PacificaHistory.org)

Secretary: Pat Kremer (Pat@PacificaHistory.org)

Corresponding Secretary: Enid Ansgarius

Treasurer: Jerry Crow (Jerry@PacificaHistory.org)

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Erika Rigling / Steve Kraus. **Writers:** Rigling, Kraus, Del Rosso

BOARD & PLANNING MEETINGS

The PHS welcomes everyone to join our committees and attend the monthly Board meetings (second Tuesday of each month, 7pm, at the Museum). The Event/Planning committee meets the first Tuesday of the month at 2pm at the Museum.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Enid Ansgarius, Judy Barton, Clorinda Campagna, Jerry Crow, Rick Della Santina, Mary Dougherty, Shirlee Gibbs, Deidra Kennedy, Eileen Kewnig, Pat Kremer, Kathy McGuire, Erika Rigling, Paul Slavin, Steve Talsky, Diana Zollinger

RENTAL SPACE

The Coastside Museum is a great venue for events, and a revenue-generator for the PHS. For rental information please contact Judy Heldberg (650-359 6874). The building is available outside of museum hours, and is ideal for meetings, memorials, etc.