HOLIDAYS AT SHADELANDS

Shadelands kicked off the holiday season on November 25th with the opening of the Victorian Tea and Holiday Vendor Fair. The museum looked beautiful decorated with all the garlands, trees and lights. Rosemary Mazzetti and Patty Howard did an extraordinary job of organizing and managing the kitchen for the teas, which is no easy task. Between 80 and 90 people were served daily during the 16 days of the tea, which ended December 10th. Rosemary made her famous lemon curd, always a highlight. This year we added a special Champagne Tea on Saturday, December 2nd, which was a success!! Our caterer, Brittany Mafia, owner of Urban Organics, did an outstanding job. New this year: we partnered with a mother/daughter volunteer organization, National Charities League. Our mother/daughter volunteers joined us on the weekends to help serve tea. There were far too many other volunteers who worked at the event to name here, but they deserve much credit for its success. Also a big thank you to Jackie Byrd & Moira Anwar, our office manager & archivist, who took reservations, worked closely with the caterer to ensure that things went smoothly, and spent many hours decorating the house. Special thanks to Patty and Rosemary, without them the holiday tea would not be possible, and we are so grateful for their commitment and dedication.

Because of their dedication to the museum and historical society Rosemary and Patty were presented with the 2017 Mary Penniman Award. They were unable to attend last year’s dinner so we celebrated with them on the last day of the teas. We are blessed to have them working with us.

The 1402 tea attendees praised the setting, the food, the service, and the handmade crafts at this joyful event. There are people who have been coming 30+ years; it is an holiday tradition. We have 3 generation families who look forward to kicking off the holiday season at the Victorian Tea. Many come in their finest holiday attire, complete with hats and seasonal jewelry. It is wonderful to see so many happy, smiling people.

There were 35 vendors selling all kinds of hand crafted items such as ornaments, pottery, candy, jams, spiced nuts, jewelry, aprons, and much more. The event was a tremendous success and we have already started planning our 2018 event.

Mark your calendars
2018 Holiday Victorian Teas & Vendor Faire
November 24—December 9
Tickets will go on sale Monday, October 1st at 9 AM
PURPOSE AND MISSION

The mission of the Walnut Creek Historical Society is to collect, preserve, and interpret the history and heritage of the Walnut Creek area. The Walnut Creek Historical Society is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation. Cash or in-kind donations are tax deductible up to the limits of the law. The Walnut Creek Historical Society welcomes new members, and those interested in the history of Walnut Creek. Board meetings are held every third Monday of the month and are open to all WCHS members and interested citizens.

Co-Presidents Lee Culver and Mark Brown
Vice President Sheila Rogstad
Treasurer Barton Tolley
Recording Secretary Karen Majors and Teresa Wenzel
Directors Ann Shelton, Jeff Peterson, Priscilla Tudor
Archivist Sheila Rogstad
Investment Committee Mark Brown
Legal Advisor Anina (Ann) Dalsin

Officer Support Staff Jackie Byrd and Moira Anwar

Shadelands Inventory

In January 2018, Paul Kovak of Michaan’s Auctions graciously donated his time to examine all the major pieces of furniture for an insurance update. What a coincidence it was that in the 1960s he had been a two year caretaker for the house while attending DVC. He said that he painted the kitchen purple.

In 2011, inventory lists and some photos were made for the china, glassware, silver, pottery and the blue and white china.

An important part of the inventory was noting and counting not only the furniture, but all the accessory items in each room. Big job! Four docents donated a great deal of time listing and examining each object for an accession number, to be checked against our files. Huge Thanks go to Barbara Crews, Phyllis Bolton, Ted Dobbs and Jane Viator.

Membership Renewal

Please check your address, if there is a star next to your name it is time to renew your membership. Please use the form on the back of the newsletter.

Thank you!
Walnut Creek Historical Society 45th Annual Dinner

On Monday, January 22nd, members of the Historical Society convened at Scott’s Restaurant for our Annual Dinner, meeting, and social get-together. The program began with a welcome by Lee Culver, WCHS Co-President. After the flag salute and moment of silence to honor those members no longer with us, volunteers and staff were recognized for contributing much time and effort to the WCHS. Board members were thanked and Cindy Silva, Mayor Pro Tem of Walnut Creek, administered the oath of office to the 2018 Board Officers.

The evening continued with a review of 2017 and some impressive numbers, such as 136 people volunteering their time to the Society last year, 60 house tours taking place, and over 1400 guests attending our Holiday Teas. The meeting portion of the evening finished with the presentation of the Mary Penniman Award, given to recognize extraordinary service benefitting and advancing the goals of the Society. This year’s award was presented to Sheila Rogstad, historian and archivist, who has spent many years researching, photographing, and organizing documents and objects with historical significance from Shadelands Ranch and the City of Walnut Creek.

After a delicious Scott’s dinner, Mark Brown, WCHS Co-President, introduced Megan Honey, keynote Speaker. Megan teaches AP History at Northgate High School and also teaches in the credential program and is part of the MA in teaching faculty at St. Mary’s College. The topic of her speech was *The Personal is Historical: Helping Students Confront Injustice Through Historical Examples and Contemporary Inquiry*. Megan’s excellent speech was appreciated by all, and Mark thanked her and the audience for attending our 45th Annual Dinner.

“Receiving the Mary Penniman Award was such an honor, quite a surprise, and greatly appreciated. We are fortunate to have members who put in so many hours to keep Walnut Creek Historical Society afloat.”

Sheila Rogstad
From the History Room…..

An Almost Perfect Crime

If you have lived in Walnut Creek a long time you may remember when Gemco was on the corner of Main St. and Ygnacio Valley Rd, where Target is today. Before Target—and before Gemco—The Glove Factory was in business on the same property. In fact, one of the photos that accompanies this article shows Gemco’s sign behind the rundown building that used to be the Glove Factory.

This building was propelled into history in 1925 when Charles H. Schwartz, a chemical engineer, seemed to be the victim of a terrible explosion and fire. Schwartz had set up a laboratory and offices for the Pacific Cellulose Company in the old Glove Factory. He claimed to be on the verge of developing a formula to make artificial silk. Silk was light weight and durable and so far no one had been able to discover how to make anything synthetic that could take its place. Schwartz’s investors patiently waited for the news that the secret formula was complete and ready for production. And as they waited, Schwartz spent their investment money.

One night, after announcing that at last he had found the formula to make artificial silk, Schwartz was working alone in his lab when an explosion rocked the building. The night watchman called the fire department who discovered a body in the fire-damaged lab. Schwartz’s keys and pocket watch were found on the body. His grief stricken wife identified the body as his—and then asked that her husband’s cremation take place as soon as possible.

It looked like a tragic accident, but not everyone was convinced. Walnut Creek’s fire chief found very little chemical equipment in Schwartz’s lab, and bloodstains inside a nearby closet. An autopsy found the victim’s fingertips altered by acid burns, plus his eyeballs punctured to prevent identification of color. In addition, the length of the body didn’t match Schwartz’s height. And, most importantly, death was not caused by fire but blows to the victim’s head.

Suspected of killing someone—Schwartz or someone else—and setting the fire, the night watchman was given a polygraph test, which he passed.

Finally, police were able to identify the badly burned body as that of Gilbert Barbe, an itinerant preacher from Placerville. Reporters and sightseers descended on Walnut Creek. Eager for news, they filled restaurants and hotels to capacity. A massive hunt covering all of California began for Schwartz.

Meanwhile, at an apartment in Oakland, a man named Harold Warren was resting quietly following a minor traffic accident. The main topic of conversation among other tenants of the building was the murder in Walnut Creek. When someone produced a newspaper photo of Dr. Henry Schwartz he was recognized as Harold Warren.
Continued from page 4..

Police were notified at two in the morning, and an hour later banged on the door of the Warren/Schwartz apartment. As they attempted to enter they heard a shot. They found Schwartz with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head and a note to his wife saying, “I made a dirty job of it.” He died on the way to the hospital.

Investigation found that Schwartz had established his identity as Warren long before the “almost perfect crime” was committed. It was assumed that money from an insurance policy was the motive. Although there was much speculation as to Mrs. Schwartz’s involvement, she was never prosecuted.

And The Glove Factory building? It became an apartment house, while Walnut Creek—in those days a quiet town—returned to normal.

Lee Culver and Sheila Rogstad
WCHS Historians

Recent Donations:
John Christensen: model of a Bancroft Elementary School 3rd grade classroom. Made for his wife, Gloria.
Barbara Grant: Large group of miscellaneous items, compacts, clothing, hats, doll furniture.
Elaine Green: silver service for teas. Daughter of Russ (ex WCHS Pres) & Elaine Green (ex WCHS Docent)
Darrell Mortensen: Two aerial photos of WC, framed and one picture of Shadelands. He worked for the City for 35 years since 1966, Parks and Rec.
Bev Lawler: Tea Cups, saucers and dessert plates.
Lyle Shares: Black & White photos of Saranap taken in 1948.
Cash Donations:
Mark Brown
Earl & Nancy Turner
Stanley Hawkins—on behalf of his mother Lydia Hawkins who in the past has donated many beautiful garments.

New History Room Volunteer
The History Room Welcomes Joe LaBrie as a new volunteer. Joe has lived in Walnut Creek 35 years. Before retiring he worked for the Bank of America and was a professor at Golden Gate University teaching finance.

Joe is interested in antiques, historical houses, and going to flea markets. Shadelands caught his eye when he first came to Walnut Creek. He toured the house and vowed some day he would volunteer. Now someday is here, and Joe says he smiles whenever he drives by. He likes seeing the house and it’s beautiful grounds, especially the trees.

Joe is already hard at work with Sheila and Lee as they organize the files, and they are very pleased to have his help.
Plaques for Walnut Creek’s Past

In the mid 1980’s a committee was formed to place plaques on old buildings in conjunction with the first walking tours given by Brad Rovanpara. Members included some of the longtime Walnut Creek families — Dorothy Wilson, Bob and Fran Schroder, Peter Howard, Barbara Granzotto Querio and Roy, Bruno Chiavini, Bill Connelly, Jay de L’eau, Doug Martin and Hal Nelson.

On September 1, 1988 three of the plaques were unveiled on buildings at the corner of North Main and Mt. Diablo Blvd, at La Fogata, and two buildings that are no longer standing — Rogers Hotel and San Ramon Valley Bank. The hotel is now Mechanic’s Bank and the old bank is now Starbucks. Placement of the plaques was made possible in part by a grant from the Walnut Festival Association. A reception followed at Schroder Insurance.

The La Fogata building has a long history. Lawrence Peed arrived in town in 1863 and built a store at Main and Lafayette Rd (Now Mt. Diablo Blvd.). The lumber came from the Moraga redwoods. The store operated for 15 years until 1973 when it burned. It was rebuilt by Albert Sherburne and eventually became La Fogata restaurant. The buildings are now marked by the Historic Walking Tour with signs in front of each building. More sites will be featured in future newsletters. Look for the plaques the next time you’re in the vicinity.

The accompanying photo of September 1988 shows Primo Facchini (WCHS President at the time), Adele Laine (former City Clerk), Don Bluebag (City Manager) and Sherwood Burgess (WCHS Historian)

Sheila Rogstad, Historian

2018 College Scholarship Opportunity!

Founded in 1967 by members of the Walnut Creek Women’s Club, the Walnut Creek Historical Society works with the community and the City of Walnut Creek to “collect, preserve and interpret the history and heritage of the Walnut Creek area.” The Walnut Creek Historical Society began the scholarship program to do more community outreach as well as recognize two local high school seniors who have displayed commitment to both academics and the community. For the first time in it’s history the Walnut Creek Historical Society offered a $1,000 merit based scholarship to one Northgate and one Las Lomas high school senior attending a 4 year college or university. Last year, the scholarship was awarded to Estelle Yim of Northgate High School and Brenna Killoran of Las Lomas High School. Estelle is attending Smith College and Brenna is attending San Diego State University. For the 2017-2018 school year, The Walnut Creek Historical Society will award two $2,000 merit based scholarships to an outstanding graduating senior from Las Lomas and Northgate High School. It is our hope that the students we serve will become confident, well-adjusted adults, interested and involved in their community.
Downtown History Tours set to resume on Saturday, March 10, 2018

Our popular guided walking tours of historic sites in downtown Walnut Creek will begin again in March.

Upcoming Tours: March 10, April 14, and May 12

The easy 90-minute walk on city sidewalks brings to life the early times of what has become a Bay Area destination city. It is a perfect way to spend a morning and then stay to enjoy all that downtown Walnut Creek has to offer.

We meet every 2nd Saturday, rain or shine, from March through October at Liberty Bell Plaza in front of the fountain on the corner of Broadway and Mt. Diablo Blvd. The tour begins at 9:30 AM and ends at City Hall by 11:00 AM. The tours are free. A booklet with historic photos of the sites visited may be purchased at the tour for $5.00. Registration in advance is not required.

If you would like to go on a tour with a group—friends, family, co-workers—please call the Shadelands Ranch Museum at 935-7871 and we will arrange one, at a time that is convenient for you. Although there is no charge for the tour, a donation to the Historical Society is always welcome.

A dedicated group of volunteer docents makes these tours possible. If you would like to consider being a tour guide, please contact the Museum to learn more.

The Downtown History Tour opens a new way to experience our city. Hundreds of people have already enjoyed these tours. If you haven't yet, we hope you will join us on the sidewalks of Walnut Creek on the 2nd Saturday morning this spring.

Ann Shelton

Volunteers Needed:

If you love history and would like to help preserve and pass on the fascinating story of the Penniman family and of Shadelands, become a volunteer. Volunteer schedules are flexible; there is no minimum required number of hours. Volunteer opportunities include leading house tours, downtown history tours, 3rd grade field trips and helping our historians. Men and women are welcome. Volunteering with Shadelands is both fun and rewarding; training is provided. Volunteers are invited to our annual member appreciation event and to the holiday Victorian tea. Check out our website at wchistory.com. To volunteer contact the office at 925-935-7871
Check out our website at wchistory.com

WCHS Membership Renewal Form
Please return form with your renewal

NAME: _____________________________________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS: ______________________________________________________________________

PHONE NUMBER: ______________________________ EMAIL: ________________________________

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE:

Individual $25         Family $45         Student $15         Lifetime (over 55) $300

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Check # __________

Visa/MC/AMEX card # _____________________________ Exp. Date: _________ 3 Digit code _____

OFFICE USE ONLY:
Date: ____________ Payment amount: ____________ Check#/CC approval Code: ____________

☐QB  ☐PP  ☐ML  Office initials: ____________