



Milpitas Muse

September 2012

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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Next Milpitas Historical Society Meeting: Wednesday, September 12

At the next meeting of the Milpitas Historical Society, on Wednesday, September 12, at 7:00 pm, our speaker will be Trisha Crowder, a descendent of the Sinnott family, after whom the John Sinnott Elementary School on Yellowstone Avenue in Milpitas is named.



Ms. Crowder is the great-great-great granddaughter of John Sinnott, who emigrated from Ireland to North America from Wexford, Ireland in 1831. In 1851 he brought his family to California, becoming one of the leading farmers in the Santa Clara valley with over 1,000 acres of land.



John Sinnott

The Sinnott family is also connected to the Martin Murphy family in Sunnyvale, because John Sinnott and Martin Murphy married the Bolger sisters, John to Elizabeth Bolger and Martin to Mary Bolger.

Ms. Crowder has many family stories connected to our local history which she will be sharing with us.

Meetings are held in the Community Room (Auditorium) of the Milpitas Library. All are welcome to attend free of charge.

Members Visit Old Laguna Schoolhouse

The Milpitas Historical Society's summer picnic was held on the property of Society Vice President Bill Hare, where the Laguna Schoolhouse structure is located. Laguna School was the first school constructed in the Milpitas area. It was built in 1865 where Felter Road and Calaveras Road intersected and was used for the education of children in the area for the next 70 years.



Front row (l-r): Harriett McGuire, Thelma Bridges, Shirley Skuse, Catherine Pelizzari, Roger Skuse; Back Row Kraig Bunnell, Bill Hare, Danny Cosper

Members were able to tour the schoolhouse inside and out, and see how suitable this historic structure would be for the planned Milpitas Museum in the park next to the library, a project that the Society is working to implement.

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

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

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

Summer 2012 Milpitas Community Tour

The Milpitas Historical Society conducted its annual Community Tour on June 30 and visited some new as well as some familiar tour locations. While the date kept the tour from finishing up at the Big Dog Winery this year, the tour did include a new and detailed presentation of the building, grounds, and history of the Higuera Adobe.



Historical Society Archives and Landmarks Chairman Steve Munzel tells about the building known as the Casino at the Higuera Adobe

Tour members also learned about historic buildings in the old center of town along Main Street, including the sites of the first store and the first hotel in Milpitas, and heard the story of the restaurant, now “Red Chillies” (on the corner of Main Street and Serra Way), that was once Smith’s Corner and then Campbell’s Corner.

Campbell’s Corner: A Historic Structure

This building occupies a spot that was once in the north-west corner of Rancho San Miguel/Milpitas. One of the first Anglo settlers of the area, Michael Hughes, bought it from Juana Galindo Alviso, widow of Jose Maria Alviso, for

\$225 in 1856. The land, probably including buildings, was rapidly transferred through several owners and ended up belonging to Augustus Rathbone. It may be the oldest continuously occupied commercial lot in Milpitas.

Rathbone established a saloon on the property, and by 1862, Rathbone's Saloon was the site of the first recorded murder in Milpitas (the killer escaped). In the 1880s, the saloon was replaced by a hotel operated by a man named Goodwin, who probably kept a saloon downstairs. That hotel burned prior to 1900, perhaps in the same fire that destroyed French's Hotel a few feet north and across the Alviso Road (now Serra Way).

According to Clarence Smith, nephew of John Smith and owner of the bar until the late 1940s, his uncle built the present structure in the mid-1890s. John Smith named his saloon Smith's Corner and began serving liquid refreshment to local farmers and travelers.



The “Campbell’s Corner” Building (photo from 1997)

In the late 1940s, Clarence Smith sold the property to the Campbell family, who renamed it Campbell’s Corner. Although the property was owned by others during the next fifty years, the name remained unchanged until the building was purchased in 1997 for use as a restaurant. It has served as a restaurant under several different names since 1997. It may be the third structure to be on this site since 1856, and is certainly over 100 years old.

**Milpitas Historical Society
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First Class