



# Milpitas Muse

April 2019

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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## April 10 Meeting: One of California's Earliest Innovators

The Milpitas Historical Society's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 10. This meeting will take place at 7:00 pm in the Multipurpose Room (Auditorium) of the Milpitas Library, 160 North Main Street.



Our speaker, Robin Chapman, pictured left, will tell us the amazing and largely unknown story of Lope Inigo, a Native American of what is now generally called the Ohlone culture, which was made up of numerous subtribes, the names of which were often not recorded.

Inigo was born in 1781, just four years after the founding of Mission Santa Clara, where he was baptized at the age of 8. As an adult, he became an *alcalde* or magistrate at the Mission and also served as a soldier.

Later, due to his visionary ability to survive the complete disruption of his culture by the Spanish-language and then English-language settlers, he became one of the very few Native Americans to successfully acquire, after endless negotiations with the shifting governments, his own land grant property near what later became Mountain View.



Lope Inigo, 75 years old

Robin Chapman's 2018 book, *Historic Bay Area Visionaries*, tells the complete history of Lope Inigo, as well as that of five other Bay Area innovators: Juana Briones, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sarah Winchester, Thomas Foon Chew, and Charlie Chaplin.

Robin Chapman, a native of the Santa Clara Valley, is a longtime journalist who worked in television news and later felt a calling to write about the history of her home state, in this book and an earlier one, *California Apricots: The Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley* (2013).

Please join us for this informative presentation and stay for treats and conversation afterwards. Meetings are free and all are welcome.

## School Name Stories: Thomas Russell Middle School



Thomas Russell Middle School

Who was Thomas Russell? Thomas Russell was born in Ireland on August 20, 1834. He had to work while attending night school. Upon completion of school, he became a First Mate on a whaling ship, and often spoke of his travels to Hong Kong and the Hawaiian Islands. He immigrated to Canada from Ireland, settling in Boston before arriving in San Francisco by boat around the Horn. He lived in Milpitas for 45 years.

According to Margaret Chia, who was his grand-daughter, Mr. Russell was very proper, stern, and well mannered. Education was very important to him. Mr. Russell had all his children learn to play the piano and hired art teachers to come to the house to teach the children to paint. He encouraged his

children to go to college. It was unusual for girls to go to school in the 1800s, but he pushed them to be educated.

Mr. Russell raised Percheron horses. His ranch included the land where the school is located and also all the land around it, all the way to the Great Mall. His house in Milpitas was located on Main Street. Thomas Russell died June 15, 1917.

### **Our Great Mall History Exhibit Must Move**

The Milpitas Historical Society faces a new challenge after being notified that it must remove all of its historical items from the Entrance 4 display area at the Great Mall by April 19. The Society's Board is currently working with the city, which has offered a safe temporary place to store our historic items, and is locating new areas where some of our history can be put on display, such as in the locked glass cases in City Hall and the Community Center.



**Visitors watch last year's video additions to the Society's Great Mall history display**

The Great Mall occupies the structure built as a Ford assembly plant in 1955, replacing the older, smaller Richmond Assembly facility. This plant produced Mustangs, Torinos, Fairlanes, Escorts, Pintos, Edsel Rangers, Pacers, Mercury Cougars, Montegos, Comets, Bobcats, Lynxes, Capris, and F-Series trucks, and because of the large influx of workers employed in the plant, it greatly increased the population of Milpitas.

The plant closed in 1983, citing competition from Japanese imports.

When the site reopened as a shopping mall in 1994, each entrance had a different transportation theme, including air, automotive, railroad, and maritime travel. The automotive display often featured Ford brand vehicles built at the site, such as the Ford Skyliner still on display in its current showcase. Somewhat later, Leaping Lena was displayed on one of these turntables, but eventually it was moved into storage at Manuel Franco's ranch before it was put on display in the library parking garage when the new library opened in 2009.

In 2008, the Mall management allowed us to put Milpitas Historical Society artifacts in the same space with Ford exhibit. The current management now wants to remove everything from this exhibit space (of the last 25 years) and convert it all into rental space.



### **Milpitas Historical Society Board Meetings**

The Board will meet next on Monday, May 6, at 2:00 pm in the Milpitas Library Group Study Room A. Subsequent meetings will be announced in the newsletter for each month. Members are always welcome.

### **Our Society's Contact Information**

You can contact the Milpitas Historical Society:

- by mail at 160 N. Main Street, Milpitas CA 95035
- by email to [tmhs@milpitashistoricalsociety.org](mailto:tmhs@milpitashistoricalsociety.org)
- from our website: [www.milpitashistoricalsociety.org](http://www.milpitashistoricalsociety.org)

You can see the traditional Milpitas history website here: [www.milpitashistory.org/home/index.html](http://www.milpitashistory.org/home/index.html)

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

**First Class**