

# Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

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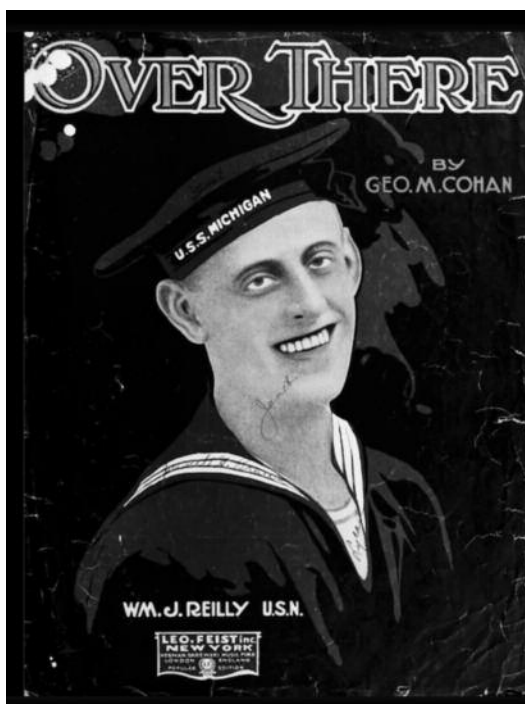
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## — 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR I — COMMEMORATE VETERANS DAY SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11



**T**he Pinole Historical Society has some special touches planned for this year's Veterans Day Memorial and Flag Retirement Ceremony, which will be held from 11 a.m. to noon on Sunday, November 11, in Fernandez Park.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I, which was signed at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month — November 11, 1918.

We hope you can attend as the society and the City of Pinole honor the brave men and

women who have served — and continue to serve — to protect the freedoms we treasure.

**THE PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM WEBSITE IS LIVE!**  
[WWW.PINOLEHISTORYMUSEUM.ORG](http://WWW.PINOLEHISTORYMUSEUM.ORG)

Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

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It's also posted on the PHS website (click on NEWSLETTER in the menu bar).

**FOR ADVERTISERS:** 2,000 printed copies of *PHS Newsbriefs* are distributed every quarter, generating readership among thousands of Pinole and West County residents. Hundreds more receive the newsletter directly from the PHS via its database and website.

**If you're interested in advertising, contact Jeff Rubin at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org) or (510) 724-9507.**

## PHS CALENDAR

### ONGOING

**November 2 program: "Life and Local Politics in Contra Costa County,"** presented by former Contra Costa Times Metro Columnist Tom Barnidge. The public is invited to this FREE event from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road. Refreshments will be served.

**November 28: Monthly Board of Directors meeting.** The public is invited to attend and speak on any of the items discussed at these meetings. Pinole Senior Center, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**PHS booth at Pinole Farmers' Market.** We're at the Pinole Farmers' Market on alternate Saturdays through December: November 10, 24; December 8, 22.

## PinoleHistoricalSociety

**Board of Directors:** Jeff Rubin, President; Mary McMains, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Norma Martínez-Rubin, Carol White.

**Directors Emeritus:** Marcia Kalapus, Jack Meehan, George Vincent. **Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Rubin.

## 2019 PHS MEETING DATES

**February 1:** Program to be announced.

**May 3:** Program to be announced.

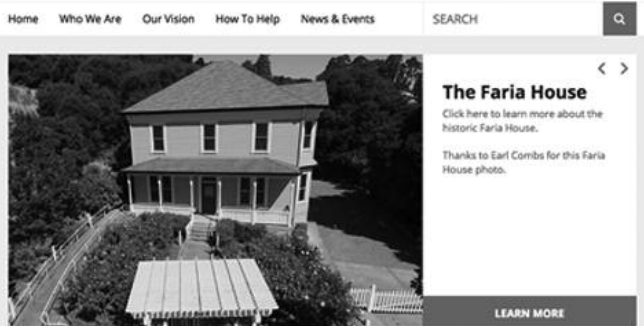
**September 6:** Program to be announced.

**November 1:** Program to be announced.

All meetings are held from 6:30-8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road.

For more information, call (510) 724-9507, e-mail [info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org), or visit our website at [www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org).

## PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM



## MUSEUM WEBSITE ONLINE

The Pinole History Museum website is online at [www.pinolehistorymuseum.org](http://www.pinolehistorymuseum.org).

There are sections on the Pinole Garden Club, historic preservation, the Pinole Historical Society's annual school essay contest, the Faria House, the Fernandez Mansion, and some of our planned museum exhibits.

And, of course, you may donate to the museum through the website.

Let us know what you think. E-mail comments and suggestions to us at [info@pinolehistorymuseum.org](mailto:info@pinolehistorymuseum.org).

# President's Message

**Jeff Rubin, President, Pinole Historical Society**

## MUSEUM DINNER WAS A GREAT SUCCESS

**T**he October 13, 2018, Pinole History Museum fundraising dinner at St. Joseph School was a smashing success.

The support of the community was overwhelming, heartwarming, and encouraging, as we begin the long road toward converting the nearly 140-year-old Faria House into a world-class, small-city museum.

We blasted past our goal of selling 150 tickets, selling more than 200. Combined with a raffle that generated more than \$1,300, we were able to raise nearly \$6,000

toward our first goal, which is assisting the City of Pinole in covering the cost of architectural plans to bring the Faria House up to code.

The great Pinole Valley High School Jazz Band entertained our guests for more than 90 minutes, playing a selection of jazz standards by Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, and others. And the altruistic and enthusiastic students from the PVHS Interact group helped us set up, served dinner and dessert, and helped us clean up to leave the school auditorium as spotless as it was when we arrived.

There are lots of dinner photos in the November 1 PHS E-News. You can find it here: [www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org/ENews.htm](http://www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org/ENews.htm)

**Bob Kopp and Pete Murray cooked chicken for nearly 180 guests.**



**Jeff Rubin**



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# Back in the day

George R. Vincent

## THE LADY WHO DISLIKED PINOLE

**T**he home of one of Pinole's leading ladies of the past is today a town landmark, which, unlike so many local structures, has withstood the ravages of time and the wrecking ball.

The stately gray and white Pfeiffer House is a main street architectural reminder that Pinole has a prideful history to tell. The old home seems out of place amid its surroundings of the busy buzz of shopping plazas, noisy traffic, and neon business fronts.

Built in 1901 alongside Pinole Creek, the originally all-white redwood home today houses the aptly named Pinole Creek Cafe.

Who were the Pfeiffers, who chose this location to begin their new lives in a new community about to enter a new century?

In 1898, eighteen-year old Lottie Race disembarked from Pinole's Southern Pacific depot in a driving rainstorm. Young Lottie was not at all impressed with her first glimpse of Pinole and felt her stay there to be a short one. Eighty-seven years later, Lottie was still a Pinolean.

Her father, Albert Race, found work at the Hercules Powder Company (California Powder Works) and brought his

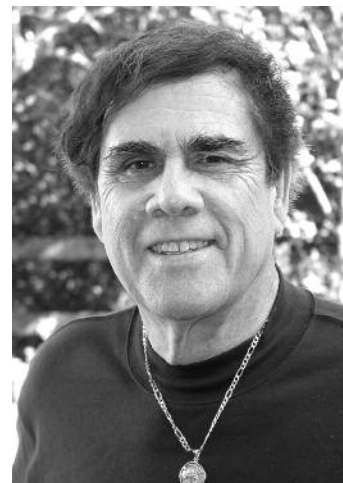
family from Eureka to live in Pinole in 1898. Fast forwarding to 1974 found Lottie Race Pfeiffer at age 94, still living in her home at 2454 San Pablo Avenue.

Lottie remembered Pinole in those early days as having more saloons than houses, no sidewalks, hard well water and always muddy streets. The Races lived on Tennent Avenue,

where there were 11 saloons; some of the Races were saloon-keepers.

But the small community also offered Pinoleans fun outlets associated with the many fraternal lodges. Dances with an orchestra were held every Saturday night in the large Foresters' Hall on Tennent Avenue. It burned down in the large fire of 1908 and

***Lottie Pfeiffer, 94, takes her last walk up the steps of her house at 2454 San Pablo Avenue in 1974. It was her home for 73 years. It's now the Pinole Creek Cafe.***



**George Vincent**

was replaced by the Pinole Opera House, which burned down in 1931.

It was at a Saturday night dance where Lottie met George Pfeiffer, one of the many bachelor boarders who worked at the Hercules Powder Company. Lottie was smitten by him and turned down five young men who wanted to escort her to the next dance. Their courtship led to marriage three years later.

During their courtship, the couple would ride into the Pinole Valley in his horse and buggy, have picnics at the old adobes, or stroll on Sundays down Tennent Avenue to the depot to watch the trains arrive to see who was coming and going.

George had been a carpenter at Hercules since age 15 and would work there for 48 years. He built their dream home, and the couple moved in on their wedding day, October 23, 1901.

The large home was the most imposing one on San Pablo Avenue.

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# THE LADY WHO DISLIKED PINOLE

Continued from page 4

Its unique architectural style boasted five rooms with 12-foot ceilings and a large yard.

In the 1920s, San Pablo Avenue was widened, and much of their front yard was lost. In 1906, the house was knocked three inches off its foundation by the San Francisco earthquake, breaking almost everything in the house and knocking plaster from the walls.

Lottie's grandparents were living in the old Martinez family adobe in Pinole Valley. They had to abandon it when the quake demolished much of the old adobe's rooms.

Lottie vividly remembered the families and buildings in her town.

Pinole's first bank was next to their home, and her husband built the first vault in the bank. Lehman's Grocery Store

was at the site of the present Antlers Tavern, and the Commercial Hotel and Walton's Livery Stable occupied today's Fernandez Park.

Dr. Manuel Fernandez delivered their daughter, Muriel, in their home. Lottie recalled the doctor laughing, "from just performing surgery on a chamber pot." A boy from Rodeo had managed to get the pot stuck on his head, and mother and son had walked all the way from Rodeo to have Dr. Fernandez remove the pot.

Lottie's husband passed away in 1956, and she continued to live in the house for 55 years. In October 1974, Lottie left to live with her daughter, coincidentally on the same date she had moved there when married on October 23, 1901.

Since her departure, the home has been

bought by individuals who have preserved its grand exterior. It has been a crafts shop, almost a Vera's Italian Restaurant, an ice cream parlor, and today's popular Pinole Creek Cafe.

Lottie's first impression of Pinole in 1898 was an unfavorable one. However, she came to accept and love the close-knit community and the friends she made with early families such as Fernandez, Collins, Barrett, Brandt, Ellerhorst, and Downer.

For those who knew Lottie, her day of departure was undoubtedly a sad one. She had sold most of her treasured belongings of a bygone era and watched them go out her big front door — the same one she had entered 73 years earlier. But Lottie retained the wonderful memories of everything and everyone in her home until her

passing in 1985 at the grand age of 105.

If a home forever keeps the mannerisms of its occupants long after they have gone, the Pfeiffer house still speaks of Lottie's presence there. One can imagine her small, delicate figure standing on her broad front steps with a welcoming smile much as she had done on her wedding day so long ago.

She was a strong woman of her time and an exceptional homemaker in so many ways. Her marriage ushered in the new 20th century, and her love for husband George and daughter Muriel still prevails within the walls of the old home.

If you chance to visit the Pfeiffer House, you just might feel greeted by an unseen hostess of the past escorting you to your dining pleasure in her parlor.



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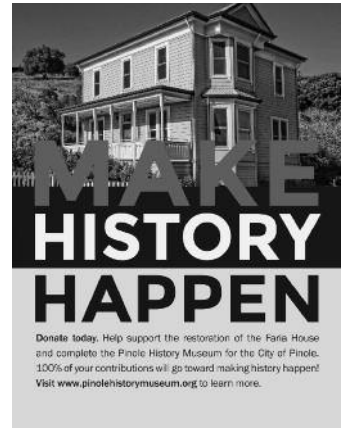
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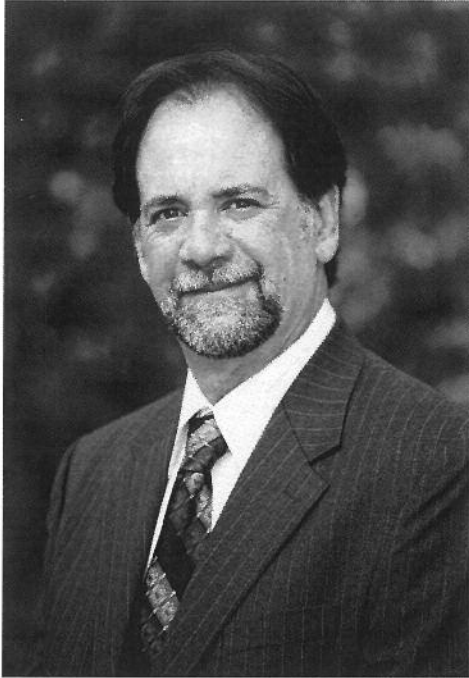
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# Guest columnist

**Stella Faria**

## PINOLE POST OFFICE MOVES IN 1910

In 1823, a Mexican land grant was given to Ygnacio Martinez, Commandant of the Presidio of San Francisco. He built an adobe hacienda in Pinole Valley that started the land development that was to become the city of Pinole.

Bernardo Fernandez, a Portuguese immigrant, had started a shipping and trading company at the Pinole waterfront in the 1850s. It shipped grain and livestock for the farmers in the area.

Edward M. Downer came to Pinole in 1889 as station agent and postmaster at the new Southern Pacific Railway depot. With his family he

formed a chain of banking houses and became a very influential figure in the area.

These two gentlemen played a big part in the development and history of Pinole.

The block-long piece of land on the west side of Tennent Avenue between Pear Street and San Pablo Avenue was very familiar to me because I walked it often when making a trip to



**Postal worker George Fraser with his daughter Marybelle (left) and her friend, Ruth Van Dollen, in the old Tennent Avenue post office.**



**Stella Faria**

the Barroca and Pontes grocery store for my mother. The only thing left from that once busy little business strip is the Pump House at one end and a small parking area at the other, in front of where the Pinole Food Center once stood.

These are my memories of that little section of Old Town.

At the southwest corner of Tennent and San Pablo avenues, which was then the heavily

*Continued on page 10*



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# PINOLE POST OFFICE MOVES IN 1910

Continued from page 9

trafficked Highway 40, was the Golden West Hotel and Saloon. The owner/proprietor was James A. Silvas, a member of the Cipriano Silvas family. He was the original owner of that strip on Tennent Avenue.

Sometime during the 1940s, Mr. Barrett opened a dining room in the back of the saloon. The girl who was the waitress asked me to take her place for a couple of days. I had no experience, but she was confident I would do a good job, and said the tips were good.

At that time there was gambling going on at Manuel Marcos's saloon across the street, so the dealers came over to eat at the hotel. That's where the big tips came from. My career as a waitress was over in three days.

Next door to the Gold-



**The two-story Town Tavern, southwest corner of Tennent and San Pablo avenues, ca. 1950s.**

en West Hotel was a haberdashery, a store catering to men's clothing and accessories. A haberdashery in England sells a different variety of notions, such as buttons, ribbons, and other sewing items. Mr. Silvas owned the store and carried a variety of men's hats and clothing.

To the left of the haberdashery was a very small hole-in-the-wall shop that seemed to

change proprietors often.

As I knew it, there was a beauty shop there operated by the owner, Mae Turner, who was from Hercules. She did not stay there very long.

A jeweler/watchmaker moved in to replace her. His name was Randall Meador, and he remained in business there until the buildings were demolished to make way for the Pinole Food Center, owned by Glen

Ellis and later by Al Torretta and Pete Schober.

The Pinole Post Office moved from the Southern Pacific depot in 1910 to Tennent Avenue. It was a rather small building with one barred window and individual combination-dialed mailboxes. If you did not have a mailbox you had to request your mail at the window.

The postmaster was Martin Collins, a member of the pioneer Collins family. His assistant was Delfina Lewis, one of five sisters from the Azevedo family, who farmed in Pinole Valley.

I was hired a few times to help out in the Christmas rush. I was only about 15 at the time, but quickly learned the routine at a small-town post office.

There were no ZIP codes or mail-sorting machines in those days, so the postmaster had to

*Continued on page 11*

## Why not advertise with us?

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***The Pinole Historical Society promotes awareness and appreciation of history through preservation and education, and chronicles the city's heritage for current and future generations.***

## **PINOLE POST OFFICE MOVES IN 1910**



***Barroca's Central Grocery, now Tina's Place***

*Continued from page 10*

hand stamp, sort, and bundle all the outgoing mail. The mail was then put into one or two large canvas bags that were picked up in the late afternoon by Mrs. Lanthier and delivered to the Southern Pacific depot.

I still recall our mailbox number was 165. Martin Collins and Delfina Lewis worked at that location until a new post office was opened in 1948 at the west end of Pear Street, on the site of what was the Plaza School in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There was a white two-story residence between the post office and the corner that was home to the Davis family. It was later torn down to make

way for the food center/gas station project.

There was another small building and ice-house at the corner, which later became a dry cleaners. I remember that little building well because my mother-in-law, Mary (Rose) Faria, who had reared seven children and had never worked a day out of her home, worked there as a clerk for a few hours a day for a short time.

Across the street and on the corner was the Abraham Greenfield department store, which was established in 1897. That is one of the few old buildings that still remain and are on the city's historical walking tour.

The Bank of Pinole and the Fernandez and Downer mansions are still inhabited. It is too bad that the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe depots could not be saved. Fortunately, the Faria House was purchased by the city and is now in the early stages of becoming the Pinole History Museum, where our children and grandchildren can be exposed to the wonderful history of the beautiful city of Pinole.

## **GOT HISTORY?**

**The Pinole Historical Society is grateful for donations of artifacts, photos, newspapers, memorabilia —anything of historical significance.**

**Please contact us at  
[info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)  
or call (510) 724-9507.**

## You can help us preserve the history of Pinole

**A**lways seeking to improve and add to the society's collection, the PHS welcomes inquiries from individuals owning objects which are significant to the history of Pinole.

Though we do not have a museum, we have three exhibit spaces at the Pinole Library and conduct history programs for service organizations, retirement residences, and schools.

Artifacts are an important part of these programs.

Please contact us at [info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org) or call (510) 724-9507 if you have an object you'd like to donate.

Also, you can view the numerous PHS programs right on your computer. Go to the city's website [www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html](http://www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html) and scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY. Several recent programs have been added.

## PHS VIDEOS ON CITY OF PINOLE WEBSITE

**M**iss one of our history programs on Pinole Community TV? Don't despair. The city's website has a dedicated

section devoted to PINOLE HISTORY on its "Videos Online" page.

You can view the numerous PHS programs right on your computer. Go to the city's website [www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html](http://www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html) and scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY.

You'll find our interviews, Veterans Day programs, George Vincent's two walking tours of historic downtown Pinole, and the very fine PCTV-produced, 12-part series based on the Historic Walking Tour brochure. It's great TV!

The historical society has recorded interviews with several prominent Pinole citizens. Among the videos

on the city's website are interviews with Ed LeFebvre, Charlotte (Fernandez) Shea, former fire chief Alex Clark, and former mayors Jack Meehan and Tom Cutino.

PHS program videos include:

- School Bell dedication.
- Japanese-American internment.
- Bars, Barbers, and Characters.
- A Flood of Memories.
- School Bells and Ink Wells.



We thank Bob Kopp, who recorded most of these events for the society.

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## SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PHS BY BECOMING A MEMBER IN 2019

For only \$30, you can help the PHS accomplish its mission of bringing the history of Pinole to our residents through exhibits at the Pinole Library, Pinole history programs in schools, Pinole Community TV programs, walking tours of downtown Pinole, the Veterans Day event in Fernandez Park — and you'll have the satisfaction of helping promote and preserve Pinole's history for future generations.

**JOIN THE PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP)  
AND HELP PROMOTE AND PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF OUR CITY.**

**Please mail the membership application in this newsletter today!**

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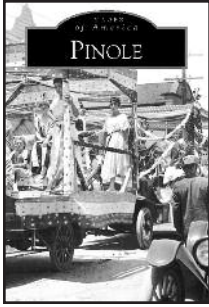


**Gary Lalley**

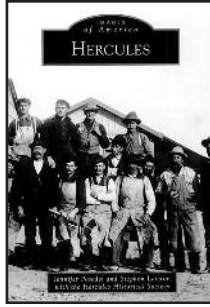
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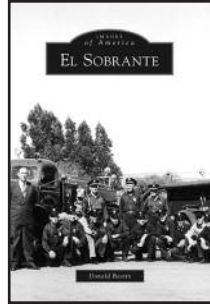
Pinole



Hercules



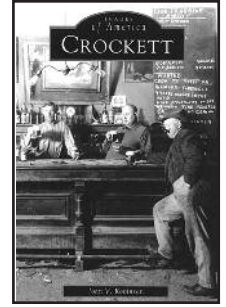
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# LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Pinole Historical Society sells Arcadia books about Pinole, Pinole Through Time, Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, El Cerrito, Crockett, Rodeo, Martinez, Port Costa, Maritime Contra Costa County, and the East Bay Hills at the Pinole Farmers' Market every other Saturday through December.

The Pinole, Pinole Through Time, Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, El Cerrito, Maritime

Contra Costa County, and East Bay Hills books are \$25, including sales tax. The Crockett, Rodeo, Martinez, and Port Costa books are \$23, including sales tax.

Mail order prices (below) include shipping. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Amex, and Discover credit cards.

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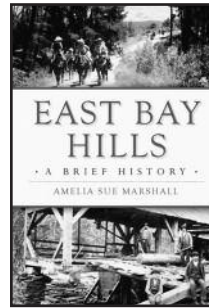
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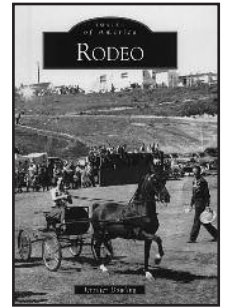
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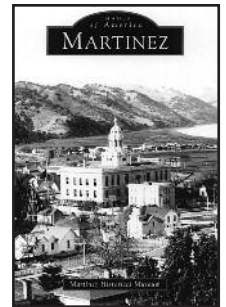
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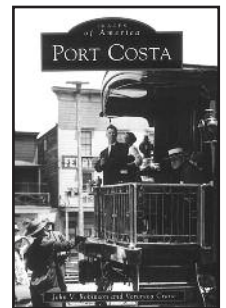
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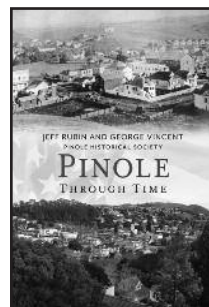
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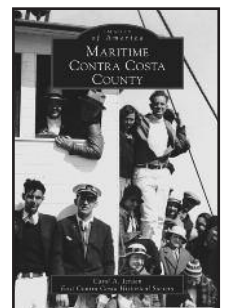
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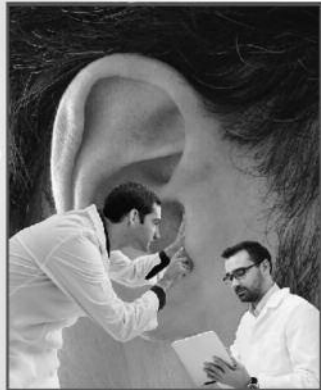
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## Pinole **Historical** Society 2019 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(PINOLE RESIDENCY NOT REQUIRED FOR MEMBERSHIP)

**PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND SEND THIS FORM TO PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 285, PINOLE, CA 94564**

MEMBERSHIPS ARE FOR THE 2019 CALENDAR YEAR (EXCEPT LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS)

NAME: (each member): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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