



# Milpitas Muse

May 2015

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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## May 13 Meeting: Preserving our History

The May meeting of the Milpitas Historical Society will feature distinguished San Jose writer and historian April Halberstadt, who will speak on "Adobe to Adobe: Downtown San Jose," an opportunity to look at some of our favorite Santa Clara Valley structures, old and new, and consider their criteria for preservation. If not every old building is historic, what makes the difference? What does a historian consider when looking at a building? The talk covers why every community should have a "Historic Inventory," why it is important, and how we can help save the cultural resources in our community.



April Halberstadt

The meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 13 at 7 pm, in the Community Room (auditorium) of the Milpitas Library, 160 N. Main Street.

What would you vote to save?



Admission is free and all are welcome. Please join us!

## May 2 Field Trip to Levine Home

On Saturday, May 2, Milpitas Historical Society members have a special opportunity to visit the beautiful home of Mort and Elaine Levine, founding members of the Milpitas Historical Society, as well as founders and longtime owners of the *Milpitas Post*, first published in 1955. Mort will lead a tour of the house and Elaine will talk about the start-up of the Milpitas Historical Society.



Their historic house, surrounded by beautiful gardens, was built as a summer home in 1914 by Fremont Older, a crusading San Francisco newspaperman and his wife Cora, an author and historian. They named it "Woodhills," and enjoyed it until the end of their lives.

Designed by architect Frank Delos Wolfe, who was also the architect of the Milpitas Grammar School, now part of the Milpitas Community Library, and of the DeVries house across the street from the library, "Woodhills" was different from the usual Victorian designs of the era and was thought to be quite unusual for its time.

Fremont Older died in 1935 at the age of 81 and his wife Cora died in 1968 at 93.

In 1975, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District purchased the property and scheduled the abandoned house for demolition. But Mort and Elaine Levine wanted to see the journalistic legacy of Fremont Older and "Woodhills" preserved. The District Board voted and approved a long-term lease to the Levines, who absorbed the cost of the home's restoration and completed its renovation in 1979.

If you did not sign up for this tour at the April meeting and would like to come, please call Harriett McGuire at (408) 262-7979. You need to be registered to participate. We will meet to car pool at the Big 5 Sporting Goods Store at 12:30 pm, so we can leave by 12:45 pm.

## Who Was Fremont Older?

Fremont Older, builder and first owner of the house for which our May tour is offered, the man for whom the Fremont Older Open Space Preserve and the Fremont Older Elementary School in Cupertino are named, was a crusading newspaperman and editor in San Francisco for nearly fifty years.



Fremont Older

He became the editor of the *San Francisco Call* (later merged with the *San Francisco Bulletin*) in 1894. During the eventful years of the San Francisco Earthquake and the mayoral corruption scandal that followed, Older worked tirelessly for the conviction of dishonest, bribe-taking politicians. He was even

briefly kidnapped by allies of the grafters, but luckily was rescued by a stranger who realized that Older was being held prisoner on a train. He was also deeply involved in documenting the surprisingly-forgotten Preparedness Day (for World War I) bombing in 1916, at which a suitcase bomb exploded during a parade, killing 10 and wounding 40. Two labor leaders were wrongly convicted of the crime and Older spent years working for their release, which did not happen until after his death.

At the *Call*, Fremont Older worked with Cora Baggerly Older, whom he had met and married in 1893. She worked as a reporter and literary editor, and became a well-known biographer (of William Randolph Hearst), historian, and novelist from the early part of the century until publication of her last book in 1961.

The Olders hosted many literary, artistic, and political guests, including Clarence Darrow, during their years in the home.

If you are interested in reading more about the Olders, there is a fascinating account of their lives, written by Cora Older at the age of 80, at this site: <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist8/olderbio.html>

## More Fun Events Coming Up This Summer

### June 6 Field Trip to See Indian Artifacts

At our regular meeting on May 13, you can sign up for a Saturday morning field trip to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Alviso. You will hear docent Laura Mello give a tour and talk about the exhibit of Ohlone Indian relics and reconstructions of Ohlone dwellings and boats that are displayed in the auditorium of the Nature Center there. The tour should last from 10 am until 11:30 am or noon.



### May 30 Milpitas International BBQ & Festival

The barbecue and festival sponsored by the Milpitas Chamber of Commerce will be back again this year on May 30 and 31. On Saturday, May 30, the Milpitas Historical Society will again have a table of interesting historical items from Milpitas and other local sites as well as the Frontier Days rolling jail. And this time, the BBQ providers have promised not to run out of meat!

### Milpitas Community Tour

The Milpitas Historical Society's annual community tour will be held on Saturday, June 20, this year. You will see complete information about it in the June newsletter.

### 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@milpitashistorysociety.org](mailto:tmhs@milpitashistorysociety.org).

The traditional Milpitas history web page is here:

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

Here's the new website for the Milpitas Historical Society: <http://milpitashistoricalsociety.org>, with information about the society and upcoming events.

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

**First Class**