



Milpitas Muse

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The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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Milpitas Historical Society Invites Our Community to a Presentation about the Old Laguna Schoolhouse

The Milpitas Historical Society will hold its next meeting on Wednesday, November 14, at 7 pm in the Community Room (Auditorium) at the Milpitas Library, 160 N. Main Street.

Bill Hare, Vice-President of the Milpitas Historical Society, will talk about the 147-year-old Laguna Schoolhouse, which still sits in its original location on Mr. Hare's property in the foothills.

Much of the story will be told by the late John Covo, via a videotaped interview with Bill Hare in 2001.



John Covo

Mr. Covo, who attended the Laguna School as a child, lived in the Milpitas hills his entire life and is remembered fondly by many Milpitans.



Courtesy of Robert Burrell
Laguna School in the 1970's

Whether you knew John or not, you won't want to miss this tour he gives of the Laguna School of his childhood. This program is free and everyone is welcome to attend.



Laguna School at present

And Speaking of Schools – What about Zanker Road and Pearl Zanker School?

Zanker Road, named for a pioneer family who had a house and prosperous farm on that road in Alviso, runs north and south from Highway 237 and isn't actually in Milpitas proper. But Pearl Zanker School, named for a member of that Zanker family, is in southern Milpitas on Falling Leaf Drive and was named for a memorable teacher who taught Milpitas students for over 40 years.

Pearl Zanker's grandfather, William Zanker, came to the United States in 1849, at the age of 19, and worked in farming in various parts of the country until he arrived in California in 1855 via the overland Panama route (no canal in those days). He first worked in the mines in El Dorado and then in Santa Cruz County before settling on what he thought was government land, near Alviso. However, he soon found out that it was claimed, under a previous grant, by Governor Burnett. After two years of litigation, Mr. Zanker and his partners were defeated. He rented this same land until about 1863, when he was able to purchase it.

In 1861 Mr. Zanker married Miss Catherine Watters, whose parents also came from Germany. William and Catherine Zanker raised hay and grain for the stock on their farm and also grew pears, strawberries, and asparagus. They had eight children, four daughters and four sons, one of whom was the father of Pearl Zanker.

Built in 1868, their farmhouse stood on the same spot for over one hundred years, until it was acquired by History San Jose and moved to History Park, where it was restored in 1988, and is now open to the public. The structure currently holds display and archival materials belonging to the African American Heritage House.



The Zanker House at San Jose's History Park

Pearl Zanker (1901-1978) grew up in Milpitas, where her parents had moved to raise their family. She was the valedictorian of her high school class at Berryessa School, and an accomplished pianist by her

high school years, according to articles in the newspapers of the day telling of her performances at recitals and social events.

Pearl Zanker



Courtesy of Ann Mason from "Images of America: Milpitas" by Robert Burrell

she held into the 1950's. She then became a personnel director in the district office in 1964, where she stayed until her retirement.

In 1970 the Pearl Zanker Elementary School was built and dedicated; it was rededicated in 2000 with the addition of the new wing. It is a California Distinguished School, an honor of which we can be sure that Pearl Zanker would have been proud.

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

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Our new web page offers general information on the Historical Society and its accomplishments:

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

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First Class