



# Milpitas Muse

March 2013

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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## Treasure Hunters

Jim and Carolyn McGee, owners of the new Treasure Hunters Headquarters store (in Olinger Plaza on Main Street in Milpitas), will give an interesting presentation about the hows and wheres of treasure hunting in California at the next meeting of the Milpitas Historical Society, on Wednesday, March 13, at 7:00 pm. The meeting will be in the library's Community Room (Auditorium).



**Special Note:** This month try to bring a friend to our meeting!

## Milpitas Historical Society (New!) 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).

**See the new blog** for the Milpitas Historical Society at <http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>. To comment or submit articles you must join the site or ask [annzeise@gomilpitas.com](mailto:annzeise@gomilpitas.com) to set you up as a user. All site members must be paid members of MHS. The traditional web page with information about Milpitas history and the Historical Society is here: <http://www.milpitashistory.org/historicalsociety/society.html>

## Alviso Adobe Park Opening

On Saturday, March 16, from 10:00 to 11:30 am, there will be a ceremony for the long-awaited opening of the renewed Alviso Adobe Park. The historic Alviso Adobe, which is located near the intersection of Piedmont and Calaveras Roads, has been undergoing reconstruction, during which the exterior of the main building has been restored and strengthened, the unsafe outbuildings reconstructed to look like the originals, and garden, park, and restroom facilities added.

At the opening ceremonies, there will be a ribbon-cutting and speeches by Milpitas City officials and a dedicatory wall plaque will be unveiled. Five historical signs around the Park explain various aspects of the farming and ranching done by the early owners over the years, including apricot growing and processing, sycamore trees, and other relevant topics.



## Reconstructed water tower and garage at the Alviso Adobe

The City would love to have Historical Society volunteers on hand at the opening, (in vintage costumes if they wish), to give out fliers near the signs with information on the Adobe (which would be provided) and about the Society. Please give our new President, Roger Skuse, a call at 408/ 262-0354 to volunteer. Sounds like fun!

Parking for the event will be available at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, 1989 E Calaveras Blvd., diagonally across the street from the Alviso Adobe.

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The Milpitas Historical Society extends deep sympathies to the families of our much-missed members **Dotte Doremus** and **Henry Mattos**.

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## Summit Pointe Restaurant Hosts 2013 Installation of Officers and Directors

On Thursday, February 21, the Society held its annual installation dinner at the Summit Pointe Restaurant. Milpitas Mayor Jose Esteves (far left in photo) conducted the swearing-in ceremony for the 2013 Society Officers and Board of Directors shown below (left to right in photo): Steve Munzel, *Archives and Landmarks* and *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Commission Liaison*; Harriett McGuire, *Historian*; Lela Ehardt, *Secretary*; Ann Zeise, *Publicity*; Kraig Bunnell, *Treasurer*; Joanne Souza, *Hospitality*; Catherine Pelizzari, *Vice President* and *Publications*; Thelma Bridges, *Special Events*, and Roger Skuse, *President*. Not present: Mabel Mattos, *Membership*.

After the ceremony, Paul Bernal, California Superior Court Judge and President of the Santa Clara Chapter of the California Pioneers, gave an illuminating and well-researched account of the tragic life of Zacarias Berreyesa, on whose property the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine was found and whose family ended up completely stripped of all claims and profits of the mine. The photo on the left shows Roger Skuse with Judge Bernal and Mayor Esteves at the dinner.



### Milpitas Street Name Stories: Gross Street

Named for former Milpitas Mayor Ben Gross (1921-2012), Gross Street is appropriately located in Milpitas's Sunnyhills neighborhood. In addition to being the first black mayor (1966-1970) of a sizeable city in the US, Ben Gross was an official in the United Auto Workers Union and was central to the development of Milpitas's Sunnyhills neighborhood, the first planned integrated housing development in California.

Ben Gross moved west to Richmond, CA in 1947, went to work in the Ford plant there, and became a member of the UAW Local 560. When Ford opened its new plant in Milpitas in 1954, Mr. Gross was chair of the union's Housing Committee, which saw a huge problem looming to find housing for African-American Ford plant workers in almost all-white Santa Clara County.

Working with the federal justice department, local developers, the Quakers, and other church groups, Ben Gross was able after much hard work to make the Sunnyhills development a reality. His dedication to community service in this and other projects led to his repeated elections to the City Council, where he served with distinction, and eventually to his election as Mayor. He initiated the request that eventually led to having a Russian delegation, including Nikita Krushchev, visit Milpitas in 1962 to experience a racially integrated neighborhood.

As befitted a passionate and effective champion of civil rights, Ben Gross's life was celebrated here on February 23; speakers included his sons Ben Gross Jr. and Ashley Gross, Mayor Jose Esteves, former Mayor Denny Weisgerber, and Milpitas Post Founder Mort Levine.

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