



Newsbriefs

Fall 2022

P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org

GEORGE VINCENT HONORED AT MUSEUM DINNER

George Vincent wrote in "Images of America: Pinole" about the cycle of life in Pinole in the early part of the 20th century:

"A person was brought into the world by Dr. Manuel Fernandez, attended Pinole-Hercules School #1, married a local sweetheart, worked at the Hercules Powder Company or Union Oil Company, and left the world via undertaker Charlie Ryan."

What he left out is that most people who lived in 20th century Pinole — and for that matter, many in the 21st century — were taught by someone in the Vincent family — first, his mother, Emily Scanlan Vincent, who taught for 40-plus years, and by George for 42 years.

Here we are, all these years later, and we are still being taught by George Vincent — whether it's by reading one of the magnificent local history books he's written, participating in one of his walking tours of historic downtown Pinole,



George Vincent (right, in dark sunglasses) regaled participants with stories of life in Pinole during his walking tour of historic downtown Pinole. The Pinole Historical Society honored him with a Lifetime Historian Award at the Pinole History Museum's September 24 Fundraiser and Dinner.

been a fourth-grade student in a Pinole school and listened to one of his Pinole history programs, or reading his thoughtful, melodic stories in this newsletter.

George is a master storyteller, and it's not an exaggeration to say that Pinole would have little

recorded or written history if it were not for George Vincent.

It was a pleasure, and an honor, to present George with the society's LIFETIME HISTORIAN AWARD at the Pinole History Museum's September 24 Fundraiser and Dinner.

Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

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Newsbriefs also posted on the PHS website (click on NEWSLETTER in the menu bar).

FOR ADVERTISERS: 1,500 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 or (510) 724-9507.

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Board of Directors: Jeff Rubin, President; Mary McMains, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Norma Martinez-Rubin, Peter Murray, Carol White.
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THE PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS A REGISTERED 501(C)(3) NONPROFIT. TAX ID: 23-7441316

PHS at Pinole Farmers' Market

The Pinole Historical Society booth is at the Pinole Farmers Market twice every month through December.

Please stop by and share some Pinole history — and tell us how you've been since we last saw each other.

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President's Message

Jeff Rubin, President, Pinole Historical Society and Pinole History Museum

MUSEUM DINNER REAFFIRMED OUR COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING CITY'S HISTORY

It's been a long struggle to establish a history museum in Pinole. It began in 2005 when the Faria House was moved to its current location, and while we had hoped we'd be open by now, we're resolute in seeing our mission to fruition. Many of the dinner attendees — there were 169 paid tickets — have donated to the museum (see page 5) and supported our advocacy before the city council. Three years after the museum's last fundraiser and dinner they were still supporting us because they see the value in preserving our past history and making a lasting record of our present history.

THANK YOU FOR VALUING CULTURE AND HISTORY!

While a permanent home for the Pinole History Museum is still forthcoming, our approach is focused on public outreach — working with schools, the community, and local businesses to promote interest and excitement for the preservation of our historical past.

While COVID-19 restrictions severely curtailed our activities in 2021, the Pinole History Museum and Pinole Historical Society jointly accomplished several goals to preserve our city's history.

— We are preparing mini-exhibits that will be installed in several Pinole businesses. These exhibits will include photographs and memorabilia on founding families, the early ranchos, downtown, then and now, and the history of street names. The first will be at Mechanics Bank.

— We did two projects with students from Pinole Valley High School: One that explored the recent history of minority business owners, and the other

an oral history project where a student sought to learn the history of her family members in Pinole. Both of these may be found on the Pinole Historical Society YouTube Channel, along with 45 other videos covering Pinole's history.

— The Pinole Historical Society resumed print publishing of its newsletter, Newsbriefs, in 2021, devoting much of its editorial space to advocate for the creation of the Pinole History Museum in the Faria House.

— The PHS and PHM Facebook pages continuously publish information about the history of our city. This information is shared on half a dozen other local and area Facebook pages.

— The PHS continued its yearly history essay contest in Pinole schools. We did so even during COVID-19 school closures, and continue to award scholarships to graduating Pinole Valley High School students.

— The PHS resumed producing its annual Veterans Day Memorial and Flag Retirement Ceremony. This year's event will be held Friday, November 11, at 11 a.m. in Fernandez Park.

— The PHM continued to establish its Collections Management System database with CatalogIt,

Continued on page 6



Jeff Rubin



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PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM

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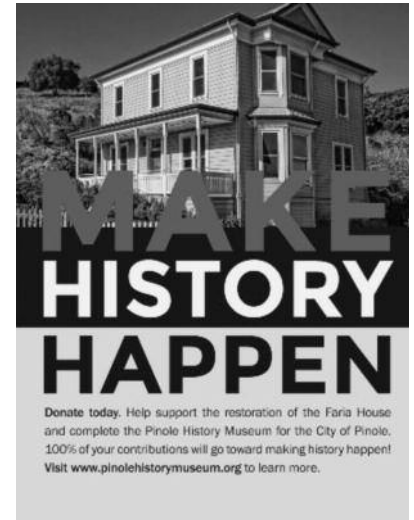
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The Pinole History Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 3

a cloud-based online service. Metadata has been added to more than 500 historical photos that have been uploaded to CatalogIt and are available to the public to view at:

<https://hub.catalogit.app/157>.

An independent contractor continues to work on this project with the ultimate goal of uploading our entire collection of photos and images of artifacts.

Imagine what we could accomplish if we had a home!

• * *

The combined boards of the Pinole Historical Society and Pinole History Museum worked for months preparing for the museum dinner, soliciting raffle and silent auction prizes, assembling the prizes, selling tickets, distributing flyers, doing publicity, and planning every aspect of the onsite event.

We are already discussing improvements and enhancements for the 2023 dinner so we can make the dinner a signature event for Pinole.

Anyone who has worked on producing an event of this size knows how much work is involved. I am extremely grateful to the all-volunteer board members for the many hours they devoted to making the dinner a success — and helping the museum raise more than \$10,000, after expenses:

Pinole Historical Society: Jo Ann Gannotti, Mary McMains, Carol White, Pete Murray, Norma Martínez-Rubin, and Jeff Rubin.

Pinole History Museum: Belinda Espinosa, Alex Jason, Cyndie Sprinkel, Diane Dyer, and Jeff Rubin.

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PINOLE RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT A MUSEUM

MIKE LEFEBVRE

As a lifelong resident and fourth generation citizen of this city, I have seen it grow from an agrarian community replete with cattle ranches, dairy farms, and in-town merchants like Augie (DeSilva) the butcher, and egg sellers like Mrs. Stelle to become the thriving community that it is today.

Who would have thought that a little town of fewer than 1,000 people would become the diverse city that it presently is? The answer to that question is — very few of us.

Pinole is resplendent with a rich and colorful history that cannot be captured totally in a book. There needs to be exhibits, pictures, and oral histories that can only be encompassed in a museum setting.

Like in every other modern city, there needs to be a visual and oral record of its beginnings, trials, and tribulations. People, especially the populace of Pinole, need to be afforded the opportunity to experience the lifestyle, economic growth, and flavor of our wonder-



ful city — and I speak for myself, my family and friends, and all of the younger generation who patiently listen to my stories without any context.

I whole-heartedly endorse the city get behind this vital project and make Pinole an even better place in which to grow up and put down roots.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP CREATE THE PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM?

The Pinole City Council needs to hear from the community that a museum in the Faria House would be a welcome and worthwhile addition to the city.

You can help convince them by sending an email to all of the council members — or publicly state that you support the Pinole History Museum at a council meeting (1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month), Pinole City Hall, 2131 Pear Street. Meetings are hybrid, open to the public at City Hall and online via Zoom.

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Back in the day

NATIONAL BUTTON BULLETIN FEATURES RANCHO EL PINOLE EXCAVATION

In April, the Pinole Historical Society was contacted by the editor of the *National Button Bulletin*, the newsletter of the National Button Society.

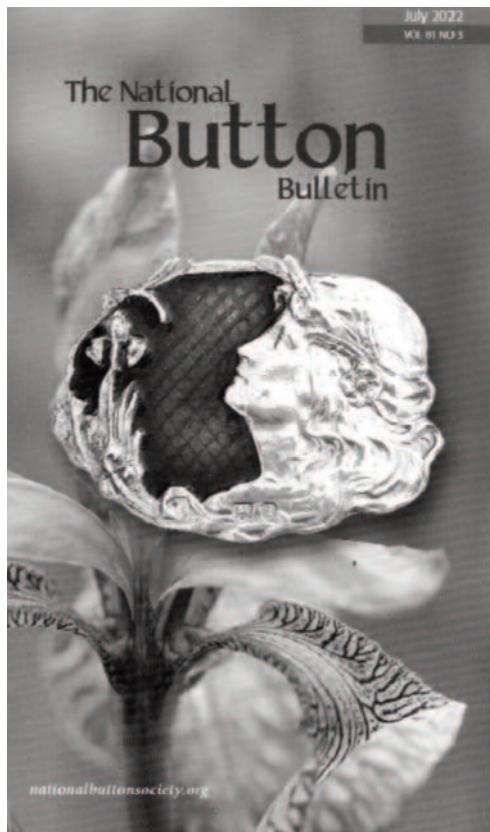
The *Bulletin* was doing a story on the 1974 excavation of the Martinez Adobe estate of Don Juan Ygnacio Nicanor Martinez, who established Rancho El Pinole in the 1830s and built three adobes on land that is now Pinole Valley Park.

The editor wanted to confirm and augment information about the Martinez family and adobes, and requested photos of the adobe and the excavation.

We were only too happy to oblige.

With our assistance, "One Hundred Buttons from Rancho El Pinole," written by archeologist Ericha Sappington, was published in the July issue.

The National Button Society (NBS), founded in 1938, features regional, state, and local clubs



that host button shows and sales. NBS has several thousand members on four continents.

In 1974, an archaeological excavation was organized at the site of Rancho El Pinole to help prepare the land for preservation within a park. The work was spon-

Synthetic polymer and five-hole bone buttons.



sored by the Pinole Historical Society and led by Dr. Priscilla Wegars and

Pinole's Antone Cepernich, who supervised the
Continued on page 9

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The National Button Bulletin

July 2022

One Hundred Buttons from Rancho El Pinole

by Ericha Sappington

Rancho El Pinole and the Adobes of Pinole Viejo (Old Pinole) are located in present-day Pinole CA, just northeast of San Francisco. The adobes were home to the family of Spanish Don Juan Ygnacio Nicanor Martinez from the early 19th to the early 20th century. He established the ranch land and built three adobes. He and his wife, Maria Martina Ramirez de Arellanes (1787-1860), married in 1802, had eleven children in all between 1803 and 1832, two sons and nine daughters. The family ranch, known as Rancho El Pinole, would eventually include over 17,760 acres of ranch land, orchards, vineyards and livestock corrals (Hulaniski, 1917; Vovsi, 1970). The excavation site consisted of three adobes: the family's main home, known as the Ygnacio Martinez Adobe and two other adobes built for his family.

Ygnacio Martinez acquired provisional land title in 1823, a formal title in 1832 and an official cattle brand for his herds in 1837 (Banks & Fredrickson, 1977). The ranch belonged to a prominent family by all accounts. Doña Maria was the daughter of Manuel Ramirez Arellanes, the head of a prominent California family in Los Angeles (Filmer, 1912) and many of the Martinez children married into wealthy families of the San Francisco area, becoming prominent citizens in their own right. By both birth and through their marriages, they were able to establish themselves as colorful characters of their era as well as in the larger history of Contra Costa County, California. The last of the Martinez family to reside at the ranch would be grandson Ygnacio Martinez, who left the land in the early 1900s (Banks & Fredrickson, 1977).



Rancho El Pinole and adobes, ca. 1890. Courtesy Pinole Historical Society.

The adobe remains give us an archaeological picture of the life of a 19th-century Spanish family who began as citizens of Mexican California. The Martinez children lived through a unique transition period from the era of Mexican California through California's American statehood in 1850, and into the era of American California. The family's prominent and unique marriages were to daughters and sons of Spanish dons; Spanish *alcaldes*; a British whaling ship's surgeon and founder of the first drug store in Martinez CA; a former British mariner, whaling ship's captain, alleged smuggler, naturalized Mexican citizen and founder of the



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Martinez Adobe ruins circa 1937 (photo courtes of the California Historical Society).



Volunteers digging at the Rancho El Pinole excavation (photo courtesy of George Vincent).

BUTTON BULLETIN

Continued from page 8

work of more than one hundred volunteers between 1974 and 1978.

The excavation site exposed the foundations of the original walls of Ygnacio Martinez's adobe's ground floor, and established its layout of four rooms with an overall dimension of 40 by 42 feet.

30,000 ARTIFACTS

The project confirmed the adobe originally had two floors, a full first floor and a second half story accessed by a set of outside stairs.

The project uncovered more than 30,000 artifacts, including one hundred buttons made of metal, fabric, cellulose acetate, composition,

black glass, shell, porcelain and bone. Manufacturer marks such as Levi Strauss & Co., Goodyear, and others placed their use and availability to the Martinez family between 1812 and 1907.

The buttons were found scattered across the site. They were found both inside and outside the foundation of the adobe building, on the surface and underneath older layers of soil and adobe bricks.

They were also found in an area disturbed by gopher burrows, near a path of small stones, and inside an area of charcoal and ash that was identified as likely having once been a fireplace for the main home.

These buttons, along

Buttons of all shapes and sizes.



with a few hook-and-eye attachments and one children's shoe are now all that remain of the clothing worn during the time the Martinez family lived at their ranch.

The buttons appear to be typical utilitarian buttons of the period.

While it is not documented who the Martinez family employed to care for their 17,000-acre ranch, we can surmise that the Martinez family would have had a large number of staff members to tend to such a vast estate, and it was likely these unnamed employees who would have worn garments with these types of buttons.

Rancho El Pinole gives us an archaeological picture of the life of a 19th-century Spanish family who began as citizens of Mexican California.

30,000 ARTIFACTS

The Martinez children lived through a unique transition period from the era of Mexican California through California's American statehood in 1850, and into the era of American California.

Sappington is completing a report on the project for inclusion with the artifacts collected from the project, to be given to the Pinole Historical Society.

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CONTRA COSTA HISTORY CENTER WILL PRESENT PHS PROGRAM NOV. 4

Got history?

The Contra Costa History Center has history, and they'll bring it to us at our quarterly meeting on Friday, Nov. 4, at 6:30 p.m. at the Pinole Sportsmen's Club, 201 Piñon Avenue. The event is free.

The presentation will highlight the center's vast archives. If you are doing historical research of any kind, this is the place to start.

The center's living archive is a treasure trove of records, letters, manuscripts, diaries, legal records, photos, maps, newspapers, periodicals, and books that tell the story of our past.

The Contra Costa History Center, at 724 Escobar Street, Martinez, is open 9 a.m.–4 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the first and third Saturdays of the month.
www.cocohistory.org



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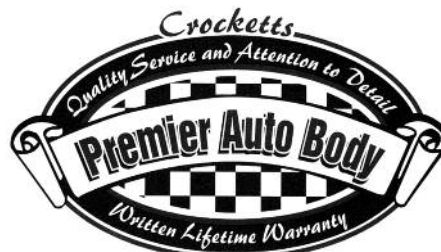


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"The challenge of history is to recognize its time flow so we can better understand it. To understand history, we have to somehow bridge then and now and connect the dots of past events with the present. One way to do this is by learning to view the past not in terms of timelines or yesterdays, but rather as an ongoing present."

— George R. Vincent —

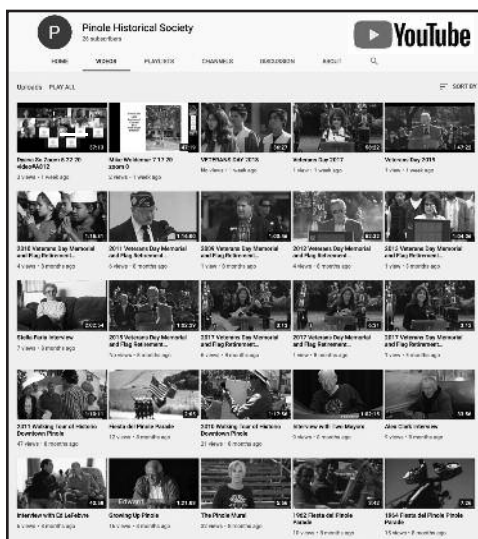
MORE VIDEOS UPLOADED TO PHS YOUTUBE CHANNEL

More videos have been uploaded to the Pinole Historical Society's YouTube channel, including Mike Woldemar's terrific July 2020 presentation on the many Pinole buildings he designed during his long career as an architect.

All of the programs we've recorded since 2008 are on our YouTube channel for your enjoyment. Our thanks to Pinole History Museum board member Alec Jason, who reformatted more than a decade's worth of PHS programs and uploaded them to YouTube.

Among the 30-plus videos include:

- **GEORGE VINCENT'S** two walking tours of historic downtown Pinole.



- **THE PINOLE MURAL:** Wells Fargo Bank produced this video about the history of Pinole. The mural hangs in the bank's Pinole office on Fitzgerald Drive.

- **AN INTERVIEW WITH TWO MAYORS:** Former mayors Jack Meehan and Tom Cutino tell how they saved Fitzgerald Drive — and the sales-tax dollars its shopping centers produce — for Pinole.

- **WHAT'S IN A NAME?:** How Pinole streets got their names, and the characters behind those names.

- **1962, '63, '64 AND '65 FIESTA DEL PINOLE PARADES,** courtesy of PHS member Jim Payne.

PHS YouTube: <https://youtu.be/0mOUvgFlrp4>.

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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!

Pinole**Historical**Society

2023 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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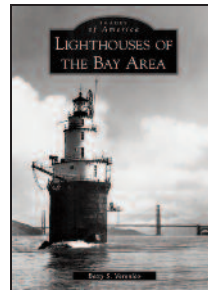
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**Friday, November 11, 2022
11 a.m.-noon, Fernandez Park**

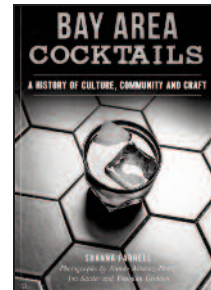
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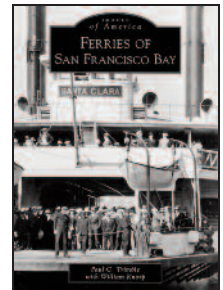
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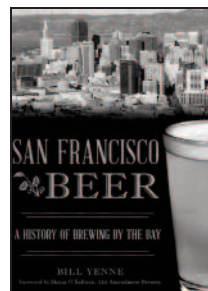
**Lighthouses of
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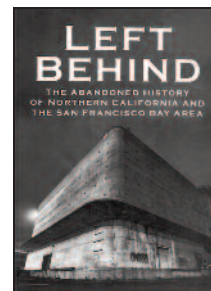
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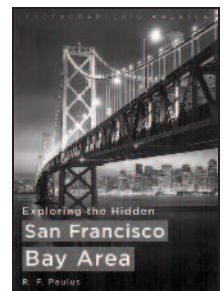
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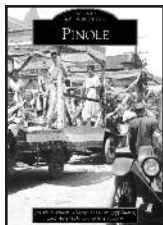
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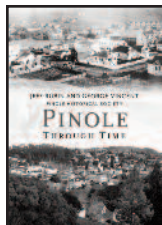
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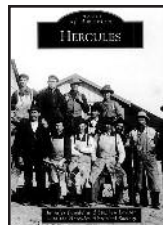
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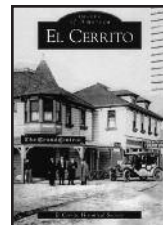
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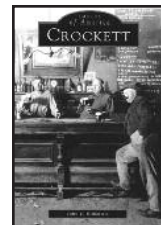
Richmond



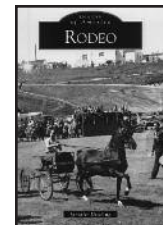
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Most are **\$25**, including sales tax. A few of the older books are **\$23**, including sales tax.

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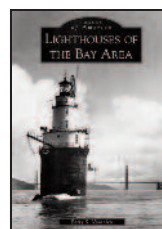
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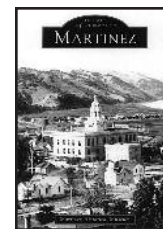
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Area



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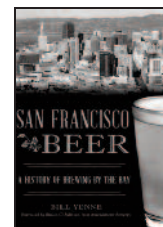
Ferries of
the Bay
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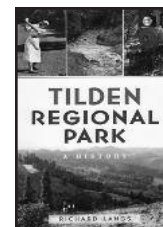
Martinez



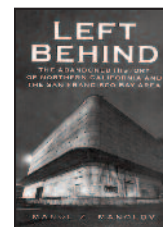
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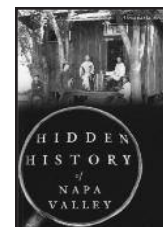
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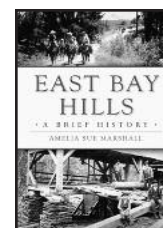
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