

# Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs

Winter 2011



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

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

## MARCIA KALAPUS NAMED RECIPIENT OF NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH AWARD

**P**inole Historical Society President Marcia

Kalapus has been selected by the Pinole City Council as the city's National Women's History Month honoree at the 11th annual

Women's History Month celebration Thursday, March 24, at 7 p.m. in the John & Jean Knox Center for the Performing Arts at Contra Costa



College, 2600 Mission Bell Drive, San Pablo.

The event is sponsored by Contra Costa College and the West Contra Costa Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), who join together with the nation's observance

of Women's History Month in March to honor

*Continued on page 14*

## PHS CONTINUES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

**T**he Pinole Historical Society continues to bring local history to children attending the five Pinole elementary schools.

The PHS brought in the new year with a Pinole history lesson for fourth-graders at Collins Elementary School on Janu-

ary 4. Late last year, we did programs at Shannon Elementary School and St. Joseph School.

The program was covered by Rob Shea, editor of Pinole Patch, the new on-line newspaper. Rob wrote a story and produced a video of George Vincent (photo, page 13),

our historian and instructor, at work with about 50 students in the school's multi-purpose room.

Read the article and view the photos at: <http://pinole.patch.com/articles/pinole-history-comes-to-collins-school>

This is the second year

the PHS has gone into local schools to work with fourth-graders. Students learn about California history in the fourth grade, but Pinole history is not taught.

PHS Director Emeritus George Vincent wrote an

*Continued on page 13*

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It's also posted on the PHS website.

**FOR ADVERTISERS:** More than 2,500 printed copies of *PHS Newsbriefs* are distributed every quarter, generating readership among thousands of Pinole 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 OF EVENTS

### MEETINGS

**February 17: Quarterly membership meeting,** Alex Clark Room, Pinole Public Safety Facility, 880 Tennent Avenue, 6:30 to 8 p.m. **Program:** *How to Create a Family Tree: An Introduction to Genealogy.* Veteran PHS genealogists Marcia Kalapus and Shirley Ramos will teach you about all of the resources available to create a history of your family. This will be an interactive program with handouts. Please bring a pencil.

**May 19: Quarterly membership meeting and PHS Annual Meeting,** Alex Clark Room, Pinole Public Safety Facility, 880 Tennent Avenue, 6:30 to 8 p.m. **Program:** *Images of America: Hercules.* Join author Jennifer Posedel as she talks about her soon-to-be-published Arcadia book about the history of our neighboring city. Jennifer will share interesting stories from Hercules's past and photos from long ago.

### ONGOING

**Pinole Library history exhibits.** Two exhibits at the library, 2935 Pinole Valley Road. Library hours: 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.** The society will be off the first quarter of the year and resume being at our booth on Saturday, April 2. We'll be there every other Saturday through December.

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# President's Message

Marcia Kalapus, President, Pinole Historical Society

## VOLUNTEERS: THE BACKBONE OF PRESERVATION

**O**ur economy showed promise toward the end of 2010, and more folks are getting back to work. Some folks who haven't been able to find work spent most of their free time during the holidays doing volunteer work.

It was good to see the great numbers of people supporting and giving of their time to all kinds of organizations, social groups, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and food banks, etc.

The largest population of volunteers is older adults over 75, and young adults. But this past fall there were not only senior citizens but entire families, individuals, teenagers, and even small children serving their communities.

Volunteering has been around a very long time. According to some record keepers more than 44% of the population in the world does some form of volunteer-

ing in their busy lives.

In the past, because of the need for more help in non-profit organizations and those who offer social services, volunteerism increased profoundly. There is more competition in recent years among all the groups to have quality programs that attract individuals to give of their time and serve their community.

I am writing about volunteers because it was through small grassroots organizers that historical preservation programs started. Concerned citizens many years ago recognized that famous landmarks, documents, records, history books, and many artifacts were literally being destroyed or demolished because of lack of knowledge or care that these things were priceless and could never be replaced.

In the 1880s and 1890s, as America continued to grow and more immigrants entered this



**Marcia Kalapus**

country, more land was being used to provide homes, farms, factories, and government buildings. Older buildings were torn down to build new ones. This also happened after World War II, when housing developments sprang up as fast as they could be built. Many old historical homes and buildings were destroyed.

For more than a hundred years these same concerned citizens have formed historical societies, donated many

hours to preservation, and formed foundations to raise money to purchase and maintain old buildings, land, create new parks, etc.

Many who offer their services have not had formal training in preservation. And that is okay, because it takes all kinds of talent to preserve history. At some museums, for instance, volunteers use their talents in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, landscaping, painting, secretarial, filing, and sorting.

Societies and museums plan projects, make lists of things to be done, and then recruit volunteers to help them. This way, the job gets done with the right person doing the right job at the right time.

The Pinole Historical Society will be establishing a volunteer program this year.

Also, our goal is to have more educational programs for all ages.

*Continued on page 4*

Geoff Torretta

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# VOLUNTEERS: THE BACKBONE OF PRESERVATION

Continued from page 3

We would like to have member/volunteers, interested persons who love history in general, and experienced or retired educators who would be willing to help us in planning, preparing, and teaching history.

We want to have these programs in conjunction with the Pinole Library so we can utilize its resources. We hope to encourage adults, chil-

dren, and young adults to preserve and learn history, to do research, to use all of the library's facilities—and one day become docents or volunteers for a planned municipal museum in Pinole.

If you have any suggestions or ideas, please share them with us via e-mail at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.com](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.com).

I hope 2011 will be a rewarding year for everyone.

## PHS PRODUCTS FOR SALE

**W**e have postcards, greeting cards, and refrigerator magnets—featuring photos from our book, *Images of America: Pinole*. You can order them from our website: [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.

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# U.S. WAR DOGS ASSOCIATION NEEDS ASSISTANCE

**L**ifetime PHS member Gail Snyder (Von Aspern) is a Civilian Liaison Officer for the United States War Dogs Association (USWDA), a non-profit organization of former and current U.S. military dog handlers and supporting members committed to promoting the long history of military service dogs, establishing permanent war-dog memorials, and educating the public about the invaluable service of these canines to our country.

Thousands of trained dogs are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and other undisclosed locations. They hold rank and have served in all branches of our military.

USWDA objectives include:

- Establishing a U.S. War Dog Memorial.
- Having the U.S. Postal Service issue a commemorative stamp honoring military dogs.
- Finding homes for retiring military canines.

## HISTORY OF MILITARY WAR DOGS

Several countries in Europe used dogs for military work during World War I (1914-1918).



**Team of U.S. Marine combat trackers and war dogs in Afghanistan.**

The United States military didn't allow dogs, but soldiers began smuggling their pet dogs aboard ship when shipped overseas.

One dog smuggled aboard a troop ship headed for France—a pit bull named Stubby—became a true hero. Stubby saved our troops from poison gas, caught enemy soldiers, was injured many times. When he returned home in 1924, he was presented with many medals at the White House.

Dogs were officially allowed in the U.S. military during World War II (1941-1945). They were called "Dogs of Defense." Americans were asked to donate their pets. Nine-

teen thousand dogs were given, and 10,000 were successfully trained to become war dogs.

During World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and Operation Freedom, these dogs made wonderful soldiers—sentry, scout, Explosive Ordinance Device dog (EOD), search and rescue, and Secret Service to protect the president.

In 1998, Lackland AFB in San Antonio, TX, began breeding Belgian Malinois, German Shepherds and Dutch Shepherds specifically for military service.

Military War Dogs (MWDs) work for 8-10 years and, until recently, were euthanized when their active duty ended.

In 2000, Congress established a law to allow handlers of MWDs to adopt them when they retire. Now, civilians may also adopt these military heroes.

The USWDA mails out care packages to U.S. military K9s and handlers deployed overseas, some in extremely remote locations with no supplies or medications. All packages are packed half with K9 care and half with handler needs.

To help the USWDA, contact Gail Snyder at (510) 724-6619 (office), (510) 417-1794 (cell), or at [thebushwoman@comcast.net](mailto:thebushwoman@comcast.net).

For more information about the USWDA, visit [www.uswardogs.org](http://www.uswardogs.org).

  
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# Back in the day

By George Vincent

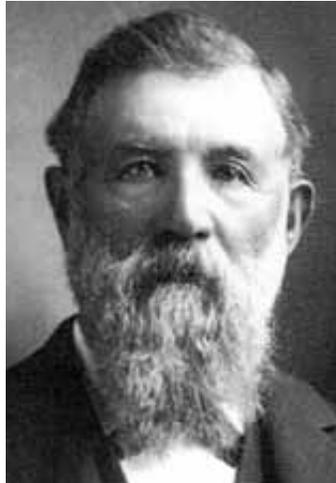
## THREE FAMILIES THAT SHAPED PINOLE

**T**he early federal census takers noted Pinole as Township #11 in Contra Costa County. The lists are revealing neighborhood maps of families, their ethnic backgrounds, and occupations.

Among the names of the young community are three notable families who came to Pinole, stayed here, and dedicated themselves to enhancing the community they loved.

While the Martinez and Tennent families were the founders of Pinole's earliest roots, the later names of Fernandez, Downer, and Collins also made important contributions to Pinole's growth as an urban township. These families saw Pinole's potential as more than just a dusty spot between the big cities of San Pablo and Martinez.

Bernardo Fernandez was responsible for the beginnings of Pinole as a city. His economic eye envisioned the Pinole



**Bernardo Fernandez**

waterfront as the nucleus of a new city and business center.

After his arrival in 1854, he acquired the bayfront from the Tennent estate in 1856. By 1859, he had a deep-water wharf, schooners, warehouses, and home. His embarcadero and shipping industry expanded with the coming of the Northern Railway (later Southern Pacific and now Union Pacific) in 1879, and Fernandez also carried the mail for Pinole. The depot area became the hub of activi-



**Dr. Manuel Fernandez**

ty in Pinole. Fernandez' long wharf became a popular place for swimmers, singers, and sweethearts.

Bernardo married Carlotta Cuadra in 1859 and raised a family of six children in the 21-room mansion by the bay built in 1894. Fernandez eventually acquired more than 20,000 acres of land in the Pinole and Rodeo Valleys and beyond. One son, Manuel, served as physician to Pinole and Hercules for nearly 50

years. Dr. Fernandez donated the land that became Fernandez Park to the city in the 1930s.

In 1909, Bernardo and Carlotta celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at their home, now on the National Register of Historic Places. Bernardo died in 1912 at the age of 87, a Pinole pioneer and benefactor, and one of Contra Costa's wealth-

*Continued on page 7*



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# THREE FAMILIES THAT SHAPED PINOLE

Continued from page 6

iest and most prominent citizens.

Edward M. Downer was also an energetic visionary of Pinole's future as a city.

Young Downer left Nevada City for Pinole in 1889 at age 20 to become station agent for the Southern Pacific Railroad at the waterfront. He also began a laundry agency and was the town's first postmaster, with mail coming by train to Pinole. In 1894, he teamed with young Manuel Fernandez to establish Pinole's first newspaper, The Pinole Weekly Times.

Downer was an entrepreneur with a heart in many other community-building ventures. He was largely responsible for the growth of the downtown Main Street business section of Pinole. He moved the post office from the waterfront to a downtown building. He was also responsible for influencing Hercules to build the reservoir on the hill to provide fresh drinking water to Pinole in 1902, when most water was from wells and often alkaline in taste.



**E.M. Downer (left), president of the Bank of Pinole, and Thomas W. Hutchison, assistant cashier, inside the bank.**

In 1905, he established the Bank of Pinole with \$12,500 in a rented wooden storefront on

Main Street (now San Pablo Avenue). By 1915, he expanded to a newly built classical stone

building that still stands and is on the National Register of Historic Places, and erected the two-story brick Downer Building, side by side on Main Street. By 1915, he had controlling interest in the Mechanics Bank of Richmond and its branches. Downer's descendants still carry on his banking tradition and name.

In 1895, Downer married Elizabeth Boquet Poinsett and built a mansion on a hill east of Pinole in 1900. Their two children, Hazel Downer and Edward M. Downer Jr., were raised in that house, today the home

*Continued on page 8*



**The Downer Building once housed Greenstein's Pharmacy (lower level) and the offices of Dr. Manuel Fernandez (upper level). It was razed after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.**

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# THREE FAMILIES THAT SHAPED PINOLE



**The Collins home on Tennent Avenue, across the street from the Pinole Youth Center.**

Continued from page 7 of Don and Lynda Bartels. Edward M. Downer was above all, a personal friend to Pinoleans, and his charitable acts were many. He was instrumental in Pinole being incorporated as a city in 1903.

The Downers were benefactors of the Pinole-Hercules Methodist Episcopal Church, and the new brick church erected on Valley Avenue in 1925 (now the Church of Christ) was dedicated in Elizabeth Downer's memory. Downer served

on the Pinole-Hercules School Board, was a trustee when Pinole incorporated in 1903, served as the city's mayor for 25 years, and was also president of the Pinole Light and Power Company.

Edward M. Downer died from a heart ailment in 1938 at the age of 69. The Downer family today still carries on his tradition of community involvement and generous support of local causes, including the Pinole Historical Society.

The John Collins family left San Francisco in the late 19th century and settled on north Tennent Avenue near downtown. John Collins and his wife, Julia, were both Irish immigrants. John became a U.S. citizen in 1889 at the age of 17 and was a civic-minded businessman.

John Collins was a saloonkeeper. He ran the Klondike Saloon downstairs while his family lived upstairs.

Turn-of-the-20th-century Pinole did a booming saloon business, and Collins's tavern was one of many along Tennent Avenue.

The great Pinole fire of 1908 that destroyed Forester's Social Hall almost burned down the Collins's wooden home close by. In 1931, the Pinole Opera House burned down, and again almost took the Collins's home with it. In the late 1930s, the home was stuccoed as it looks today for fire protection for the Collins family members still living there.

John Collins served for many years as town constable in the early

*Continued on page 9*

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# THREE FAMILIES THAT SHAPED PINOLE

Continued from page 8

1900s. He died on December 12, 1909, at the age of 37, leaving his wife, Julia, with seven young children—Margaret, John, Martin, Robert, Francis, George and Edward. Julia would later marry her husband's brother, Jerry Collins, and have two more children, Gerald and Marie.

The Collins children would grow into a community-spirited family of professionals who contributed much to Pinole's social fabric. All were active in town events and were greatly respected.

Oldest daughter Margaret was nine and a third-grader at the Pinole-Hercules School #1 when her father died. She would become a teacher and principal of the school, and later serve



**Francis Collins**

as superintendent of the Pinole-Hercules School District from 1940-1967. Pinole-Hercules School #2 was renamed Margaret Collins School in her honor.

Margaret's sister, Marie, also taught many generations of Pinole's children. Brother Martin Collins was Pinole post-



**Margaret Collins**

master for 35 years, while another brother, Francis, was Contra Costa County district attorney and Pinole's city attorney for many years. Another brother, Gerald, served in World War II in Europe, driving for General George Patton.

Always kind to children, kids could always

count on a whole Hershey bar at the Collins's home on Halloween. Descendants of the Collins family still live in the Pinole area.

It is a fortunate coincidence that the homes of all three families still stand as a visual reminder of their legacy of service to Pinole.

Dr. Joseph Mariotti and his late wife, Gretchen, restored the Fernandez Mansion. The Downer home has been lovingly preserved and cared for by Don and Lynda Bartels.

The Collins home is the last remaining original home on upper Tennent Avenue and is owned by the city of Pinole. Its current fate is unknown, but it has survived more than 100 years as a monument to a family dedicated to Pinole's betterment.



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# NEW RESOURCE AT CONTRA COSTA HISTORY CENTER

**A** young woman came into the Contra Costa History Center the other day. She was just "killing time" until a friend came to meet her. Less than a half hour later, she had seen the naturalization papers of her great grandmother.

These included not only the naturalization petition itself, but the ship on which her grandmother had entered the United States, her residence address at the time, the names and birthdates of all of her children, and personal information like height and eye color.

Many times there is also a picture of the individual in the file. For many, this is the most exciting kind of information they can find. And it is exciting for the History Center that they are able to help such people to this great historical information.

The Contra Costa County Historical Society at 610 Main Street (home of the History Center) is a treasure house of original documents, indexes, compilations, and historic photos. Professional research firms,



**Naturalization documents from 1850-1980 are now part of the CCHS archives.**

scholars, and students use its resources as the richest one-stop shop in the county for East Bay historical materials.

Less known is the fact that it holds valuable records for family historians and genealogists.

As anyone who has done much genealogy knows, not everything one needs to trace one's genealogy is found on the Internet. Although wonderful resources exist at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), and hundreds of other on-line sites, many records are off-line and in local historical reposi-

tories. Also, the kind of local records that bring life to family histories are found exclusively at the local level.

The Contra Costa County Historical Society is the Mecca for these kinds of records.

As of October 2010, one of the most important genealogical sources for Contra Costans became much more available. Margie Newton, one of the regular volunteers at the History Center, completed indexing the naturalizations for Contra Costa County.

The Contra Costa County Historical Society

holds many volumes of naturalization documents in care for the Contra Costa County Superior Court. The index to more than 11,000 naturalization records can be viewed on the society's website at [www.cocohistory.org](http://www.cocohistory.org).

Naturalizations are the single most important record class used to trace immigrant ancestors to their home countries. They contain direct evidence of specific date and place of birth, among much other information, as noted above.

Naturalization records have been the responsibility of different federal, state, or county courts. From 1850-1980, naturalizations in Contra Costa County took place in the county's superior courts. After 1980, the naturalization process moved to San Francisco. An extensive article on U.S. District Court naturalizations is on-line at [www.sfgenealogy.com/norcal/resourcecenter/natural.htm](http://www.sfgenealogy.com/norcal/resourcecenter/natural.htm).

Now, the only place to find naturalization records created in Contra Costa is at 610 Main Street, Martinez.

— By Dean McLeod

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# PHS interviews on city of Pinole website

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

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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, George Vincent's Walking Tour of Historic Downtown Pinole, and the very fine PCTV-produced, 12-part series based on the Historic Walking Tour brochure. It's great TV!



**Check the Pinole Historical Society website for information on PHS activities and events – and, of course, the history of the sweetest city in the East Bay.**

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

**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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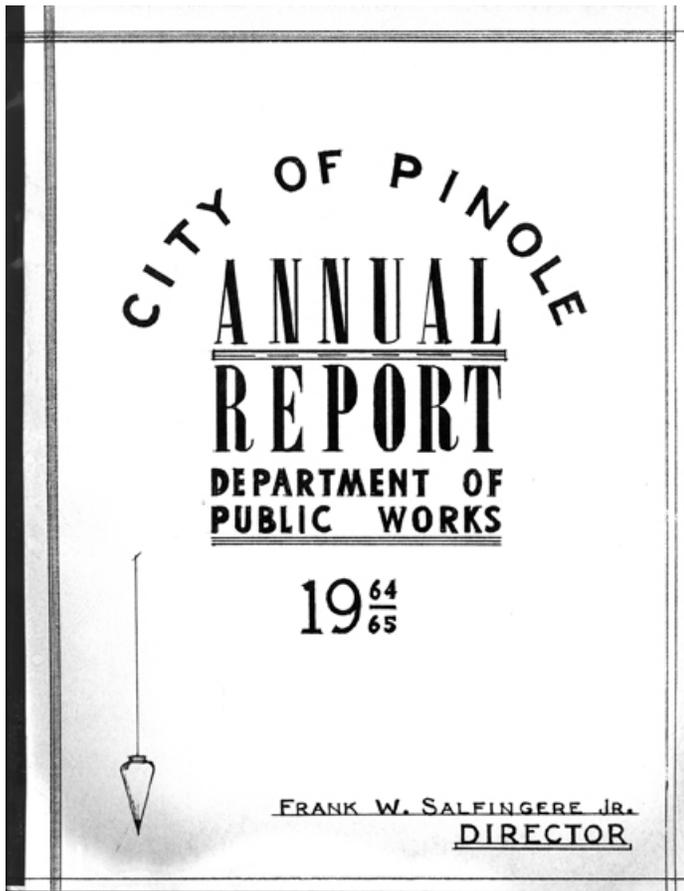
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# PHS RECEIVES PHOTOS, DOCUMENTS FROM DONORS

The society thanks Stanley J. Grogan and Claire J. Baker for their donations of photos, documents, newspapers, and other memorabilia. Included among these items are:

## FROM STANLEY J. GROGAN

- Several copies of the *Pinole-Hercules News*
- City of Pinole Department of Public Work 1964-1965 Annual Report.
- 1965 Contra Costa County Annual Report: "A Report to the Citizens from the Board of Supervisors."
- *Pinole History in Pictures*, 2nd edition, January 1976



*City of Pinole Department of Public Works annual report donated by Stanley Grogan.*

- *Oakland Tribune* newspaper article: "Highway Left but Pinole Didn't Die," June 2, 1963.
- 1964 Fiesta del Pinole books.
- Rancho El Pinole: Early History of Pinole.
- *West County Times* article: "What's inside the Fernandez Mansion," May 18, 1977.
- *Contra Costa Gazette* article: "Pinole—Founded and Named By Spanish Explorers! City Becoming Area Of Suburban Living!" Nov. 28, 1958.

## FROM CLAIRE J. BAKER

- Program from the dedication of the Pinole Public Safety Facility and the unveiling of the mosaic tile city seal along with Poetry Landmark #10, February 3, 1985.
- *West County Times* article: "Citizens asked for help pay for city seal," February 4, 1985.
- 6 photos of Jessie Clark's plaque, Thelma McPherson, Mrs. Clinton Lindell (Janie), Mrs. Wade Olds (Eleanore), Mayor Louis Borges Jr., and Jessie Clark, who was almost 95 at the time.

*Pinole historian Jessie Howe Clark (seated) was honored with a plaque and a tree (lower left) by the Pinole Garden Club at the dedication of the Pinole Public Safety Facility on February 3, 1985. This photo was donated to the PHS by Claire Baker (standing)*



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



**Pinole Historical Society Director Emeritus George Vincent (far right), a longtime teacher in Pinole schools, presented a**

**Pinole history program to fourth-grade students at Ellerhorst Elementary School in 2010.**

## **PHS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

*Continued from front page*

interesting, interactive program for the children, focusing on students and teachers who lived in Pinole 100 or more years ago.



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# NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Continued from front page

women who have made contributions to their communities. West County mayors and county supervisors select the honorees.

## How March came to be Women's History Month

The origin of women's history month goes back to 1911 in Europe, when March 8 was first celebrated as International Women's Day.

Women's rights was a political hot topic in the early 1900s in Europe and the United States. Women's suffrage—the right to vote—was a priority of many women's organizations. Also, women authors wrote and published books on the contributions of women to history during that era.

The depression of the 1930s, which hit on both sides of the Atlantic, and World War II pushed women's rights out of the public arena. The movement was not revived until the 1950s and 1960s, when author Betty Friedan described the "problem that has no name," referring to the boredom and isolation of the middle-class housewife who often gave up intellectual and professional aspirations. With Friedan's and others' efforts, interest in women's issues and their history blossomed.

By the 1970s, there was a growing sense that



**Marcia Kalapus**

history as taught in many schools was incomplete and that women were invisible in most history courses. In that decade, many universities began to include the subjects of women's history and the broader field of women's studies in their curricula.

In California, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women began a "Women's History Week" celebration in 1978. The week was chosen to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8. The response was positive, and soon schools began to host their own Women's History Week programs.

The next year, a California group shared its project at a Women's History Institute at Sarah Lawrence College.

That presentation inspired participants to have their own programs and to support an effort to have Congress declare a National Women's History Week.

The National Women's History Project began distributing materials specifically designed to support observance of the week and to enhance the teaching of history throughout the year by including notable women and women's experiences.

In 1987, at the request of the National Women's History Project, Congress expanded the week to a month. Congress issued a resolution and the president issued a proclamation for Women's History Month.

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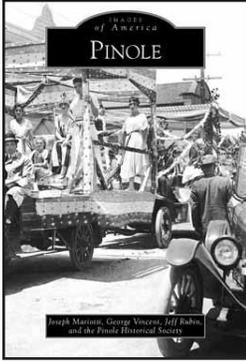
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