

# Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs

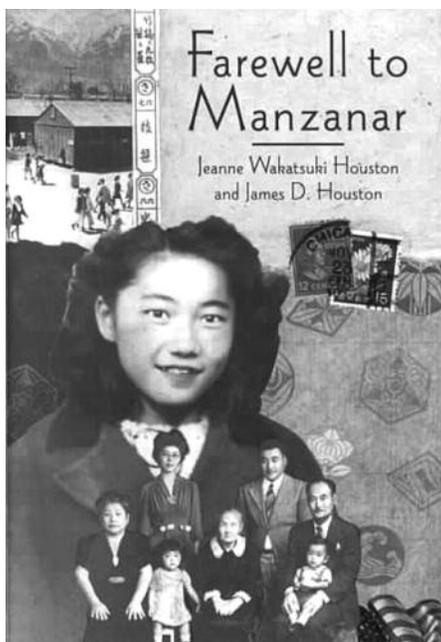
Summer 2012



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

[www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)    [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)

## PHS, PINOLE LIBRARY TO HOST PROGRAM ON SEPTEMBER 6



**T**he internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II will be the

subject of a joint program of the Pinole Historical Society and Pinole Library on September 6 at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building in Pinole.

The program, from 6:30 to 8 p.m., will feature a panel of local Japanese-American citizens who experienced the World War II internment camps first-hand, and videos about the three-year incarceration of more than 110,000 citizens in 10 camps throughout the West.

This program will be a prelude to a September 29

appearance at the Hercules Library by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, co-author of *Farewell to Manzanar*, the much-acclaimed book about her life in California's Manzanar internment camp. Published in 1973, it has been reprinted several times. It was also made into a movie.

Thanks to Barbara Saito, of the Contra Costa chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League; Tom Panas, of the El Cerrito Historical Society; and former Pinole Councilwoman Virginia Fujita, for their help in putting together this program.

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Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

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It's also posted on the PHS website.

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## PHS CALENDAR

### MEETINGS

**August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, December 12, 2012: 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.

**September 6, 2012: Membership meeting:** Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road, Conference Rooms 2A and 2B, 6:30 to 8 p.m. See front page for details.

### 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.** Every other Saturday through December 22.

## Pinole **Historical** Society

**Board of Directors:** Marcia Kalapus, President; Jeff Rubin, Vice President; Mary Drazba, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Shirley Ramos, George Vincent.

**Directors Emeritus:** Dr. Joe Mariotti, Jack Meehan

**Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Rubin



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# President's Message

Marcia Kalapus, President, Pinole Historical Society

## WE APPRECIATE SHEILA GRIST'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Every now and again, a non-profit is fortunate to have extraordinary people volunteer their services to help make the enterprise more effective, efficient, and sustainable.

The Pinole Historical Society is one of those fortunate organizations in that all our volunteers are top-drawer. Recently our volunteer treasurer, Sheila Grist, decided not to further her tenure as a board member; she continues to volunteer where needed.

Sheila joined the society several years ago and became active in collecting many artifacts and other items, labeling

them, logging them into a database, and placing them in containers, where they are protected from the elements.

She worked with her late mother, Suzanne Shaw, devoting many hours putting things in order. Now, because of Sheila, we have a detailed accounting of everything we own.

When we needed a new treasurer a few years ago, Sheila took over an undeveloped position. She immediately began a detailed financial analysis of what we needed to improve documentation, record keeping, and an annual budget plan, and revisited all of our state-government requirements



Marcia Kalapus

as a non-profit for compliance, including income (federal/state) taxes, sales taxes, and insurance.

Sheila updated our bank accounts and CDs. She introduced us to a

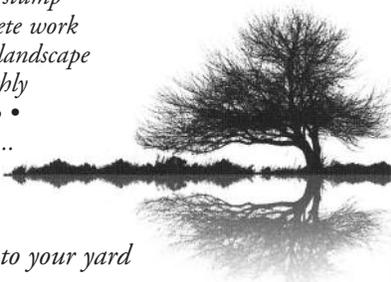
more functional way to track our expenditures/profits. We are now computerized with online banking.

She accomplished her goal of making the society's financial program up-to-date, easily accessible, retrievable, and in one place.

Sheila is a dynamo, and she is missed. But we know that she will be around, helping us when needed.

Volunteers are always needed; if you are interested in joining us, please let us know, as we have a good time doing what we do in providing historical events and activities for the citizens of Pinole.

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# SEPTEMBER 6 PROGRAM

Continued from front page

Houston will appear at the Hercules Library September 29 at 2 p.m. as part of California Reads, a program of Cal Humanities developed in partnership with the California Center for the Book and the California State Library. It invites Californians from all walks of life to participate in reading and discussion programs and related activities hosted by libraries, schools, colleges, bookstores, and other community institutions.

*Farewell to Manzanar* was chosen as a featured book by the California Reads program.

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston was born in 1934 in Inglewood. The youngest of 10 children, she was seven in 1942 when her family was relocated to the World War II internment camp at Manzanar, in the Owens Valley foothills of the eastern Sierra between the towns of Lone Pine and Independence, approximately 230 miles northwest of Los Angeles, taking only the belongings they could carry.

The Wakatsukis spent the next three years in the shadow of guard towers behind barbed wire, virtual prisoners in their own country. Houston's father had been arrested and imprisoned for supposedly selling oil to Japanese submarines.



## PHS AT THE FARMERS' MARKET

We're at our booth at the Pinole Farmers' Market on alternate Saturdays through December. Our schedule is: August 4 and 18; September 1, 15, and 29; October 13 and 27; November 10 and 24; and December 8 and 22. One or more of our books, greeting cards, postcards, and magnets will be on sale at each farmers' market. They are great additions to your history library and make wonderful gifts.

## PHS PRODUCTS FOR SALE

We have postcards, greeting cards, and refrigerator magnets—featuring photos from our book, *Images of America: Pinole*. You can order them at [www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org).

To order on-line, print the order form and mail it with your check to the Pinole Historical Society, P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564.

All of the photos in our book—and others in our collection—are available for purchase in any size you want.

All of these items make great holiday gifts. For more information, contact the PHS at (510) 724-9507 or at [info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org).

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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.

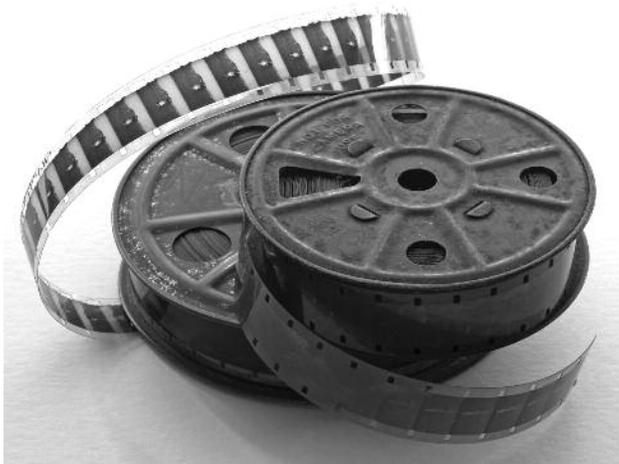
Nearly everyone has taken home movies. That makes everyone who has taken film a historian.

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.

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# PHS interviews on city of Pinole website

**M**iss one of our 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!

## PHS THANKS ITS DONORS:

**T**he Pinole Historical Society thanks **Milt Peddy**, of the film restoration

program of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County, for arranging to have four reels of 8mm film donated by PHS member Jim Payne digitized —

for free — saving historic footage from the 1962 Pinole Labor Day Parade, and the 1963, 1964, and 1965 Fiesta Del Pinole parades.

The California Pioneers of Santa

Clara County offers free film-transcription services to any historical society in Northern California,

as part of its mission to preserve the history of local communities.

Visit the California Pioneers website and its YouTube archive. Milt Peddy may be reached at [miltpeddy@aol.com](mailto:miltpeddy@aol.com).

\* \* \*

*The Pinole Historical Society will be showing Jim Payne's Fiesta del Pinole videos at an upcoming membership meeting.*

*The meeting will feature a panel of Pinoleans discussing their memories of the parades.*

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# Back in the day

By George R. Vincent

## THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE FIESTA DEL PINOLE

### Part 1: The first Fiesta

**P**inoleans have always loved a summertime parade.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Fourth of July parades were annual events with a small-town patriotic flavor.

The population in 1903 was about 600. In the early days, Pinole was a lodge town, and many of the lodges spearheaded the parade events. There were civic groups such as the Lions, Eagles, Elks, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Redmen, Pochahontas, and Rebekahs, among others.

Decorated floats from



**U.S. troops crossing Pinole Creek during early 20th-century Fourth of July parade.**

local businesses such as Greenfield's Department Store and the many lodges, Young Ladies' Institute (YLI) marching drill teams, horseback riders, marching bands, and barbecues at City Hall plaza and Fernandez Park highlighted the holi-

day festivities. Red, white, and blue colors with flag-waving spectators lined the parade routes of San Pablo and Tennent avenues.

Bill Lewis' blue-uniformed Pinole Boys' Marching Band, later to become the white-

uniformed Pinole Municipal Band, led the parades. Gala parades were also held to welcome home Pinole and Hercules veterans from World Wars I and II.

One of the earliest and largest summer parades was part of the annual Portuguese Holy Ghost Festival, held in June on Pentecost Sunday. The two-day event crowned a queen of Portuguese descent at St. Joseph Church.

This was followed by a parade of Portuguese and American flags and music down Tennent Avenue to the Portuguese (IDES) Hall across from Fernandez Park (today's Episcopal Church building). A free Portuguese

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# FIESTA DEL PINOLE

feast followed.

In 1916, Miss May Vincent was the first queen. By 1950, when Miss Carol Costa reigned as queen, 3,000 people were fed sopas in the hall's dining area. There were also Saturday night dances in the Portuguese Hall and Eagles's Hall across the street (today's community theatre), and a concluding fireworks display.

In August 1949, the Pinole Lions Club held the first barbeque and fiesta. This included a parade and a carnival in Fernandez Park. There were no card or dice games or slot machines. There was a game-booth fee of \$2 per foot. Pinole's population was 1,147.

In the 1950s, Pinole began a suburban growth spurt that would increase its population to 4,500 by 1958, and to more

than 13,000 by 1969. The heyday of the lodges in Pinole was waning,

giving way to new civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

Newcomers brought a new civic energy to  
*Continued on page 10*



**Henry Langhorst riding an elephant in Fiesta del Pinole Parade.**

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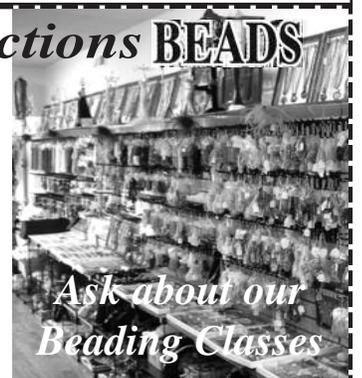
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# FIESTA DEL PINOLE

Continued from page 9

Pinole's changing landscape with a desire to put Pinole on the map. In 1962, the idea of the grand Fiesta del Pinole was born. This was to become one of Northern California's major summer attractions.

A number of Pinole residents and city officials got together and decided it was time Pinole emerged from its sleepy hollow past and got some well-deserved identification by honoring its historic roots.

Credit for the idea of the Fiesta del Pinole to commemorate the city's Hispanic heritage and 60th anniversary in 1963, is given to resident John Healey.



**1956 Holy Ghost Queen Margaret Faria**

Healey campaigned for a tribute to the city and its history originally as a small celebration. But this quickly grew to include all of Pinole's

civic, social, and service organizations.

An ad-hoc citizens' committee approached Mayor Bruno Felice in 1962 with a proposal for a festival, to which the city council responded in what a reporter called "characteristic Pinolean speed."

Promoting the first Fiesta del Pinole were Paul Badger, Bruno Felice, City Clerk Betty Grimes, Healey, and city employee Tom Tudor. The event's theme was to celebrate Pinole's discovery and naming by Spanish explorer Pedro Fages in 1792, as well as the founding of El Rancho Pinole by Don Ygnacio Martinez in the 1820s.

So inspired was Healey by Pinole's history that he wanted the first Fiesta del Pinole to be held on October 12, the birthday of explorer Fages's horse.

The first advertisement could be seen from I-80. The words and dates, courtesy of Healey, were done in huge chalk letters on Faria's Hill above the freeway.

The Fiesta, held in late August, was a huge success. One Pinole resident put it this way: "You had to live through that first Fiesta to believe it. It was as zany as a scene from a W.C. Fields' movie. It was unbelievable. It was as if the entire town just suddenly came out of their homes, then went to Fernandez Park."

Businessman Henry Langhorst, mounted on an elephant, led the noisy parade from Pinole-

Hercules School #2 (Collins School) along Tennent Avenue to Fernandez Park. Floats, horses, clowns, old cars, marching bands, drill teams, flags, scouts, and community organizations followed.

One reporter wrote: "The sidewalks were filled with children witnessing the spectacle, and old Pinoleans watched full of pride for the 'old city', as well as new residents of the Pinole Valley of the last four years who came in droves."

Fernandez Park was filled with game booths and carnival rides, a Ferris wheel and roller coaster and Tilt-a-Whirl. Throw a baseball at a salami on a string, knock it off, and win it.

The Pinole Sportsmen's Club and VFW had beer booths with old Pinole pictures and soft drinks. There were Saturday night Twin Hall Dances to live music in the Portuguese and Eagles's halls, followed by a Sunday barbecue and a massive fireworks display.

The little town had put on its best dress to become a big California attraction.

*Next issue: Subsequent Fiesta del Pinole celebrations.*

\* \* \*

The Pinole Historical Society would love to see your Fiesta del Pinole memorabilia. Please contact us via e-mail at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org) or call (510) 724-9507.



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## Historic Pinole: 1904 Explosion Killed Five Workers

This article is from the June 5, 1904, edition of the San Francisco Call newspaper.

BERKELEY, June 4 — Three hundred pounds of nitro-glycerine exploded at the California Powder Works this morning at Pinole and crushed out the lives of five men, two of them white and three Chinese.

In an endeavor to save the entire plant from destruction by the fire that followed the explosion two other white men were injured, one of

### CONTRA COSTA COUNTY SHERIFF'S SON SPARED BY "PREMONITION" ABOUT EXPLOSION. CLOCKS ALL OVER PINOLE STOPPED AT ONCE

them so seriously that he may die. The dead are:

- Alexander McCullough, 30 years old, married.
- John Evans Smith, 30 years old, single
- Ah Hung
- Hong Soy
- Loe Bow.

The wounded are:

- S. S. McKinley, skull

probably fractured.

- George C. Cooper, foot injured.

Besides the loss of life there was a great destruction of property. The powder company estimates its loss at \$30,000. This was due to "the complete wiping out of the gelatine-mixing plant, the giant mixing plant and the ice works.

All around the enclosure at the works are evidences of the great force of the concussion. Of the two mixing plants there is nothing standing above

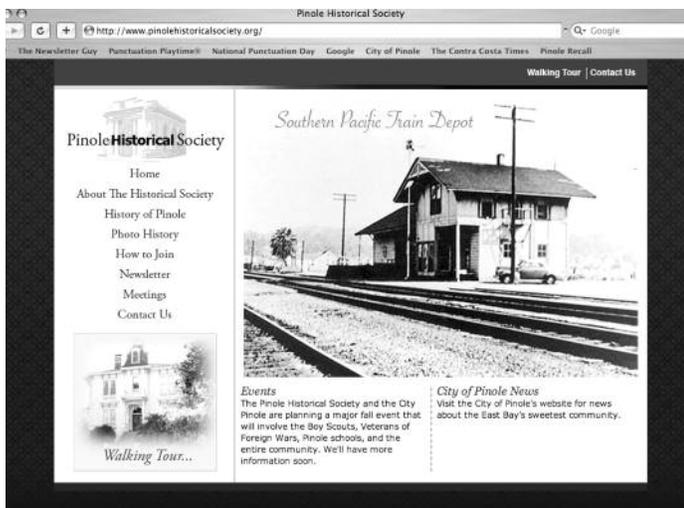
the ground but a few broken timbers. Only the gelatine plant suffered from the explosion, the other two buildings having burned to the ground after being set afire by the flying debris.

#### Fire follows explosion

The explosion must have occurred at 9:40 o'clock, for all the clocks in Pinole were stopped at that hour.

There was a sudden detonation, that jarred upon the ears of all within a mile of the plant. Every man about the works, knew at once what had happened at the gelatine works. There was no time to go there to investigate, for fire had broken out immediately

*Continued on page 12*



Visit the Pinole Historical Society website for information on the society's activities and events — and, of course, the history of the sweetest city in the East Bay.

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# Historic Pinole: 1904 Explosion Killed Five Workers

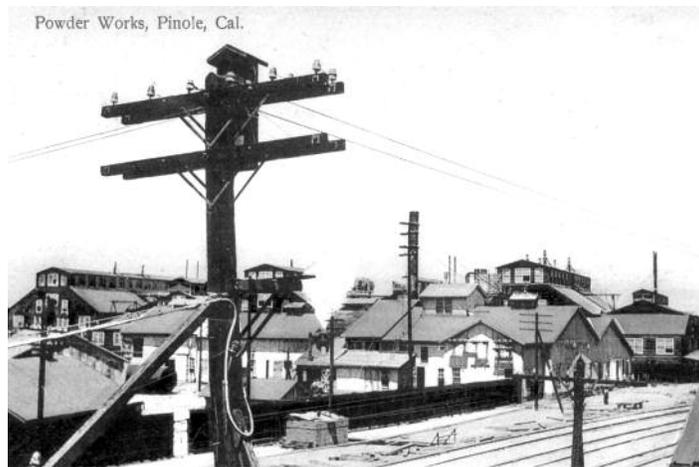
Continued from page 11

in a dozen places. Burning timbers landed upon the roofs of buildings full of explosives, and the dry grass was being devoured by the flames in a dozen directions.

In defiance of all rules of safety and self-preservation, the employees of the plant at once hurried out to do what they could to blot out the flames.

The fire department called every man to his station, and for an hour they all worked with desperation. It took all that time to master the flames, so that some idea of the danger involved in this undertaking may be had.

The fight cost S. S. McKinley, shipping clerk at the plant, a broken head, and George C. Cooper, a carpenter, a badly lacerated foot.



**Postcard of California Powder Works.**

These men were caught by falling timbers while fighting at the ice plant and buried beneath them.

The bravery of these workmen turned firemen saved an immense amount, of property and probably many lives. Tons and tons of high explosives were time and again in danger of being fired by the falling embers. It was mainly a fight to keep the flames

away from the big storage houses, and out of the struggle came victory.

After the plant had been saved from destruction there was time to investigate the ruins of the gelatine plant, where it was certain there was nothing left of the five human beings to tell the tale. Where formerly there stood a stout building for the manufacture of gelatine there only remained then a few

blackened ruins. Even the great bulkheads surrounding the works to modify the effects of just such an accident as occurred to-day were toppled over on their sides.

### Victims annihilated

Of the human beings who had gone to destruction a little while before there remained hardly enough of their flesh for identification. The skulls, or pieces of the skulls, of McCullough and Smith were found, but that was all. There was nothing to help reveal the identity of two of the Chinese.

One person only escaped out of the six who were regularly employed in the gelatine house. He is Howard Veale, 18 years old, son of Sheriff Veale of Contra Costa County. Veale's escape was nothing short or miraculous and he owes his life to a prem-

*Continued on page 13*

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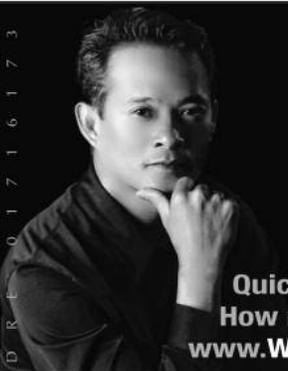


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# Historic Pinole: 1904 Explosion Killed Five Workers

Continued from page 12

nition that there would be an accident today. Just before the explosion Veale was suddenly seized with the conviction that the plant would be blown up. Then he said to McCullough, who was foreman of the plant: "It don't look good to me. She's going to blow up."

With these words Veale left the place and ran behind the bulkheads fifty feet away. He had not any more than got behind them and thrown himself on the ground when the explosion came. Timbers landed on all sides of the youth, but he escaped altogether unhurt.

The body of a Chinese, thought to be that of Ah Hung, was found some distance from the scene of the ruin, which shows that he, too, sought safety from the impending disaster. He might have

escaped had he hidden himself behind the bulkheads, but he went in another direction, where there was no protection at all.

## Cause of explosion

John Bermingham, superintendent of the California Powder Works, gave out an authorized statement covering all the details of the explosion, including also a hazard as to its cause. He attributes it to the probability that in lowering the mixer paddles into the mixer the workmen allowed it to drop upon the rubber buffers

too violently and the elasticity of the rubber allowed the mixer to strike the bottom with such force as to ignite the explosive.

McCullough, together with Veale, was engaged in preparing a hoist for the mixer, which had been sent to the machine shop only yesterday.

Veale told the officers of the plant afterward that when he saw McCullough lower the shaft into the machine he became frightened and ran out of the house. It is estimated that there were some 300 pounds of nitroglyc-

erin in the mixer at the time it exploded.

No larger amount is allowed to be mixed in the house at one time on account of the danger involved in its making. Fortunately, the finished powder in the giant powder building that was burned had just been removed to the magazine and all that remained in it was some mixed stuff that did not explode.

Coroner Curry has taken charge of the remains of the victims of the accident and will probably hold an inquest on Monday next. The funerals of the white men will be held on Monday too. Both of them were members of the Masonic order, and McCullough was a Knight of Pythias besides.

McCullough leaves a wife and two children to mourn his loss. He was 30 years old and a native of California. Smith's only relatives are a mother and sisters, living at North Beach in San Francisco. He was 27 years old and was born in California.

\* \* \*

*Editor's note: This article is from the California Digital Newspaper Collection, Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research, University of California, Riverside <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cdnc>.*

*These articles about Pinole are featured weekly on Pinole Patch ([pinole.patch.com](http://pinole.patch.com)). We thank Pinole Patch Editor Rob Shea for preserving and promoting the history of Pinole.*

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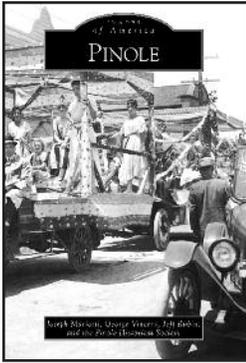
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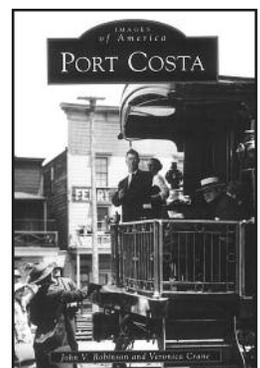
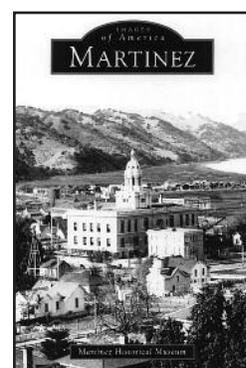
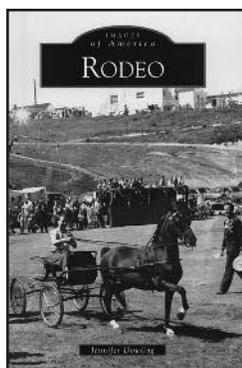
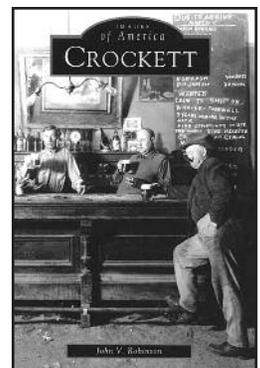
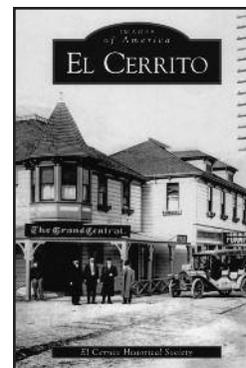
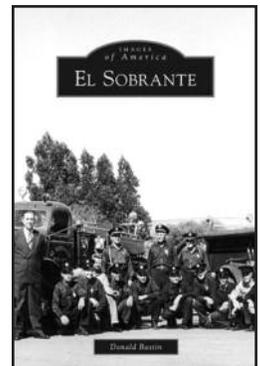
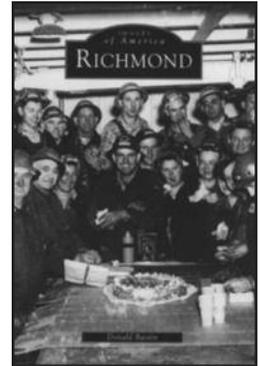
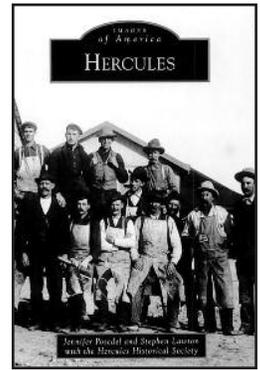
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# 50 years ago — 1962

**January 1:** The United States Navy SEALs are activated. SEAL Team One is commissioned in the Pacific Fleet and SEAL Team Two in the Atlantic Fleet.

**February 20:** United States astronaut John Glenn orbits Earth three times.

**March 1:** The S. S. Kresge Company opens its first Kmart discount store in Garden City, Michigan.

**June 25:** The United States Supreme Court rules that mandatory prayers in public schools are unconstitutional.

**July 2:** The first Walmart store, then known as Wal-Mart (which is still the corporate name), opens for business in Rogers, Arkansas.

**July 9:** American artist Andy Warhol premieres his Campbell's Soup Cans exhibit in Los Angeles.

**August 5:** Marilyn Monroe dies from an overdose of sleeping pills and chloral hydrate, officially ruled a

"probable suicide." However, the exact cause of her death has been disputed.

**August 10:** Marvel Comics publishes *Amazing Fantasy#15*, which features the first published appearance of the superhero character of Spider-Man, created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

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