



# Milpitas Muse

April 2017

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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## Finding the Treasures of Santa Clara

Come learn about the museum treasures of the City of Santa Clara at Milpitas Historical Society's next meeting on Wednesday, April 12, at 7:00 pm in the Children's Activity Room of the Milpitas Library, 160 North Main Street.

The program will tell you about the beautiful and interesting things you can find on display at such Santa Clara museums as the beautiful Headen-Inman House, the Beryessa Adobe, the Fire Museum, the Railroad Museum and the De Saisset Museum, a little-known gem located at Santa Clara University that is one of only three museums in Silicon Valley to hold accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums.



Mary Hanel

These museums will be introduced to you by our speaker Mary Hanel, History and Genealogy Librarian for Santa Clara County, who was also our docent when the Milpitas Historical Society took a tour of the Santa Clara Harris-Lass House last year.



The De Saisset Museum in Santa Clara

A second part of the program will be a preview of a traveling History of Milpitas exhibit that Kraig Bunnell, our Archives and Landmarks chair, is preparing to take to third grade classrooms in the Milpitas schools next year.

This program will include sections about the Native Americans who first inhabited this area, then the Spanish settlers, including the Alviso family who built the Jose Maria Alviso Adobe (pictured here as it was in the 1890s),



the American pioneers who came starting in the 1840s, and the turn-of-the-century Portuguese-speaking settlers who arrived after that to join what became the vibrant community of Milpitas.

### *What happened to our scheduled speaker for March?*

With deep apologies, our scheduled speaker let us know that he was unable to come to the March 8 meeting, but his talk about the industrial and social history of Campbell has been rescheduled for the meeting on Wednesday, September 13, 2017.

### *Answer to the Mystery in Milpitas History Revealed*

In case you were not at our meeting to hear about the mystery building in the photo shown in the March Milpitas Muse, it was the last Southern Pacific Railroad Station in Milpitas. The station was located a few hundred feet south of Sinnott Lane (branching east from Main Street opposite the old St. John the Baptist Church) on the west side of the railroad tracks. In those days, some will remember the Kinney Shoe store on South Main Street with the station hidden behind it. The photo was taken in July 1967 by renowned local railroad photographer Wesley L. Hammond. Was the current street Hammond Way (running alongside the east side of the tracks from Curtis) named after the photographer? Probably, but this is something that we are trying to confirm for historical accuracy.

Our meetings are free and all are welcome. Hope you can join us then.

## Milpitas School Name Stories: John Sinnott Elementary School

The John Sinnott Elementary School, at 2025 Yellowstone Ave., and the Sinnott Lane mentioned in this month's article about the train station were both named after John Sinnott, a pioneer Milpitas settler, who was born in Ireland in 1800. He immigrated to Quebec, Canada in 1831, where he met and married his wife, Elizabeth (Bolger), who was a sister of Mrs. Martin Murphy, of the well-known Murphy family, who crossed the plains in 1844, the first of the American settlers from the east to make it across the mountains to California.



**John Sinnott**

successfully farmed and raised stock, and became a prominent and contributory member of the community. He died in 1883, followed shortly thereafter by his wife.

John and Elizabeth Sinnott had three daughters, Catherine and Mary, who became nuns, and Ellen, who, with John's two sons, Thomas and Patrick, lived and worked on the ranch and eventually inherited it; they were also highly respected members of the community. In 1887, Thomas married Ella Twohig, and they had seven children, two of whom died young, two became nuns, and the others became teachers.

In 1851, John Sinnott brought his wife and children west by way of sailing ships and trekking across the Isthmus of Panama (the Panama Canal was not built yet) and settled in Mountain View, renting a farm from his brother-in-law, Martin Murphy. In 1856 he bought land in Milpitas,

## Milpitas BBQ Coming Up in May

Stay tuned for more information about the Milpitas International Festival and Barbeque, which is coming up on Saturday and Sunday, May 20 and 21, 2017, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, in a brand new location on Alder Drive (between McCarthy Blvd. and Tasman Dr.). In the next newsletter, see how our Society will be participating in it.

## Remembering a Departed Member

As you might have seen a few weeks ago in the *Milpitas Post*, we lost a long-time member, Gloria Orange at the age of 79, on February 23 of this year. Gloria lived in Milpitas for 55 years. When her children reached high school age, she gave up being a stay-at-home mother and went to work at the new Kmart in Milpitas, where she became friends with Mabel Mattos, one of the Milpitas Historical Society's founding members, and became interested in local history; she later worked for many years before retirement for EMCON, where she was a document control specialist. She is survived and missed by good friends, four daughters, 16 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and 4 great-great-grandchildren and 3 more on the way.

## Milpitas Historical Society Board Meetings

The next meeting, on Monday, April 3, at 2:00 pm, will be in Group Study Room A at the Milpitas Library. Members are always welcome.

## Our Society's 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@milpitashistoricalsociety.org](mailto:tmhs@milpitashistoricalsociety.org)

Here's the new website for the Milpitas Historical Society: <http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>, with information about the society and upcoming events. The traditional Milpitas history web page is here:

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

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

**First Class**