

Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org

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The Potomac cruises San Francisco Bay. FDR's presidential yacht is open to the public for tours and cruises.

FEBRUARY 10 PROGRAM

ALL ABOARD THE POTOMAC

The history of the USS Potomac, from its service as the "Floating White House" of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to its rescue from scrapping and restoration, will be the topic of the Pinole Historical Society's February 10 meeting.

As always, members and guests are welcome to attend from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in Conference Rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road.

Bill Hodges, a docent for 19 years with the Potomac Association, which rescued the ship from the scrap heap and restored it, will present a 14-minute video outlining the ship and the part it played in FDR's administrations. The ship is docked at Jack London Square in Oakland and is open for public tours.

Continued on page 2

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, please contact Jeff Rubin at info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org or (510) 724-9507.

PHS CALENDAR

ONGOING

Pinole Library history exhibits. Two exhibits are 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. We'll be back on April 1. Please stop by and say hello.

PinoleHistoricalSociety

Board of Directors: Jeff Rubin, President; George Vincent, Vice President; Mary McMains, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Marcia Kalapus, Melissa Lawton, Norma Martinez-Rubin. **Director Emeritus:** Jack Meehan. **Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Rubin.

POTOMAC

Continued from front page

After the video, he'll tell FDR stories, including some about those people who surrounded our 32nd president, answer questions from the audience, and conduct a fun quiz afterward, with awarding of passes for dockside tours.

The program also highlights the Potomac Association's educational program and how tens-of-thousands of Northern California children have benefited from it.

The Potomac was originally commissioned the USCG Cutter Electra in 1934. In 1936, it was renamed the USS Potomac and served as FDR's presidential yacht until his death in 1945. More than a quarter of a million people have visited and sailed aboard the USS Potomac since it opened to the public in the summer of 1995.

PHS VIDEOS ON CITY OF PINOLE WEBSITE

Miss 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 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, for-

mer 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.

President's Message

Jeff Rubin, President, Pinole Historical Society

EXCITING TIMES FOR HISTORIANS

One of the exciting things about history is it's always happening. Many people think history is about old stuff, but history is happening all around us, every day.

A new U.S. president has been inaugurated. I'm certain that whatever Donald Trump does over the next four years, it will be historic, affect future history, and will be recorded for generations to study and debate.

Locally, there is much history happening, as well. We have a new mayor, Debbie Long, a new shopping center at Gateway West, and a new history book about the early schools of Pinole,

"School Bells and Ink Wells," written by Pinole's historian and the Pinole Historical Society's co-founder, George Vincent.

If you went to elementary school in Pinole, George's book is one you'll want in your library. It's a gem.

He's an extraordinary storyteller and documentarian of this city's history. There are around 100 years of Pinole's school history shared between George and his mother, Emily Scanlan Vincent, both career educators.

George spent a decade researching Pinole's early schools — Fitzgerald Ranch School, Pinole Plaza School, and Pinole-Hercules School #1.

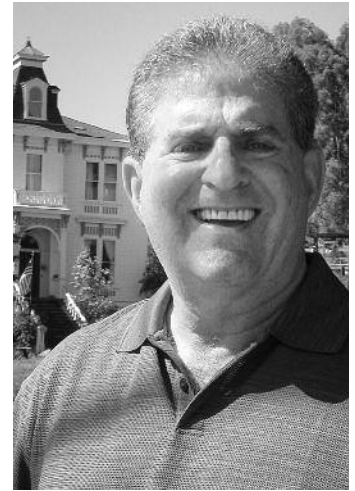
His 124-page book, filled with stories, anecdotes, and photos, brings to light the workings and people that made the Pinole-Hercules Union School District the envy of other townships.

An order form is on page 5 of this newsletter.

PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM

In September 2016, the Pinole City Council voted to establish a museum in the Faria House, and entrusted the Pinole Historical Society to plan the design of the museum and find an architect.

In October, we invited the community to participate in a "design-a-museum" program, and we got



Jeff Rubin

lots of good ideas about what people want to see in this museum.

We have met with one architect and are scheduling a meeting with another. We are also getting advice from other museum professionals.

Establishing a museum is the society's main focus now. We want it to be a museum that people of all ages will want to visit repeatedly.

We'll keep you posted on our progress.



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PINOLE THEN AND NOW

In 1961, some cars had fins and the west side of Tennent Avenue between San Pablo Avenue and Pear Street was fully occupied, with the Pinole Shopping Center/Pinole Food Center grocery store and meat market, the post office (before it moved to a new building on Pear Street),

Valentine's Cleaners, and the Town Tavern.

These buildings are gone today, and all the land is vacant, save for the Pump House gas station and convenience store on the southwest corner of San Pablo and Tennent.



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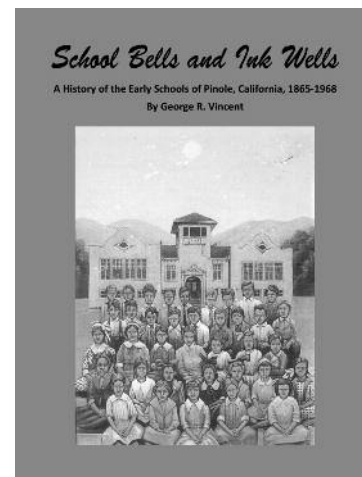
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GEORGE VINCENT'S BOOK ABOUT THE EARLY SCHOOLS OF PINOLE HAS ARRIVED

Pinole Historical Society co-founder and historian George Vincent's long-awaited book, *"School Bells and Ink Wells: a History of the Early Schools of Pinole, 1865-1968,"* has been published and is for sale.

The 124-page book, featuring more than 150 photos, some never-before seen, chronicles the history of the Fitzgerald Ranch School (1865-1886), Plaza School (1886-1906), and Pinole-Hercules School #1 (1906-1966).

The book is filled with stories and amusing anecdotes, and anyone who went to school in Pinole will treasure this fond memory of their early education. It brings to light the workings and people that made the Pinole-Hercules Union School District the envy of surrounding townships.

Hill School alumni are fiercely loyal to their "green school" that stood atop Samuel Street in Pinole until 1968. There is a shared pride of camaraderie understood only by those who bore the trials of the daily

uphill climb to the creaking stairs and dark halls haunted by the strict stares of lurking teachers.

If you are interested in purchasing the book (\$30, including sales tax and postage), please fill out the order form above and mail it to George Vincent. He will mail the book to you.



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Fond Memories

Stella (Freitas) Faria

A CASTLE IN PINOLE?

Since my childhood, I have always been fascinated by the building located at 2131 San Pablo Avenue in Pinole. It was directly across the street from the house I first lived in when I married in 1947.

I knew it as the Pythian Castle, which always seemed to have some sort of mystery associated with its name. Who would ever have dreamed of having a castle in the little town of Pinole?

It is a rather unique structure in the 2100 block of San Pablo Avenue, aside from the Curran family home a few doors down (formerly the Garden of Gems) and the relocated Faria farmhouse across the street.

It is a white with blue trim wood-framed building with a gabled roof and some stained glass windows, one of which survived a gas-line explosion next door on February 17, 1998. It suffered blown-out windows and other minor damage, but

the building next door that housed the Second Fiddle thrift store, was completely leveled.

I have known it as the Pythian Castle since I went there during the 1930s for variety programs that were put on by our local churches or fraternal organizations who shared their auditorium.

Fraternal organizations such as Masons, Odd Fellows, Redmen, Elks, Eagles, Woodmen, Knights of Columbus, and Knights of Pythias, were very popular in

those days.

The Knights of Pythias has a very long and colorful history. It became a secret fraternal organization in Washington, D.C., on February 19, 1864, founded by Justus Rathbone. Its name came from a play, "Damon and Pythias," written by Irish poet John Banim. Its legend illustrates the ideals of loyalty, honor, and friendship that are the center of the order.

When a man was inducted as a member, he received a ceremonial sword, presented as a



Stella Faria

token of esteem by family members or business associates. A local chapter was known as a "castle." I was a bit disappointed to find that there was no fairytale connection to my Pythian Castle.

Pinole's First Methodist Episcopal Church built this wooden structure in 1898 at 2131 San Pablo Avenue. When the church built its second home on Valley Avenue in 1924, the building was sold to the Order of the Knights of Pythias

Local Methodist church records show that the first Protestant services in Pinole were held from 1889 until April 24, 1898, at the site of the Plaza School, where today's post office stands.

Ministers from Presbyterian, Methodist, and

Continued on page 7



Pythian Castle, 2131 San Pablo Avenue.

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FOND MEMORIES OF A PINOLE CASTLE

Continued from page 6
Baptist churches in Richmond took turns preaching on Sunday evenings.

There was also a Martinez-Pinole connection when, from 1890 until the new church building was dedicated in 1898, Methodist ministers came to preach on Sunday evenings.

Little is recorded about the building once it became the Pythian Castle.

It was an Assembly of God church later on and was occupied by Elaine Pond's Insurance agency for a couple of years. The

Scolari & Sons Tile Company ran its business out of that building.

The present owner, Dennis Lorette, CPA, purchased the building in 1984. He shares his office there with several other businesses.

I am very grateful to Dennis for providing me with information he had on the early history of the building.

He loves the architecture and history related to the building, and would be proud to show you around if you appreciate the building as much as he does.



Remains of the Second Fiddle thrift store, with the Pythian Castle building at the right, after the February 17, 1998, explosion. Photo courtesy of Adila Araya.



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Back in the day

George R. Vincent

A PINOLE LANDMARK COMES TO LIGHT

One of the joys of researching the past is discovering history that has been lost or misplaced in time.

Such is the case of Pinole's first and only large-scale department store, built by Abraham Greenfield in 1905 on the southwest corner of Tennent Avenue and Pear Street.

No early pictures of the building by itself were ever found. It only appeared in group photos of nearby buildings showing vague portions of the structure in later years and after different remodeling phases. Thanks to a discovery by PHS member Stephen

Lawton in the Contra Costa County Historical Society's archives, we now have an original photo of the pride of Abraham Greenfield's business enterprise in Pinole.

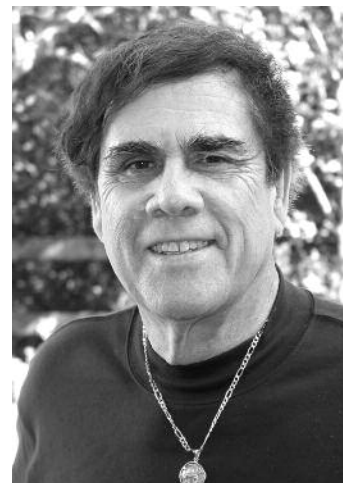
Abraham Greenfield came to Pinole in the late 19th century. In July 1897, he had a smaller store called the "Pinole Bazaar" along Tennent Avenue, between the old Pinole Food Center of the 1960s and today's Pump House convenience store. Here, Greenfield carried almost everything, from furniture and clothing to foodstuffs, paint, liquor, and farming gear.

In 1905, he built the

massive three-story structure with its large staircase just one block from his first store. Greenfield was a respected merchant and member of the Pinole community heavily involved in town politics and social life. He was also a money lender to those needing a loan. His decorated float led Fourth of July parades.

The cover of the Pinole Historical Society's 2009 book, "Images of America, Pinole," shows Greenfield and his patriotic float.

Mr. and Mrs. Greenfield and daughter, Rosalie, carried on the business until moving to San Francisco in the late 1930s. His customers



George Vincent

looked forward to getting calendars and fancy china plates at year's end.

Abraham Greenfield's stellar reputation played a part in freeing the only woman ever put into Pinole's first wooden jail on Pear Street.

In 1900, Constable Michael Scanlan arrested the manager of a boarding house on grand larceny charges. There had been a theft of guns and money from one of her

Continued on page 9

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A PINOLE LANDMARK COMES TO LIGHT

Continued from page 8

boarders. Scanlan physically arrested her on Main Street in front of her daughter and many astonished citizens. He shut her in the old jail for hours, as night fell and crowds gathered.

Greenfield was one of the cool-headed onlookers who convinced Scanlan to free the hysterical woman into her husband's custody for the night.

Greenfield's large new building, as seen in the photo, was called the "Big Department Store."

And big it was, selling shoes, clothes, dresses, hardware, wine and spirits, groceries, coal, kerosene, notions, tobacco, candies, and much more. Employees remembered how cold it was inside, as there was no heat in the huge store.

Customers were billed



Greenfield's, Pinole's first large-scale department store. Abraham Greenfield was one of the city's great businessmen.

at month's end and farmers paid bills once a year.

Deliveries were made by spring wagon and a team of horses with an umbrella above the driver's seat.

Twice a week, deliver-

ies were made to the nearby town of Giant.

Abraham Greenfield's

store in early Pinole was as awesome to Pinoleans

Continued on page 10

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A PINOLE LANDMARK COMES TO LIGHT

Continued from page 9 as the new Sprouts Farmers Market is today.

Greenfield's three stories had a staircase and landing at each level, filled with goods.

Outside, the building was attractive, with an imposing cupola and skylight and Italianate-style fence atop the roof.

After the Greenfields left, the building saw a succession of owners.

The top floor was removed and apartment units constructed. Bob Dutra and former Pinole fire chief Alex Clark bought the building in 1962 and remodeled it. One popular restaurant still a Pinole fixture on the ground floor is The Alley Cafe, with its



The southwest corner of Tennent Avenue and Pear Street today.

famous 1964 mural of Pinole. Dutra and Clark sold the café, reacquired it, and then sold it again.

Dave Brandt bought it in 1978 after the previous owner died. Cori Brandt worked for her father in the restaurant as a waitress; Dave was the cook.

When Dave died in 1992, Cori (Brandt) Clark, by this time married to Alex Clark's son, Chano, took over. Chano and Cori owned the building and the restaurant until selling both in 2015.

Abraham Greenfield had an eye for a great

business location in downtown Pinole. We now know what it looked like to Pinoleans of the past.

Hopefully, we will one day also find missing pictures of the Pinole Opera House, Pinole's social center from 1909 to its fiery end in 1931.

Pinole **Historical** Society 2017 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

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Always 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 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 and scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY. Several recent programs have been added.

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2017 PHS MEETING DATES

February 10: U.S.S. Potomac Association

May 12: Susie Fernandez on her family's history

September 8: Author John Robinson presents the history of the Carquinez Bridge

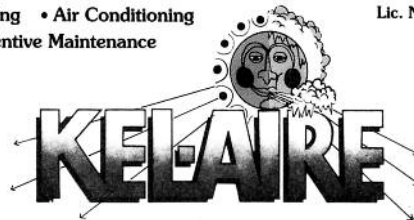
November 3: To be announced

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

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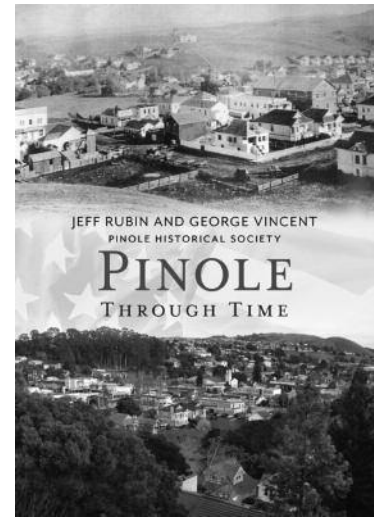
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SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PHS BY BECOMING A MEMBER IN 2017

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)
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Please mail the membership application in this newsletter today!

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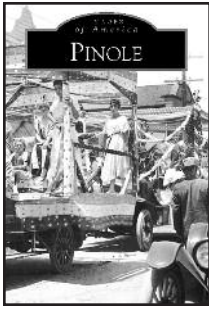
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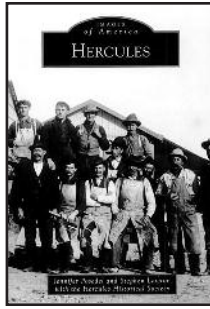
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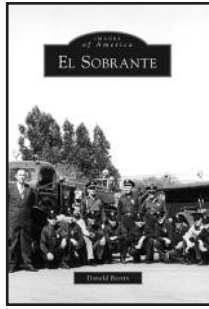
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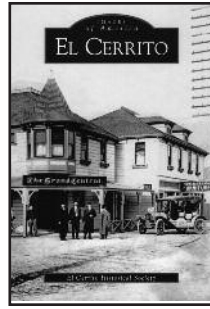
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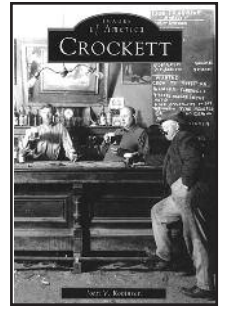
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El Sobrante



El Cerrito



Crockett

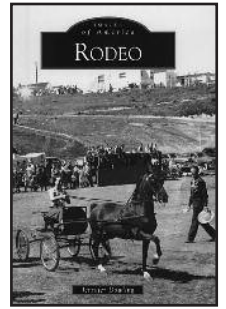
LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

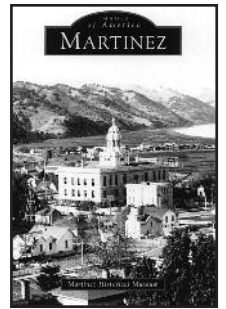
The Pinole, Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, El Cerrito, and Maritime Contra Costa County

books are \$24, including sales tax. The Crockett, Rodeo, Martinez, and Port Costa books are \$22, including sales tax.

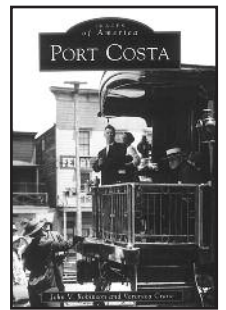
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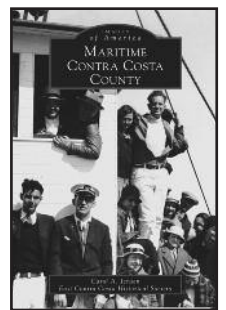
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The Pinole Historical Society promotes awareness and appreciation of history through preservation and education, and chronicles the city's heritage for current and future generations.

TIME TO RENEW PHS MEMBERSHIP FOR 2017

If you haven't already done so, *please clip the membership renewal form on page 10 of this newsletter* and mail it to us with your check.

The Pinole Historical Society thanks you for

your many years of support as we work to preserve the history of the city, bring history programs to the community, and establish the Pinole History Museum.

In memoriam

Verla Noreen Gillikin

December 27, 1929 – December 26, 2016

Age 86

Verla was a lifetime Pinole resident and descendant of local pioneer families. She was the first child of George and Emily (Scanlan) Vincent, born at Cottage Hospital, Richmond, delivered by Dr. Manuel Fernandez.

She graduated from Pinole-Hercules School #1 and Richmond Union High School. She had careers with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, in San Francisco, and Doctors' Hospital of Pinole.

She was a member St. Joseph's Church, Y.L.I., and the Pinole Chapter of Pocahontas Lodge.

Verla was the wife of the late Bertram Gillikin, and the mother of Kerri Kierstead, Kathy Knoblauch, and Kevin Gillikin. She is also survived by her brother, George Vincent, six grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren, and her faithful dog, Phil.

Verla's familiar face will be missed on the streets of the small town she grew up in and loved. She was happy living in Pinole and making so many lifetime friends. Hers was a good life well spent in doing charity for others and always with a smile.



Virginia Fujita

January 14, 1947 – December 12, 2016

Age 69

Former Pinole mayor and lifetime Pinole Historical Society member Virginia Fujita died December 12. She was 69.

Virginia led a full life and touched many people along the way with her vibrant personality and infectious laugh.

Virginia worked for the city of Pinole for many years, and in 2008 ran for the city council. She won, and served three years, from 2008 to 2010, including more than one year as mayor.

She decided not to run for re-election in 2010, choosing to spend more time with her family, including several grandchildren.

She is survived by her husband, Kenneth; three sons, Gregory Mori, Randal Mori, and Mathew Fujita; two step-children, Mark Fujita and Joanne Fujita; two sisters, Jeanette Kanzawa and Margaret Novak; and six grandchildren.



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