

# Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs

Winter 2014



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

[www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)

[info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)



## “SCHOOL ON THE HILL” BELL DEDICATED

**T**he 100+-year-old Pinole-Hercules School #1 bell, restored and installed at Collins Elementary School by the West Contra Costa Unified School District, was formally dedicated at a brief ceremony January 25.

The bell is the last remnant of the school that served generations of Pinole and Hercules students from 1906 to 1966. The school was demolished in 1968. The district also installed a bronze plaque on the wall behind the bell.

More than 50 people attended the ceremony.

*Pinole Historical Society co-founder George Vincent, at right, speaks at the January 25 dedication of the Pinole-Hercules School #1 bell at Collins Elementary School. More than 50 people attended the brief ceremony, which featured remarks from one of the school's graduates, Selma (Greenstein) Riskin, above, daughter of Jacob Greenstein, who owned Pinole's only pharmacy in the 1920s and 1930s. Another photo is on page 7.*



Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

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It's also posted on the PHS website.

**FOR ADVERTISERS:** 3,000 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, please contact Jeff Rubin at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org) or call him at (510) 724-9507.**

## PHS CALENDAR

### MEETINGS

**February 12, March 13, April 9: 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.

**February 7 membership program: "Bars, Barbers, and Characters of Early Pinole."** Be there as PHS co-founder George Vincent takes us through the early, bawdy days of Pinole's history. Great photos and great stories. Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road, Conference Rooms 2A and 2B, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

### ONGOING

**Pinole Library history exhibits.** Two exhibits at the library, 2935 Pinole Valley Road. Library hours are: Monday (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), Wednesday (2 to 8 p.m.), Friday and Saturday (12 to 5 p.m.).

**PHS booth at Pinole Farmers' Market.** We are at the farmers' market every other Saturday from April through December.

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## PinoleHistoricalSociety

**Board of Directors:** Marcia Kalapus, President; Jeff Rubin, Vice President; Mary Drazba, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Norma Martínez-Rubin, Mary McMains, George Vincent.

**Director Emeritus:** Jack Meehan

**Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Rubin

## NEW ADVERTISERS

The PHS welcomes these new advertisers:

- **Pinole Hearing Aid Center, Dennis Tobin, BC-H.I.S.**
- **Farmers Insurance, Gary Lally.**

## PHS videos on city of Pinole website

**M**iss one of our history programs on Pinole Community TV?

Not a problem. The city's website now 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 [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, both of George Vincent's 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!



# President's Message

**Marcia Kalapus, President, Pinole Historical Society**

## WHY HISTORICAL SOCIETIES ARE IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITIES

**S**ince the mid 1800s, there has been an ongoing interest in the preservation and protection of the historical record, as well as making history available to academics and the public, by means of educational forums, literature, and oral communications.

Historical record also includes the protection of old buildings, artifacts, government papers, documents, collections of ethnic mores, religious materials and icons, re-enactments of war-time engagements (Civil War, Boston Tea Party, American Revolution, etc.) with detailed involvement, even down to authentic costumes, weapons, and scripts.

In 1884, the American Historical Association (AHA) was formed to try to bring together those areas involved in historical collection. In 1904, the Conference of State

and Local Historical Societies formed within the AHA. In 1940, it became an independent organization, the American Association for State and Local History, which is still active today.

Small, local historical societies were formed in many communities in the late 1800s and early 1900s by the "elite" members of those areas who were businessmen or government employees who wanted to preserve their own family legacies, and by ancestors who had settled the area or made major contributions to the well being of the area.

After World War I, as the country began to grow and major building, revitalization of communities, and transportation evolved to include more infrastructure roads, coast-to-coast railroads, and air travel, historians began to see old buildings being torn down and county courthouses and

governments tossing old records to make room for new records.

These historians began to fight to prevent historic architectures from being destroyed, collecting tons of old documents, maps, books, pictures, old furniture, clothing — anything that had historical relevance to the beginnings of this country.

In some areas, such as in the original colonies, these included whole family histories, census, land deeds, burial records, Bibles, church records, baptism, and marriage records. Soon, historians recognized that it didn't do any good to store them, that the public should be included in viewing all the collections and artifacts. Museums were opened to allow the public to engage, and universities and other institutions of learning engaged in research and documentation.



**Marcia Kalapus**

However, over the years it has been the small, local historical societies that have worked very hard to uncover, protect, preserve, collect, and document their communities' history.

They have engaged the public — with parades, local history books, forums, workshops, educational meetings, school programs, and establishing their own museums to display the artifacts and history they have collected.

Funding has been declining all across the United States for such endeavors because of the economics of recent years. Even great museums are having trouble with funding.

Historical societies provide communities a

*Continued on page 4*

Geoff Torretta

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## WHY HISTORICAL SOCIETIES ARE IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITIES

*Continued from page 3*

looking glass into how their cities evolved from their beginnings.

Cicero, a Roman author, orator, and politician (106 BC – 43 BC) said, *"History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity."*

What Cicero meant was that history brings into perspective what is happening now, while at

the same time reminding us of our past. History reminds us that we can learn from our past, using our history to guide us, by knowing our mistakes as well as our achievements.

When we question why something was done a certain way, historical data are available for us to research to give us answers that will give us insight into what our ancestors were thinking, how they lived, and why they made the decisions that we live with every day.

Our community, our state, our nation would not be where they are today without volunteer historians who, for more than two hundred years have been doing what they love best — keeping historical data protected and preserved, and sharing it with others.

That's why it is so important for all of us to continue to support and

donate our time, resources, and energy in keeping local historical societies vibrant.

On page 5 of this newsletter there's an application to join the Pinole Historical Society. For only \$30, you can help the PHS bring the history of Pinole to our residents.

Please consider becoming a member.

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## SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PHS BY BECOMING A MEMBER IN 2014

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 today!**

# Pinole **Historical** Society

## 2014 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(PINOLE RESIDENCY NOT REQUIRED FOR MEMBERSHIP)

**PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION, AND SEND CASH OR YOUR CHECK,  
TO PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 285, PINOLE, CA 94564**

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# PHS SEEKING FAMILY FILMS FOR HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

**G**ot film? The Pinole Historical Society is embarking on a major project to archive the city's history — family by family and event by event. Our objective is to establish a permanent, digitized collection of Pinole's history.

Do you have film of past Holy Ghost parades, Pinole Valley High School Homecoming parades, Memorial Day or July 4 parades?

How about important athletic events, such as a high-school football, basketball, baseball, softball, or volleyball game?

Perhaps you have film of an important event that took place in Fernandez Park, or a ribbon cutting or an event that has a place in Pinole's history—such as the 1958 flood?

We're looking for any video or film you have—VHS,

Beta, camcorder, DV tape, 8mm, Super 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, motion picture.

Nearly everyone has taken home movies. That makes everyone who has taken film a historian.

We want to collect, digitize, catalog, and preserve old movies on DVD (and whatever formats are to come) to exhibit, educate, and entertain.

The PHS will share these videos on a film archive that we will establish, similar to the The Pioneers Film Archive on YouTube created by the California Pioneers of Santa Clara ([www.youtube.com/sccpioneers](http://www.youtube.com/sccpioneers)).

Film connects with the past in a unique way. It's immersive, educational, and entertaining for young people. It's a way to get young people interested in history.

Got film? Please contact us at [info@pinolehistorical.com](mailto:info@pinolehistorical.com)



## 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.



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## How 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.



### **"School on the Hill" alums**

**Graduates of Pinole-Hercules School #1, the beloved "School on the Hill" that educated generations of Pinole and Hercules children in grades K-8 from 1906 to 1966, gathered to formally dedicate the last remnant of the school, the iron bell that**

**rang generations of students to class. More than 50 people attended the January 25 ceremony at Collins Elementary School. The West Contra Costa Unified School District refurbished the bell and installed it, and a plaque, at Collins.**



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# Back in the day

## EARLY PINOLE WAS A DANGEROUS PLACE TO LIVE

By George R. Vincent

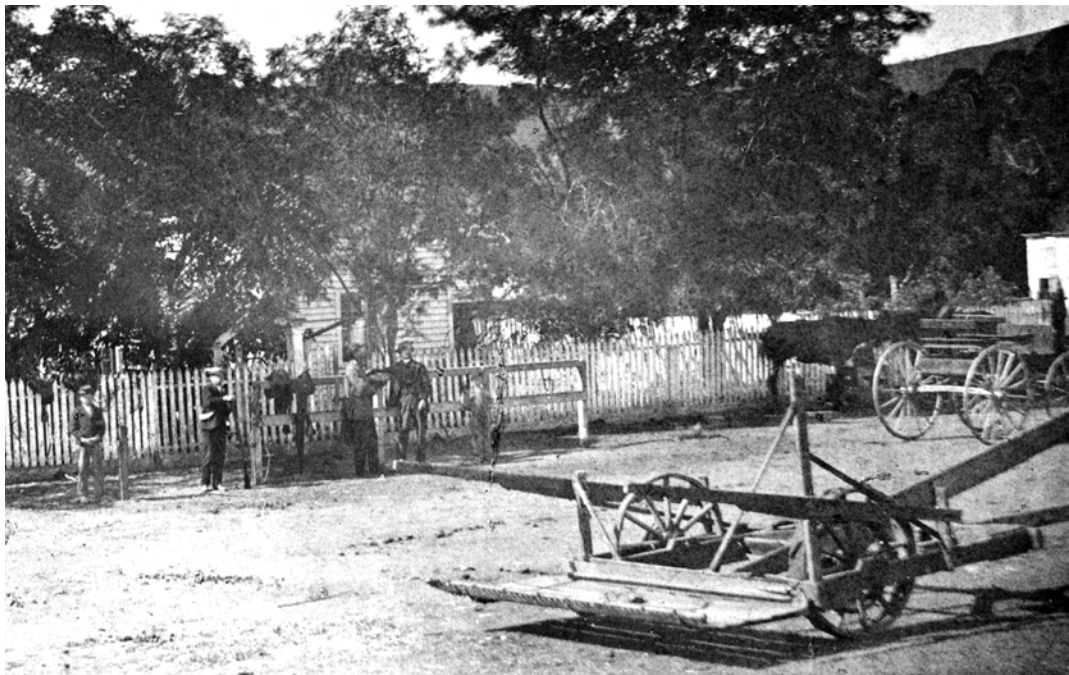
(Second of two parts)

**K**athryn Burns Plummer was the granddaughter of Samuel J. Tennent and Rafaela Martinez Tennent, who were founding pioneers of Pinole.

Kathryn's mother, Anna Tennent, was the youngest of the 10 Tennent children born on the Tennent Ranch (today's I-80 freeway, Pinole Valley Lanes to downtown Pinole).

Kate listened to and wrote down the stories she heard from family members about life in Pinole in the 1840s-1860s.

Many of the tales she



**Tennent Ranch, across Pinole Valley Road from today's Kaiser medical facility.**

heard were about her grandfather's efforts to protect his properties in

El Rancho Pinole. Many of the dangers faced were from wild cattle

roundups, Indian raids, and grizzly bear attacks. One story recalled the

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last grizzly to be seen in Pinole:

"In 1849 or 1850, the last grizzly bear in Pinole Valley was killed. A 'set gun' was put between two trees with animal carcass bait. A string was put on the trigger. When the bear came to get the bait, it discharged the gun and the bear was killed. The bear weighed over 1,200 pounds."

However, the greatest danger faced by the Tennent family was not wild animals or Indians, but the problem of illegal squatters.

After California became a possession of the United States in 1848, and following the Gold Rush in 1849, there was an influx of Americans who claimed the rancho lands as spoils of war, settled down, and refused to recognize the ownership of Spanish-speaking Californios.

There were violent, and sometimes deadly, confrontations between



**General Mariano Vallejo**

Anglo newcomers and the Californios.

Evicting squatters was a dangerous job, and it often fell into Dr. Tennent's lap.

From Kate Tennent: "Dr. Tennent always took a siesta and had a horse saddled for emergencies. His wife (Rafaela) heard an ax chopping and rode up a hill to see a man

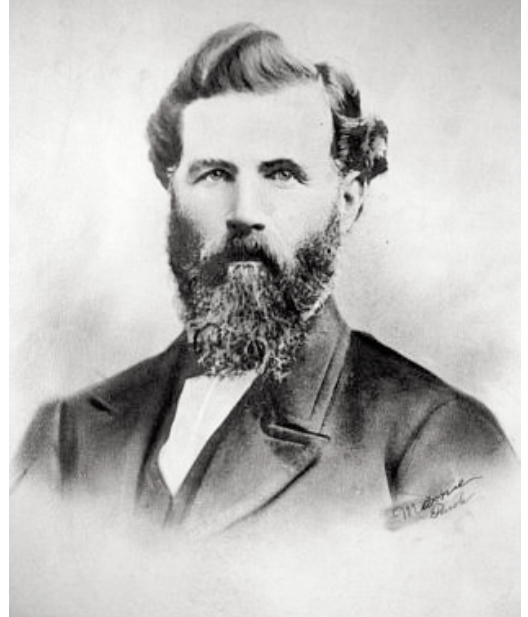
chopping a large, white oak tree.

"Rafaela called Dr. Tennent and told him, and he took his Colt revolver and rode up the hill. Before the squatter knew he was there, Dr. Tennent grabbed the startled man's shotgun and covered him with his own shotgun. Dr. Tennent marched him and a

bunch of other squatters in the trees a half mile down the hill in a hollow where they had built cabins.

Because Dr. Tennent was a British subject, he took his case before a federal court, won his case, and had the squatters driven off the ranch.

*Continued on page 10*



**Bernardo Fernandez**



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# EARLY PINOLE WAS A DANGEROUS PLACE TO LIVE

*Continued from page 9*  
At one time there were 52 squatter cases tried at once.

"In 1859 or 1860, Dr. Tennent had gone to Nevada County after horse thieves. When he returned home, he found more squatters who had horses, built cabins, and were putting in crops on his land in the Pinole Valley.

When he rode up to the house, the squatter named John Sino turned his gun on the doctor. Dr. Tennent shot the man in the leg. He then made a tourniquet and tightened it up with the ramrod of a gun to save him from bleeding to death. Dr. Tennent again took the squatters to court and won.

"There were also squatters on the family's waterfront property by the bay.

"Manuel Suarez in the 1850s kept a store on the Pinole waterfront and refused to pay rent. Dr. Tennent rode his stallion 'Pres' to the bayside to reason with Suarez about paying rent for his use of the property.

"Suarez drew a big dagger and came after Dr. Tennent. The horse wheeled and kicked the

dagger from the man's hand. No blood was spilled and Suarez paid the rent."

At about the same time, Bernardo Fernandez was leasing waterfront land from Dr. Tennent, and the two were friends. Kathryn tells how Fernandez's life was saved:

"Bernardo Fernandez was taken down with diphtheria. Dr. Tennent sent his wife, Rafaela, to treat Fernandez and swathe his throat. His life was saved by Doña Rafaela's care."

The squatter problem was epidemic in California and the rancho lands of the Bay Area.

Squatters boldly fenced and farmed land they did not own. In the north, General Mariano Vallejo's lands were overrun and ravaged by squatters.

The Californios had to prove title to their properties in Yankee courts and a legal system they did not understand.

It was not an easy task, as many Californios spoke no English.

Court costs and legal

fees forced many Californios to sell their lands for very little to pay lawyers, who often took advantage of their plight for personal gain. Rancho El Pinole, for example, was tied up in the courts for 25 years.

Kathryn Burns Plummer's recollections are vivid examples of this dangerous time in early Pinole.

Her stories chronicle a period when property rights were openly violated by the new American invaders and had to be defended at gunpoint.

## The Pinole Mural

*A Community Legacy*



**Watch The Pinole Mural video at this link:**

<http://www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org/PinoleMural.mov>



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# ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL MARKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

By Kathy Meehan Brunstein

In August 2013, St. Joseph School in Pinole opened its doors to 283 students, commencing its 50th year in the Diocese of Oakland.

While the facilities and staff have changed over the years, the commitment to providing a faith-filled education in the Catholic tradition, nurturing the mind, body and spirit, has never wavered.

St. Joseph School provides a quality education, as well as a commitment to the gospel values of service in our school and parish, and our local and global communities.

The school and parish of St. Joseph gathered last September for a spe-



**Fr. Thomas Collins**

cial Mass kicking off a year-long 50th anniversary celebration. The Diocese of Oakland's Bishop Emeritus John Cummins presided at the Alumni Mass, along with

the parish priests, Fr. Paul Schmidt, Fr. Mark Amaral, and Fr. Eddie Castanas.

The event brought together students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni and others who were involved with the school over the years.

When Fr. Thomas Collins became administrator of St. Joseph Parish in 1957, the area was part of the Archdiocese of San Francisco served by Archbishop John Joseph Mitty.

Fr. Collins took the idea of building a parish school to Archbishop Mitty, who had constituted the new parish of St. Joseph, a former mission church from St. Patrick's

in Rodeo 10 years earlier.

The idea of a parochial school met with almost immediate approval.

And, after parishioners and members of the St. Joseph Men's Club cleared the blackberry bushes from the sight, ground broke in 1961.

The school was built during great changes in the Catholic Church: The area became part of the newly formed Diocese of Oakland, Bishop Floyd Begin was appointed the first bishop of the diocese, and Vatican Council II began under Pope John XXIII.

Although the school was completed in 1962, the school's opening was *Continued on page 12*



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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.**

## ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL

*Continued from page 11*

delayed until 1963 when a community of Sisters became available to run and staff the school.

Three Sisters, members of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis, came to the new diocese to staff the school in 1963. The Sisters opened the first three grades, which had 103 pupils.

Sister Mary Donata taught first grade, Sister Mary Maureen taught second grade, and Sister Mary Anastasia was the third grade teacher and principal. Each year after that, a new grade was added. The school held its first eighth-grade graduation in June 1969.

In March 1979, the school suffered a major fire that started near the stage. Units from Rodeo and Richmond were called in to assist. The fire gutted the gym, which was rebuilt over the remainder of the year.

In 1991, the kindergarten was added. In 2000, the school added a new middle-school building, the



**St. Joseph School class of 1969.**

Fr. Paddy Bishop Middle School, which was dedicated by Bishop John Cummins on May 7.

The next major gathering to celebrate the school's 50th Anniversary will be an auction and gala on March 8 at the Hilton Concord. Call the school at (510) 724-0242 for more information.

— Mrs. Brunstein, a 1972 St. Joseph School graduate, is the vice principal and middle-school teacher at the school.

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## 2014 quarterly meetings at Kaiser continue on Friday evenings

This year's quarterly membership meetings of the Pinole Historical Society will be held Friday evenings in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building.

Attendance on Fridays was good in 2013, so we thought we'd continue on this day this year. As always, we will have an interesting program for you at each meeting.

The 2014 meeting schedule is: February 7 • May 2 • September 5 • November 7

### February 7 program at Kaiser

## BARS, BARBERS, AND CHARACTERS OF EARLY PINOLE

Pinole's early history as a bawdy, brawling town with a bar on every street corner will be brought to life by PHS co-founder and historian George Vincent on Friday, February 7, when he hosts the Pinole Historical Society's quarterly meeting from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road.

The public is invited to attend this free event. Refreshments will be served.

By the turn of the 20th century, a thriving community had been born in the old downtown with businesses, hotels, churches, and numerous saloons. John and Julia Collins arrived in Pinole in the late 19th century.

They and their eight



**Barber Benjamin Christian in his shop in what is now the rear of Antlers Tavern, ca. 1920s.**

children lived above the family business, the Klondike Saloon, on Tennent Avenue. The building still stands, next to the former Blackie's restaurant. The historic

Four Corners was created where Tennent and San Pablo avenues intersect, sporting a saloon or hotel — or both — on each corner.

And, did you know the

rear section of Antlers Tavern, on the Tennent Avenue side, was once a barber shop?

We'll have great photos and great stories to share. Please join us.

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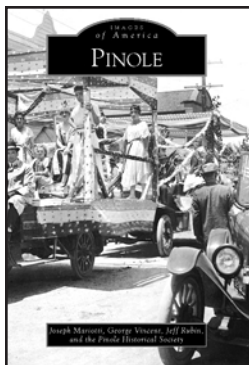
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## LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM PHS

The Pinole Historical Society stocks Arcadia books about Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, El Cerrito, Crockett, Rodeo, Martinez, and Port Costa. And, of course, we have plenty of Pinole books.

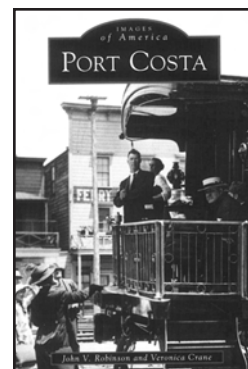
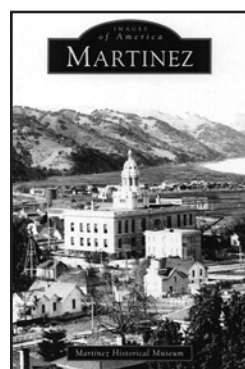
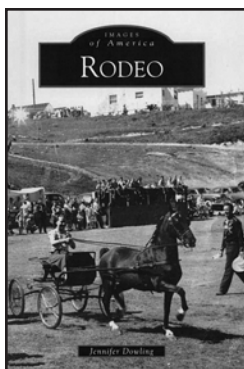
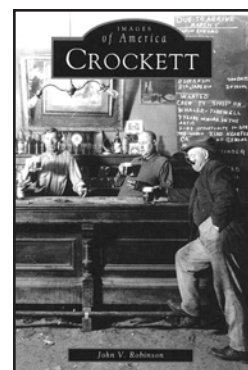
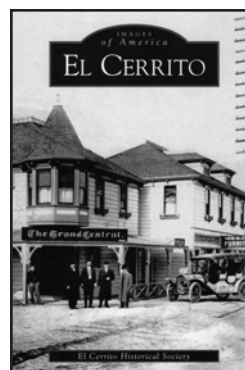
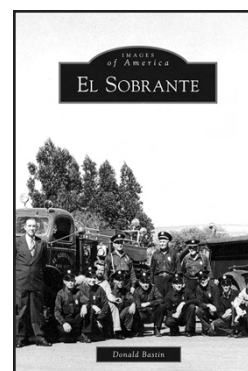
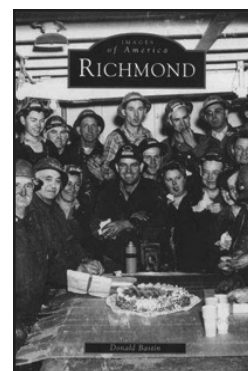
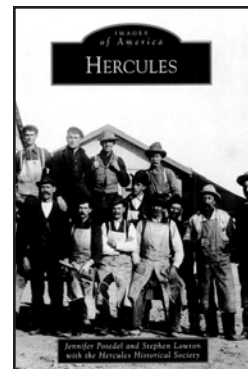
You may purchase one or more of these books from us at the Pinole Farmers' Market—we're there every other Saturday from April through December.

Pinole, Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, and El Cerrito books are **\$24**, including 8.75% sales tax.

Crockett, Rodeo, Martinez, and Port Costa books are **\$22**, including 8.75% sales tax.

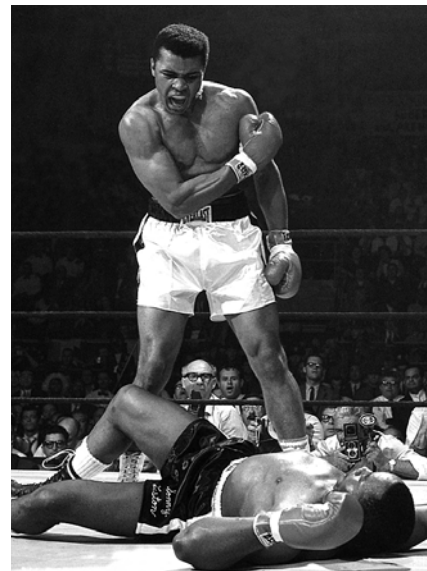
You may order one or more by mail and we'll ship them to you. Send your order to **Pinole Historical Society, P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564.**

Mail prices, including sales tax and postage are: Pinole, Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, and El Cerrito: **\$27**; Crockett, Rodeo, Martinez, and Port Costa: **\$25**





# 50 years ago — 1964



**January 8:** President Lyndon B. Johnson declares "War on Poverty."

**January 11:** U.S. Surgeon General Luther Terry reports that smoking may be hazardous to one's health.

**January 18:** Plans for World Trade Center in New York City announced.

**January 23:** 24th Amendment to the United States Constitution ratified, barring poll tax in federal elections. The amendment states voting rights could not be denied due to failure to pay taxes.

**February 1:** Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand," their first #1 hit, stays #1 for 7 weeks.

**February 1:** Indiana Governor Mathew Walsh tries to ban "Louie Louie" for obscenity.

**February 9:** First appearance of Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show draws 73.7 million viewers.

**February 9:** Ninth Winter Olympic games close at Innsbruck, Austria.

**February 17:** U.S. Supreme Court issues "One Man, One Vote" ruling, saying districts for the House of Representatives and for the legislative districts of both houses of state legislatures had to contain roughly equal populations.

**February 23:** Charlie Finley signs a four-year lease to keep the A's in Kansas City. The A's moved to Oakland in 1968.

**February 25:** Cassius Clay TKOs Sonny Liston in 7th round for the heavyweight boxing title. Clay joined the Nation of Islam on March 6 and changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

**March 9:** U.S. Supreme Court issues *New York Times vs. Sullivan* decision, ruling public officials must prove malice to claim libel and recover damages.

**March 14:** Dallas jury sentences Jack Ruby to death for murdering Lee Harvey Oswald.



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