



Milpitas Muse

November 2011

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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History of Local Aviation and Moffett Field at November 9 Meeting

The Milpitas Historical Society's next meeting, on Wednesday, November 9, at 7:00 pm, will feature Greg Lander's presentation "The History of Aviation at Moffett Field and in the Santa Clara Valley." Mr. Lander, a former Naval Aviator flying the Lockheed P-3 from Naval Air Station Moffett Field since 1974, is very familiar with the history of Moffett Field and will gladly answer any questions we may have after the presentation. The public is invited to attend the meeting at no charge.



The dirigible Macon, tethered to the mast outside Hangar 1 at Moffett Field (1934)

Come hear about the transition from the USS Macon dirigible (pictured above), to the U.S. Army Air Corps Moffett Field, to Naval Aviation, NASA and finally Moffett Federal Airfield, and learn how these 1,000 acres of farmland were critical to the defense of the United States for over 60 years. With threats ranging from Japanese submarines lurking in Monterey Bay, to Soviet nuclear missiles aimed at our cities from submarines in the Pacific Ocean, we will see what the men and women of Moffett Field did to protect our country, and how one man – Admiral William Moffett, had such dramatic influence on the development of the United States military.

The speaker will describe the vast collection of military, artifacts, uniforms, photographs, models and equipment that paint the history of military aviation at the Moffett Field Museum, which also includes restored aircraft, cockpits and specially designed displays that spark the interest of children, as well as the many blimps, jets, fighter and patrol aircraft that routinely operated out of Moffett Field, which was decommissioned in 1994.



Navy P-2 Neptune anti-sub patrol plane (1940's-50's) being restored in Hangar 1 at Moffett Field

A trip to this museum is planned for Saturday, Nov. 12th at 12:30 p.m. Meet at Big 5 parking lot at 12:00. For further information on the museum tour and the Milpitas Historical Society phone 320-9587.

Also at the November meeting the Nominating Committee (Mabel Mattos, Joann Souza, Jean Wyatt, and Catherine Pelizzari) will present the slate of candidates for the 2012 Board of Directors of the Milpitas Historical Society.

Fashion Show Fundraiser Success!

On Thursday, October 27, a reception and fashion show at the Great Mall celebrated Milpitas Women as Role Models. At press time, ticket sales raised \$1,320 to support the Milpitas Community Museum Fund. Additional money was raised in a gift basket raffle and from direct donations. This was the most successful fundraiser ever for the Society! A big thank-you to Harriett McGuire for organizing and managing our part of the event.

Milpitas Street Name Stories: The Voice of a Pioneer

Mabel Mattos, Steve Munzel, and Catherine Pelizzari, spent several weeks this summer listening to and editing the previous transcript of an interview made on cassette tape in 1971 with (William) Weller Curtner, (1894-1972). This recording was made into a digital file and enhanced by member Bill Hare, which made it clearer and easier to understand

Weller Curtner, as well as being a prominent local rancher, was the grandson of two Milpitas pioneer settlers, Joseph Weller and Henry Curtner.



**Weller Curtner and his wife, Ruth Long Curtner,
at their Scott Creek Ranch**

The Hon. Joseph R. Weller, (1825-1916) was a prominent landowner and civic leader who, after working as a teacher in New York State and a try at the California gold fields, filed a preemption claim to land on Rancho Tularcitos in 1853. In 1855, he organized the Milpitas School District on land owned by his brother, Abraham, and was appointed one of its trustees, a position he filled for the next 24 years. He was a Justice of the Peace (1856-1878) and was one of the Associate Judges of Santa Clara County. In 1878, he was elected as a member of the State Constitutional

Convention and assisted in framing the California State Constitution.

Weller Lane is named for J. R. Weller, as is Weller Road, in the hills behind Milpitas, and Joseph Weller Elementary School.

Henry Curtner (1831-1916) migrated from Indiana in 1850 and after farming in the Alvarado area moved with his family to Warm Springs, and the property came to include 7,000 acres from Warm Springs south to Jacklin Road. He was noted for supporting benevolent and educational institutions.

Curtner Road, on the northeast side of Milpitas, was named after Henry Curtner and Curtner School honors the Curtner family who carried on his legacy of civic responsibility.

In the taped interview, Weller Curtner remembers the area as all farms, when the locations of markets and depots were determined by how horses could manage the roads; he remembers the stern-wheelers and scow schooners that took the produce up the bay to San Francisco. He describes the various tanneries, black-smiths, and wagon makers that were so important to the farmers then. He tells how and when the different crops that made the Santa Clara Valley famous were introduced, and he reminisces about all the people from different lands who came here to work. The Society's collection of oral histories give an amazing window into the history of our community

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

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

**Milpitas Historical Society
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First Class