

Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org

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The 1940 flood in front of Val's, a popular restaurant on the southeast corner of San Pablo and Fernandez avenues.

HISTORY AND PREVENTION OF PINOLE FLOODS SUBJECT OF FEBRUARY 6 PHS PROGRAM

On April 2, 1958, a fierce winter storm that had dropped buckets of rain on the city for several days caused a swollen Pinole Creek to overflow, turning downtown Pinole streets into navigable waterways.

This was the latest of several massive Pinole Creek floods in the city's history. It caused the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin a lengthy project to ensure the creek wouldn't overflow again.

Why did Pinole Creek overflow and how did civil engineers solve this problem?

Continued on page 15

Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

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It's also posted on the PHS website.

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 call him at (510) 724-9507.**

PHS CALENDAR

MEETINGS

February 6: Program: "A Flood of Memories." (Story on front page)

The public is invited to this FREE event in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road. Refreshments will be served.

February 11, March 11, April 8: 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.

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.

NEW ADVERTISERS

The PHS welcomes this new advertiser:

- **Big O Tires (Page 13).**

2015 PHS MEETING DATES

- Friday, May 8
- Friday, September 11
- Friday, November 6.

PinoleHistoricalSociety

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

PHS videos on city of Pinole website

Miss one of our history programs on Pinole Community TV?

Not a problem. The city's website now has a dedicated section devoted to PINOLE HISTORY on its "Videos Online" page.

You can view the numerous PHS programs right

on your computer. Go to www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html and scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY. You'll find our interviews, Veterans Day programs, both of George Vincent's Walking Tours of Historic Downtown Pinole, and the very fine PCTV-produced, 12-part series based on the Historic Walking Tour brochure. It's great TV!

President's Message

Jack Meehan. Director Emeritus, Pinole Historical Society

HISTORY RIDES THE RAILS INTO AND THROUGH PINOLE

Sounds and sights of trains through Pinole hail their historical significance, if only one knows their origins.

They helped save the American Union, they funded and helped fight our wars, they built California's mineral and agricultural economy — and now they carry a huge part of world trade.

Let's start with the 1840s plans to link the Wild West to the Eastern states and the Midwest, as surveyors and Congress debated a rail link — a northern route, a southern route, or a compromise middle, or central, route. Slavery split the nation then, and no decision was reached until President Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862 — a compromise to help save the Union.

Fast forward, as the Central Pacific building eastward from Sacramento meets the Union Pacific building westward in Utah on May 10, 1869.

Competing northern and southern routes, already surveyed in the 1840s, were taking shape — but without the government backing that the Central Pacific and Union Pacific had.

One headed southwest in 1868 to California. It was the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Ry, and it aimed for the Pacific Rim, which was under control of the Southern Pacific (aka the Central Pacific) Railroad, a monopoly of California rails. During part of the 1880s, every rail line in the state was owned or controlled by the SP.

It was challenging. There were real wars greeting the Santa Fe in several locations before it reached Southern California in March 1881. And then it turned northward, crossing the Tehachapi Mountains, and into the great San Joaquin Valley.

It intended to compete with SP, and eventually reach the Pacific coast at San Francisco. That

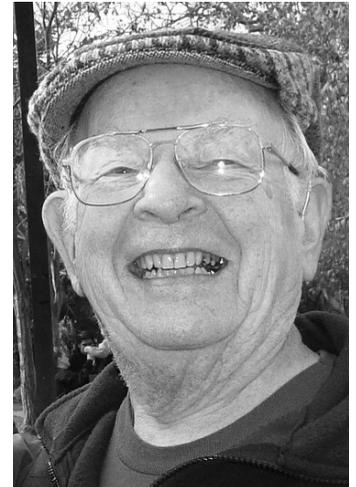
would break SP's stranglehold on the state's rail traffic — and rates.

Formed and known as the San Francisco & San Joaquin Valley Railway (funded and controlled by the Santa Fe Ry), upon reaching Stockton — then a crucial junction of the Southern Pacific — it veered west toward Oakland and San Francisco.

The SF&SJV Railway met with swampland, delta waterways, and the hills and valleys from Martinez to Pinole on its way to Point Richmond.

Maybe the SP foresaw this back in 1874. Its main route to the Bay Area went from Sacramento to Stockton, then Tracy, Niles, and crossed the shallow southern Bay to the Peninsula and up to San Francisco.

However, it sought a more direct route through the Suisun marshland to Benicia, barging across the Suisun Bay to Port Costa, and onto its Contra Costa shoreline tracks on the Northern Railway.



Jack Meehan

(That Benicia-Port Costa leap ended abruptly in 1930 with the opening of a new, steel Martinez-Benicia railroad bridge.)

Owned and controlled by SP, the Northern Railway was a superior route it acquired from landowners Tormey, Fernandez, Hercules Powder, Dohrmann, Krieger, and others, in 1874.

Now the dates and dots are coming into view: 1874, monopoly years in 1880s, 1881 for Santa Fe, and soon the 1899 right-of-way through west Contra Costa County.

Tunnels were a nuisance to be dealt with as a necessary evil — a half-dozen between Martinez and Pinole. One by one the Valley Line moved closer to its goal of Point

Continued on page 4

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www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org



HISTORY RIDES THE RAILS INTO AND THROUGH PINOLE

Continued from page 3

Richmond — its car ferry to San Francisco's China Basin.

Local citizens — even those back East — eagerly awaited the Valley Line's last tunnel and track-laying projects. The San Francisco Call of July 8, 1899, noted that "...the last breakthrough at Pinole..." signaled a successful beginning of rail-to-seaport competition.

On May 1, 1900, Santa Fe's first freight train arrived at Point Richmond. Passenger service to San Francisco, by car-barge, began July 1, 1900.

Finally, it was done!

So, where can one see this now?

First, go to the site of the Santa Fe depot, first opened in spring 1901, located on Charles Street — just steps from the Pinole Senior Center — and

Continued on page 5



Westward view of the daylighted portion of the tunnel leading into Pinole. Santa Fe's noted Navajo Track Crew is working the area in on August 8, 1996. Photo by Jack Meehan.



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How you can help us preserve the history of Pinole

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.

HISTORY RIDES THE RAILS INTO AND THROUGH PINOLE

Continued from page 4
look eastward, under the highway bridge over the tracks. That was the breakthrough place, the entrance/exit to the last tunnel of the, well, OK, now the Santa Fe Ry — headed to its Point Richmond terminal and ferry docks.

But where's the tunnel? Well, railroads weigh efficiency factors when locating their lines. Tunnel, or cut?

Eventually, cuts are safer and cheaper to maintain, so in 1933 the

final tunnel was "daylighted" and it became a "cut."

The highway (formerly the County Road, later U.S. Highway 40, and now simply San Pablo Avenue) now bridges the gap. Before that, a basic railway-style timber overcrossing into Hercules sufficed. It survived for many years after — though not for traffic service.

To view the cut, go to Hercules Avenue and San Pablo Avenue (a short way into Hercules) where

one can look down into the cut that once hosted the famous Valley Line breakthrough.

Thus, the monopoly built by the Big Four — Crocker, Hopkins, Huntington, and Stanford — drew to a close, but not before the SP's tentacles had reached far and deep into California's pockets.

Both railroads have generated loyal supporters, fans, customers, and admirers for passenger and freight service. The Santa Fe far outran its

competitors for passenger service with its storied elite accommodations and superior (well, some might argue) food service initiated by one Fred Harvey — but that's another story in itself.

History is continuous. The Southern Pacific Railroad is no more, having been absorbed by the Union Pacific in 1995.

The Santa Fe was absorbed by the Burlington Northern Railway and is now officially the BNSF. Down at Pinole's Bayfront
Continued on page 6



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In memoriam

Stanley Lewis Clark: September 6, 1923 – January 13, 2015

Stan was a U.S. Navy veteran during World War II and a Pearl Harbor survivor. He was 91.

During World War II he was assigned to four different ships. The first one was the USS St. Louis, a light cruiser. Its claim to fame was being in Pearl Harbor during the bombing on Dec. 7, 1941.

During the bombing by Japanese warplanes, the battleship USS Nevada was sinking, so the captain beached her so she wouldn't block the channel. The USS St. Louis went around her and out to sea.

"For the next three days," Stan said in his biography for a 2010 Pinole Historical Society exhibit at the Pinole Library honoring veterans, "she chased real or imaginary submarines."

Stan also served on the USS Starling, an auxiliary minesweeper. "On our maiden voyage from San Francisco to Hawaii we got perpendicular to the convoy and were hit by a freighter, putting a 19-foot hole in our new engine room," Stan said. "I was transferred and never knew what punishment the captain received."

Stan's next ship was the aircraft carrier USS Lexington, which he boarded in Boston.

"We went through the Panama Canal to reach the West Coast," Stan said. "The Lexington Air Group 16



consisted of torpedo planes, dive bombers, and fighter planes. This group did lots of island hopping and supported Marine landings, from Tarawa to Tokyo. We were hit by a torpedo once and hit by a kamikaze once. What I'm really proud of is our helping the prisoners of war (in five camps) by dropping supplies (food, clothing, and copies of the *Sunrise Press*, the

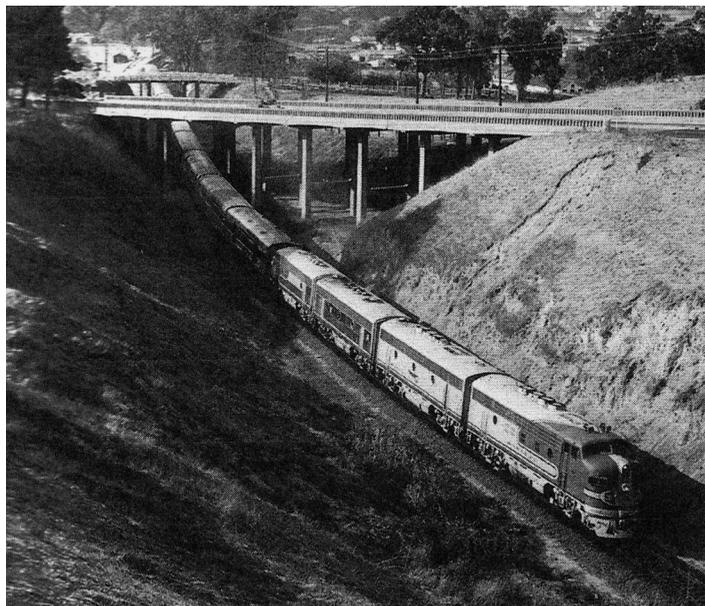
Lexington's daily newspaper)."

Stan last served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ticonderoga, on which he sailed from Tokyo Bay to San Francisco, where he was discharged.

Stan had a long career in banking after the war, mostly with Bank of America. He was a life member of Veterans of Foreign War Post 2798 and a ham radio club member. He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Betty; a son, Larry Clark; a daughter, Patricia Ann Clark; five great-grandchildren; and five great-great-grandchildren. A daughter, Linda Douglas, preceded him in death.

— Jeff Rubin

HISTORY RIDES THE RAILS INTO AND THROUGH PINOLE



The timber bridge into Hercules is seen just beyond the highway bridge. That's the San Francisco Chief leaving Pinole eastbound on November 6, 1959. Photo by Donald A. Hansen.

Continued from page 5
Park one will see (and hear) no fewer than 28 daily Amtrak-operated passenger trains on Union Pacific's tracks, as well as a few UP oil, auto, and container freights. Remember, UP owns its tracks; BNSF simply owns rights.

Adjacent to Fernandez Park, the BNSF operates Hotshot United Parcel Service trailer units — these are high-priority runs — headed to the modern UPS terminal between Pinole and Richmond.

No more passenger service here. Read about it in history books.

NOTE: Nothing in this article suggests that you trespass on railroad property. That's not only dangerous — it's illegal!

Here's a trivia question:

How could the Santa Fe — coming to California by the southwestern route — hope to compete for rail business with the Southern Pacific that came over the Sierra Nevada mountains up north? Hint: Which is farther west, Reno, or Los Angeles?

* * *

PHS President Marcia Kalapus will resume her column in the spring 2015 issue.

Pinole **Historical** Society

2015 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(PINOLE RESIDENCY NOT REQUIRED FOR MEMBERSHIP)

**PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION, AND SEND CASH OR YOUR CHECK,
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MEMBERSHIPS ARE FOR THE 2015 CALENDAR YEAR (EXCEPT LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS)

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Back in the day

REMEMBERING RUFF'S GROCERY STORE

By Stella Faria

Louis Ruff was the proprietor of a San Pablo Avenue grocery store during my childhood. His name was pronounced like the word "roof," but the street in Pinole Valley named after him is erroneously pronounced "Ruff," as in rough.

The store was located on the southwest corner of San Pablo and Fernandez avenues in a two-story red brick building. It was heavily damaged in the 1989 earthquake, and had to be demolished. The Pear Street Bistro is on the site now.

The brick pharmacy/medical office building on the other side of the

Bank of Pinole was also demolished, and remains an empty lot.

Ruff, who was a bachelor, had a brother named Charlie who had a drinking problem and seemed to be an embarrassment to his serious businessman brother.

I think that Charlie and Emmet "Pully" Walton, another Pinole legend, were drinking partners.

Ruff also had a sister, Catherine "Katie" Wagoner, who lived in one of the apartments above the store, as he did.

Catherine's husband was gone a lot, as he was either a merchant seaman or traveled for his employer. They had a daughter, Barbara, who

was doted over by her uncle Louis.

There was an empty lot between the store and the Bank of Pinole building, where Katie Wagoner worked as a cashier for many years.

Louis Ruff had a child-sized, furnished playhouse built at the back of the lot for Barbara, which was the envy of every little girl in town.

There was another Ruff sister, Mary, who was married to Arthur Noyes, who had a very lucrative business selling fuel oil used in furnaces and other heating equipment.

They had a son, Arthur Jr., and lived in a Spanish-style home on the hill above Pinion Avenue.



Stella Faria

Mary, so unlike her sister, had a flamboyant personality and wore heavy, bright makeup and flashy short dresses. I remember staring at her when she walked downtown.

When I was about 12, I went with my dad to pay our furnace oil bill at their home. I was so impressed at the lovely tile-roofed house with a courtyard entry.

They had a beautiful parrot in a large cage outside. As we approached

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L-R: Ruff building, Bank of Pinole, Downer building. The Ruff and Downer buildings were heavily damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and subsequently demolished.

REMEMBERING RUFF'S GROCERY STORE

it, the parrot squawked "Call the cops, Junie (for Jr.)." That was the first time I had heard a parrot talk, and I never forgot it.

So much for the Ruff family. It was the store that became part of Pinole's history.

The brick building was

not very big, but it encapsulated a multitude of interesting sidelines.

There were magazine and newspaper racks inside and outside, since they had the agency for the San Francisco and Oakland papers. The Greyhound depot was

also located at the store. Mel Marcos, one of the eight local Marcos brothers, was Ruff's loyal

right-hand man and delivery boy. The local fire siren was mounted

Continued on page 10

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REMEMBERING RUFF'S GROCERY STORE

Continued from page 9

on the side of the store, so Mel was usually the first volunteer to arrive at the fire station to drive the little red fire truck.

The back of the store had a small enclosure that held the telephone switchboard that served the entire community. Carrie Moore was the regular daytime operator, and there were others who worked part-time. In the late-night hours, Ruff handled the switchboard on his own.

There were very few private lines, so most people had party lines with a wall phone. You had to turn the crank on the right side of the wooden box to reach the operator, who would say "number please."

The speaker was mounted on the front of the box, and the ear-piece hung in a clip on the left side. If the line was in use, you had to hang up and wait until it was not busy. People were not always polite or considerate about sharing their party line.

I still remember that our telephone was 143W and later became PL8-3570 when we became part of the Richmond exchange.

The biggest fascination for small children in Louis Ruff's store, (everyone called him Louie), was the big glass cabinet that held the world's greatest assortment of penny candies.

When we were lucky enough to have small change given to us, we headed straight to Louis Ruff's

"penny candy paradise."

I remember the Tootsie Rolls, Butter Balls, Necco Wafers, Whoppers, licorice, bubble gum, and other melt-in-your-mouth hard candies. He trusted everyone to pick out their candies and bring them to the counter.

He was also very kind and trusting when he let the kids read and return the comic books to the racks.

There was a young boy named Jimmy Turner who had come to Pinole from North Dakota. He was handicapped from suffering frostbite to his hands and feet. He walked with a limp and his hands were disfigured.

Sad to say, Jimmy was often

bullied. He sat in front of the store after school daily, reading comic books, which Ruff allowed.

Jimmy was in my class, and I came to his defense one time. He was wrongly blamed for a rough-house incident while our teacher was out of the room. He treated me like I was his best friend that day and never forgot it. I was called a "tattle-tale," but that didn't really bother me. I was happy I had the courage to speak up.

When Ruff was mayor of Pinole (1938-1947), most of the city's business was handled over the front counter of his store. Looking back, I realize that selling groceries was just another sideline at Ruff's Grocery Store.

☆ ☆ ☆

Stella Faria is a lifelong resident of Pinole, aside from 12 years spent in Folsom. She was born on Plum Street and grew up on Peach and Quinan streets, in downtown Pinole.

She attended Pinole-Hercules School #1, the School on the Hill, graduating from the eighth grade in 1940.

She graduated from Richmond High School in 1944, and attended UC-Berkeley for two and a half years. She worked at the Kaiser Shipyards during World War II for three years during high school and college.

She and her late husband, Clarence Faria, were featured in the documentary "Growing Up Pinole," which may be found on the City of Pinole website —www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html.

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PHS SEEKING FAMILY FILMS FOR HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

Got 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.

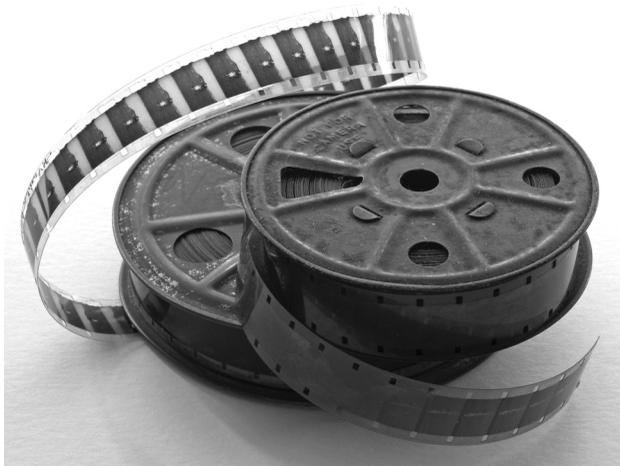
Nearly everyone has taken home movies. That makes everyone who has taken film a historian.

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).

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



GOT HISTORY?

The Pinole Historical Society is grateful for donations of artifacts, photos, newspapers, memorabilia—anything of historical significance.

Please contact us at info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org or call (510) 724-9507.



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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.

City adds history videos to website

Several PHS programs have been added to the City of Pinole website: www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html

- 2012 Veterans Day Memorial/Flag Retirement.
- 2013 Veterans Day Memorial/Flag Retirement.
- 2014 Veterans Day Memorial/Flag Retirement.
- Japanese American Internment program (2012).
- Old School bell dedication (2013).
- February 7, 2014, program: "Bars, Barbers and Characters of Early Pinole."
- September 5, 2014, program: "Presidential Rosies."
- November 7, 2014, program: "Maritime Contra Costa County."

We thank Bob Kopp, who recorded most of these events for the society.

Scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY on the city's website to find all the Pinole history programs.

The Pinole Mural

A Community Legacy



Watch The Pinole Mural video at this link:
<http://www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org/PinoleMural.mov>



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THEN AND NOW

A dults and children flocked to the Pinole Bakery, owned by the Woy family, 100 years ago. Today, the building, virtually

unchanged on the exterior except for a recent paint job, is occupied by a State Farm insurance agency. The Woy family house next door is still there, too.



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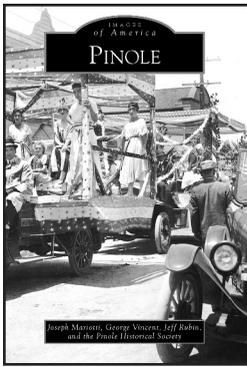
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LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM PHS

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

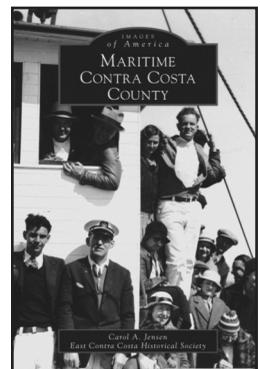
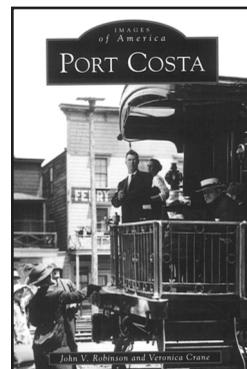
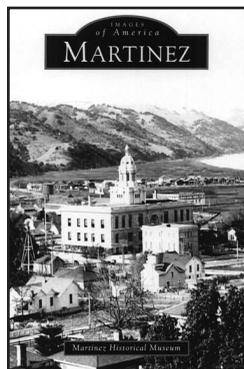
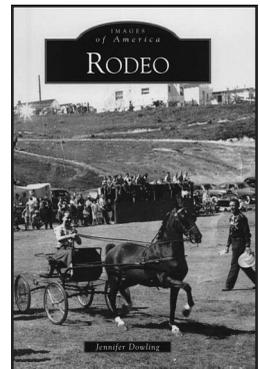
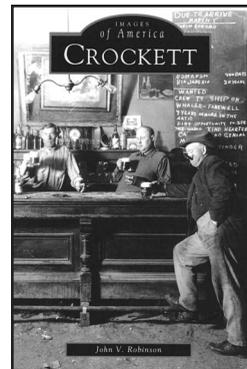
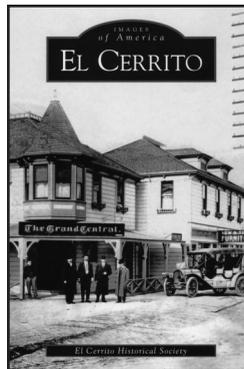
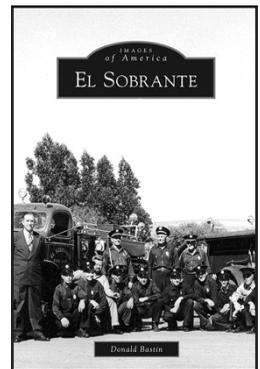
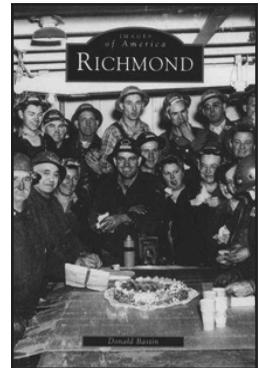
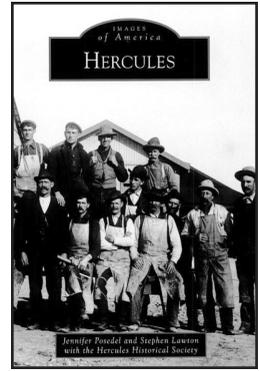
You may purchase one or more of these books from us at the Pinole Farmers' Market—we're there every other Saturday from April through December.

Pinole, Hercules, Richmond, El Sobrante, El Cerrito, and Maritime Contra Costa County books are **\$24**, including sales tax.

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

You may order one or more by mail (prices listed include sales tax and postage) and we'll ship them to you immediately.

Mail your check and order form to **Pinole Historical Society, P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564.**



50 years ago — 1965



Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

January 1: Actor George Murphy begins his term as United States Senator from California.
January 2: Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. begins a drive to register black voters in Alabama.
January 2: The New York Jets sign Alabama quarterback Joe Namath for a reported \$427,000.
January 3: UC Berkeley officials announce a new policy that allowed political activity on campus.
January 4: President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" State of the Union address.
January 12: "Hullabaloo" premieres on NBC-TV.
January 20: Byrds record "Mr. Tambourine Man."
January 27: Winston Churchill, former prime minister of England (1940-45, 51-55), dies from a cerebral thrombosis in London at age 90.
February 1: Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and 2,600 others arrested in Selma, AL, during three-day demonstrations against voter-registration rules.
February 6: The Righteous Brothers's "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" hits #1.
February 15: Singer Nat King Cole dies at age 45.
February 21: Malcolm X is shot dead by Nation of Islam followers at Audubon Ballroom in Harlem.
March 2: "The Sound of Music," starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, is released.
March 7: Alabama state troopers and 600 black protestors clash in Selma, AL.
March 8: First U.S. combat forces (3,500 Marines)

arrive in Vietnam. By the end of the year, 190,000 U.S. troops are in Vietnam.

March 8: President Lyndon Johnson asks Congress to ensure everybody's right to vote.
March 18: Soviet Cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov, leaving his spacecraft Voskhod 2 for 12 minutes, becomes the first person to walk in space.
March 20: UCLA beats Michigan 91-80, for the Bruins's second consecutive NCAA basketball championship. UCLA, coached by John Wooden, would win seven in a row from 1967-73.
March 25: Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. leads 25,000 marchers to the state capitol in Montgomery, AL.
April 9: In an exhibition game, The Houston Astros beat the New York Yankees, 2-1, in the first game at the Astrodome, as Mickey Mantle hits the first indoor home run.

FLOODS IN PINOLE

Continued from front

PHS co-founder George Vincent, former mayor (1964-65) Jack Meehan, and Pinole Public Works Director/City Engineer Dean Allison will discuss

the history of Pinole's watery battles with Mother Nature in our February 6, 2015, program, "A Flood of Memories," from 6:30 to 8 PM in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente

Medical Office Building on Pinole Valley Road.

Do you remember the flood of 1958? Of 1940? Please share your recollections with us at this event, the first of four fascinating 2015 PHS

programs for members, their guests, and the public. As always, admission is free and refreshments will be served.

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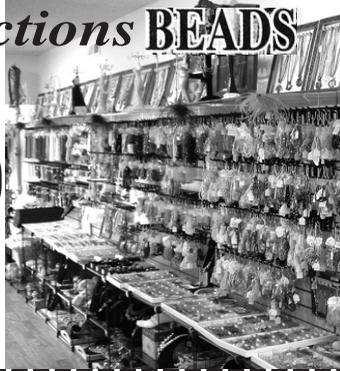
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