



Milpitas Muse

June 2012

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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New Almaden History

The New Almaden Quicksilver Mine and Museum will be the subject of the next presentation at the Milpitas Historical Society meeting on Wednesday, June 13, at 7:00 pm in the Community Room (auditorium) of the Milpitas Library.

Doug Bergtholdt will be our speaker on the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine and its background, geology, and the fascinating social history of the town of New Almaden, with photos and stories that make the area come alive. A film about the New Almaden Quicksilver Mines will also be shown.



**Doug Bergtholdt will be our speaker
on the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine**

The New Almaden Quicksilver Mine, which is 12 miles south of San Jose, was first developed in the 1820's by the Robles family, who were trying to mine the cinnabar (mercury) ore for silver, but not having any success. In 1845, Andres Castellero recognized the ore for what it actually was, due to familiarity with the Almaden Mine in Spain, and filed the first mining claim in California. His claim ran into trouble after the Mexican War, because he was a Mexican Army Officer, so he sold his shares to Eustace Barron and Alexander Forbes, who operated the mine until 1863, when as a result of another claims dispute, The Quicksilver Mining Company took over and ran the mines until it went bankrupt in 1912.

The first mine manager, Henry Halleck, built the Casa Grande, completed in 1858, as the manager's residence. He lived there until 1861, when he left for the Union Army, where he eventually became general-in-chief.

Subsequent managers lived there and entertained many distinguished visitors, including Abraham Lincoln.



**The newly reopened Almaden Quicksilver Mine Museum
at the Casa Grande**

Various other companies continued mining at the site until 1976, when the price of mercury dropped so much that it was no longer be feasible to continue mining, as well as the EPA declaring mercury to be hazardous. In 1978 the County of Santa Clara purchased over 4,000 acres of land for the park.

In 1997 the County obtained the mining museum that Constance Perham had begun in 1949. The museum was moved into the Casa Grande, where it is today, it, and brought up to code. Local groups, including the DAR, obtained donations of furniture and décor for the 1895-era rooms and the beautifully refurbished museum reopened in 2011.

New Almaden Quicksilver Mines Field Trip

The Society will sponsor a field trip tour of the town and mines (10 am) and the Casa Grande museum (1 pm) on **Sunday, June 24**. As part of the Living History Day celebration at the Casa Grande, costumed docents will be on hand to guide you through Victorian period rooms and museum exhibits. Time (around 9 am) and place of departure for the tour will be specified at our meeting. Come to the meeting and sign up for the tour! You can also call the Milpitas Historical Society at: (408) 320-9587 to sign up.

Milpitas Veterans' Display in City Hall

If you haven't been to City Hall lately, you might have missed the display of US Armed Services Veterans' memorabilia in the big glass cases to the left as you enter the front doors.



These items, loaned by Milpitas veterans, range from photographs, letters, and official documents to swords, uniforms, and a flight helmet. These items will be on display to honor our local service men and women until July 1. Drop by and find out more about the histories of our Milpitas veterans.

Milpitas Community Museum Needs You!

The Milpitas Community Museum (MCM) has been successfully raising start-up funds. Now MCM is ready for more persons who are interested in becoming Trustees and Directors. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to become involved in the historic founding of our city's first museum. Our first goal is to apply for non-profit corporation status with the State of California.

If you are interested in attending the next MCM Board of Directors meeting, call Steve Munzel, current President of the Board of Trustees and Chairperson of the Board of Directors of The Milpitas Community Museum, at 408-263-3099 or tmhs@milpitashistory.org.

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

Summer Vacation is Coming -- and so is the Milpitas Community Tour

The Milpitas Historical Society is taking its usual summer vacation; there will be no Society meetings or newsletters in July or August.

Community Tour Plans

The Society is again organizing a Community Tour this summer, on Saturday, June 30; it is likely to include, among other attractions, the Silva Apricot Ranch, the St. John's Cemetery, the original Laguna Schoolhouse, and more, and will certainly finish up again with a delightful lunch and wine tasting at the Big Dog Winery.



Historical Society President Harriett McGuire (center) chats with Alice Woodrow and Mabel Mattos at last year's Community Tour

When the itinerary and the meeting time and place are finalized, the information will be sent out in a bulletin to Society members and will be available to everyone else through the *Milpitas Post*.

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>

First Class