

Milpitas Muse

April 2013

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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Historic Liberty Ship SS Jeremiah O'Brien

For the April meeting of the Milpitas Historical Society, we have a historic treat: a presentation about the last authentic WWII Liberty Ship, the *SS Jeremiah O'Brien*, now permanently berthed at Pier 54 at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco (pictured below passing beneath the Golden Gate Bridge). The Jeremiah O'Brien was launched in 1943 and made several war transport voyages before the end of World War II.



The meeting is Wednesday, April 10, at 7 pm, in the Auditorium (Community Room) of the Milpitas Library.

Our presenter will be Jo Lawrence, shown below shaking hands with President Clinton in 1994, after his tour of the ship. Ms. Lawrence is a native Californian who is retired from Civil Service (30 years with the Department of the Navy) and a veteran who served in the Navy Hospital Corps at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland. She has been volunteering on the O'Brien since 1980 and will have many interesting stories to tell us about this historic ship and its adventures.



Alviso Adobe Park Opened!

On Saturday, March 16, Mayor Jose Esteves and a distinguished group of city and county officials, including our Society President, Roger Skuse, cut the ribbon marking the opening of the historic Jose Maria Alviso Adobe Park. Speakers acknowledged and gave thanks to the wide range of community groups (including the Milpitas Historical Society) that made the restoration of the park possible.

The event was attended by three generations of descendants of the original Alviso and Sepulveda families and of the Cuciz family, who lived and farmed there later.



Milpitas Historical Society members (shown below, left to right: Joe Ehardt, Mabel Mattos, Jim Mattos, Kraig Bunnell, Joanne Sousa, Catherine Pelizzari, Roger Skuse, and Shirley Skuse) wore period costumes and served as docents to provide historical background information to visitors.

Jenny Lind Disaster Historic Marker Dedication

On Saturday, April 13, at 11:00 am at the Alviso Marina County Park, there will be a dedication of a historic marker commemorating the explosion on the steamship Jenny Lind that took place on April 13, 1853, that took many lives and may have changed California history. This will be especially good to see because our May Historical Society program will feature Alviso's South Bay Yacht Club Commodore Russ Robinson and historian Claire Britton-Warren giving us the whole story of the Jenny Lind disaster. You can find out more

about the dedication and how to get there at this site: <http://www.sccgov.org/sites/parks/Maps%20Here/Pages/Alviso-Marina-County-Park.aspx> or by calling (408) 262-6980. We hope you can come to this event; speakers will include County Supervisor Dave Cortese and re-enactors in historic costume will answer questions.

Milpitas Street Name Stories: Mattos Drive

Mattos Drive in Milpitas, near Yosemite and Falcato Streets, was named for Manuel Joseph Mattos. The street is marked with a blue sign, indicating that he died while in the United States Armed Services.

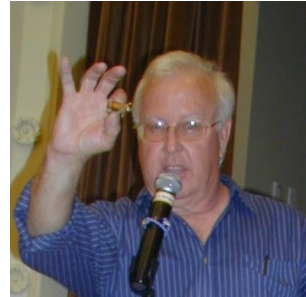
Manuel Mattos and his twin brother, Joseph, were born at home in 1919 to parents Manuel and Rose on a small ranch in an area known as Wayne Station in San Jose, CA. He had an older brother, Alfred, a younger brother, Henry, and a younger sister, Edith. (His younger brother Henry, a longtime Society member and late husband of our Membership Director, Mabel Mattos, died in February). Manuel Mattos and his brothers and sister attended and graduated from the 8th grade at Orchard Elementary School on Gish Road in San Jose. The family attended the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Milpitas.

Manuel was drafted into the army in October of 1941 and was sent to Camp Roberts, CA for basic training, and upon completing that training, was sent to Yachats, OR to join the Army Signal Corps. While off duty, Manuel went swimming in the ocean on June 29, 1942, was caught in an undertow, and lost his life by drowning. He was buried at Calvary Catholic Cemetery in San Jose. Honored by his city, he is still loved and appreciated by his family.

There is also a Mattos Avenue in San Jose, about a mile and a half south of Milpitas off Piedmont Road. But this street was named for John Mattos, who had a large apricot ranch in that area and whose sons invented a widely-used apricot cutter. This San Jose Mattos family is not directly related to the Milpitas Mattos family, but was also descended from people who emigrated in the 19th century from the Azores Islands.

Show and Tell!

At the March meeting of the Society, our President Roger Skuse showed and told the story of a tiny brass pig, which was called a “go-to-bed” and was used, before there were electric lights, to strike and carry a match to give you light to get to your bedroom after the oil lamps were blown out.



Do you or a friend or family member have any interesting antiques, family treasures, or historic objects you could tell us about? We'd love to have one or two members or friends do a “show and tell” like Roger's at each of our upcoming meetings. If you have any family, community, or historical treasures you could tell us about, please call Roger at 408/262-0354 to sign up for a meeting.

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.

There is new blog for the Milpitas Historical Society:

<http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>. To submit a post you must be a MHS member and join the site or ask annzeise@gomilpitas.com to set you up as a user.

The traditional web page with information about Milpitas history and the Historical Society is here:

<http://www.milpitashistory.org/historicalsociety/society.html>

And there's a YouTube Channel with four videos with tours and other historical information about Milpitas you can see here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/MilpitasHistory>

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First Class