

# Milpitas Muse

April 2015

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

Volume XXXVI, No. 3

## April 8 Meeting: Time in a Bottle?

Our next 2015 meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, April 8, in the Auditorium (Community Room) of the Milpitas Library, 160 North Main Street.

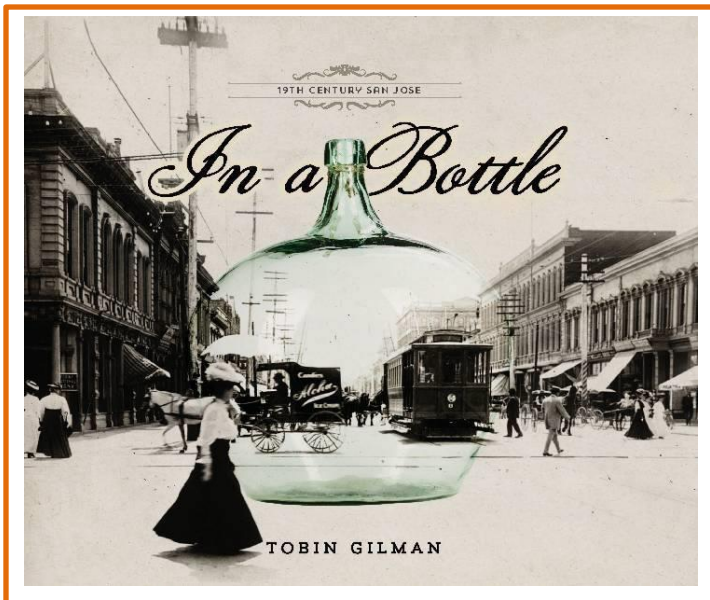
Please join us to hear author, historian and New Almaden Mine Museum volunteer Tobin Gilman talk about his new book "19<sup>th</sup> Century San Jose in a Bottle," which is the story of how he became entranced by the histories of San Jose manufacturers and commercial culture after finding, as a teenager, and then researching, beautiful old glass bottles he discovered.



**Tobin Gilman**

His interests include the 19<sup>th</sup> century San Jose druggists, located surprisingly close to each other around First and Santa Clara Streets in San Jose and San Jose's now-forgotten older breweries, local soda manufacturers, and spring water bottlers in New Almaden and Congress Springs in Saratoga.

Our meetings are free and all are welcome.



## Samuel Ayer: Milpitas Pioneer Honored by the Name of Milpitas's First High School

### *His Life:*

Samuel Freeman Ayer was born in 1840 in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. He learned carriage making as a trade there, before he came to California in 1860 by way of Panama. He worked in Santa Clara for a few months, and then received a good job offer from Abraham Weller, who manufactured carriages in Milpitas, where he worked until he set up in business for himself in 1861.

In 1862, he married Miss America Evans, daughter of his neighbor Josiah Evans, California pioneer and local rancher, for whom Evans Road was named. He and his wife eventually had nine children.

In 1868, he gave up his business and turned to ranching, on a tract of 150 acres that he bought east of Milpitas, of which 100 acres was planted in wheat by 1874. In 1875, he was elected District Supervisor of a new district formed that year consisting of the townships of Milpitas, Alviso, and Fremont. As a supervisor, he originated and supported much helpful and progressive legislation passed by the district, including educational projects. He was one of the trustees of the Milpitas Grammar School (the building which is now part of the Milpitas Library).

In the 1890's Samuel Ayer and his wife had a beautiful wooden two-story farmhouse built, where each of the children had his or her own room. His daughter, Helen Ayer Reed (Mrs. Frazier Reed), interviewed in the *Milpitas Post* in 1961, remembered that her parents visited the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 while it was under construction. It was located just south of where the high school named for Samuel Ayer was later built.

In 1961, the house that had been home to the Ayer family for over 50 years was demolished to make way for what would become the Park Town subdivision of suburban houses.

Samuel Ayer remained in office until his death in 1899. His wife survived him until 1920.

### *His Legacy:*

Before Milpitas incorporated as a city in 1954, and for a few years afterwards, Milpitas high school students had to go south to James Lick High School in San Jose. But as Milpitas grew in population and financial strength, city officials decided that it needed a high school of its own. When the new structure was built, at 1395 E. Calaveras Blvd. (now the site of the Milpitas Sports Center, Teen Center and Adult Education Center), it was decided to give it the name of the distinguished pioneer and champion of education, Samuel Ayer. The high school opened in 1956, with the first class graduating in 1957.



**Samuel Ayer High School in Milpitas 1956-1980**

After the opening of Milpitas High School in 1969, the two schools coexisted until 1980 when declining enrollment caused Samuel Ayer to be closed.

### **Don't Go Away!**

If you find a membership form attached or enclosed with this newsletter, it means we haven't yet received your dues and membership information. Please fill out the membership form and send it with your \$20 membership fee to The Milpitas Historical Society at 60 N. Main Street, Milpitas CA, 95035. We hope to see you back!

### **Future Events to Keep in Mind:**

#### **June 6 Field Trip**

At our regular meetings on April 8 and May 13, you can sign up for a Saturday morning field trip to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Alviso to hear docent Laura Mello give a tour and talk about the exhibit of Ohlone Indian relics and reconstructions of Ohlone dwellings and boats that are being displayed in the auditorium of the Nature Center there.

#### **Milpitas International BBQ and Festival**

The barbecue and festival sponsored by the Milpitas Chamber of Commerce will be back again this year, complete with another table of interesting items from the Milpitas Historical Society and the Frontier Days rolling jail on Saturday, May 30. And this time, the BBQ providers have promised not to run out of meat!

#### **Milpitas Community Tour**

The Milpitas Historical Society's annual community tour will be held in June this year. More information will be coming in next month's newsletter.

#### **Milpitas Historical Society Contact Information**

You can contact the Milpitas Historical Society:

- by phone at (408) 320-9587
- by mail at 160 N. Main Street, Milpitas CA 95035
- by email at: [tmhs@milpitashistory.org](mailto:tmhs@milpitashistory.org).

The traditional Milpitas history web page is here:

<http://www.milpitashistory.org/home/index.html>

Here's the new website for the Milpitas Historical Society:

<http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>, with information about the society and upcoming events.

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**Milpitas Historical Society**  
**160 North Main St.**  
**Milpitas, CA 95035**

**First Class**