



# Milpitas Muse

May 2011

The Milpitas Historical Society Newsletter

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## Wonderful Genealogical Resource – Right Here in Santa Clara County!

The next meeting of the Milpitas Historical Society, will be a presentation on researching genealogy, given by Trina Gentry. Ms Gentry serves as Second Vice President and Editor of *Connections*, a publication of Santa Clara County history and genealogies for the Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society.

Her presentation will cover how to work on your family tree and what the society offers for help to family historians and researchers through the vast local and international collection housed in the Santa Clara Central Library on Homestead Road.



**The Santa Clara Central Library**

The library and the society have combined collections including not only Santa Clara County and California records, but also genealogical information from a variety of other places in the United States, including New England and the southern states as well as family information about ethnic groups such as Italian, Jewish, Native American, Canadian, and many others.

The Milpitas Historical Society meeting will be held Wednesday, May 11 at 7 pm in the Community Room of the Milpitas Public Library, 160 N. Main Street. The public is invited to attend free of charge and meet Ms. Gentry. For further information on the Historical Society, phone (408) 320-9587.

Light refreshments will follow the meeting.

## Opportunity of a (City's) Lifetime

*By Steve Munzel, President*

Milpitas is poised at a very important point in our history. For the first time, our city purchased land for use as a park. What will be done with that new parkland on Main Street is now being decided.

Generally, our neighborhood parks are all cut from the same mold: there are tot lot play areas, barbecue pits, picnic tables, and areas for ball sports. These features attract and serve a particular demographic segment of our community that is mostly young and physically active.

This new Main St. Park is 1.6 acres located next to a senior housing facility, a medical clinic, railroad tracks, and our wonderful public library. The housing development that is located behind high walls just west of the new parkland already has play equipment and picnic areas in a well-maintained park.

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Commission (PRCRC), after many months of study, is considering recommending to the city council that Main St. Park be a different kind of park, a so-called passive park, featuring pathways, benches under shade trees, grassy areas, a flower garden maintained by volunteers, and a small museum. These are all features that seem to blend well with the quieter activities offered by the buildings anchoring this end of Main Street.

In particular, a small museum is appropriate for the park, not only as a central repository for artifacts from our vanished agricultural past, but as a place where our citizens and visitors can discover how different cultures came to Milpitas and contributed to making our city. Fortunately, support for a community museum is growing.

The Milpitas Historical Society has joined with the PRCRC in favor of locating a community museum in the new park. The Historical Society has even offered, at no cost to the city, to furnish and staff the museum.

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The last one-room, wooden school house in the county, Laguna School, has generously been offered free to the city by its owner, Bill Hare (who recently won two Grammy Awards) for use as a community museum. Laguna School was built in 1865. Its first students used the chalkboard still hanging on its walls when Lincoln was president and the Civil War was raging. It would become the oldest museum structure in the South Bay if our city council agrees to accept Mr. Hare's philanthropic gift and to invest in moving it to the Main St. Park.

Since the previous use of the parkland was as a commercial business, the sewer and water infrastructure is already in place for a museum. The building itself is free, a local group has offered to maintain it for free, there is already a parking garage just a few feet away, and there seems to be growing, broad support for a museum from so many community members, -- so when will there be a better time to act?

Right now we see the best and cheapest opportunity for Milpitas - the only city town in Santa Clara County without a museum - to have one of the most historic structures in the county and the state as our own community museum and to put it right next door to the finest library around.

To be sure, it will not be without cost, but considering that the price of a single tot lot playground can run \$3 million, by not building one of those in Main St. Park, the City should be able to save enough money to provide ample funds for a small, one-room museum

Please join with the rest of our community to encourage our friends and neighbors on the city council to let us all have a museum of our own.

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### **April Meeting's Preservation Information**

In case you missed our April meeting about preserving your family's historic papers and mementos, you can find excellent information, how-to's, and places to get safe storage materials on our presenter Kathleen Orlenko's website at <http://www.orklenko.net>.

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### **Milpitas Street Name Stories: Evans Road**

Evans Road, which marks the eastern boundary of residential Milpitas in many places, is named for Josiah Evans, one of our early settlers, who owned a ranch that bordered the road.

Evans came to Milpitas in 1853 from Ohio after a few years in the California gold fields, during which time he founded the Butte County city of Evansville. He bought 800 acres of Rancho Tularcitos land in 1853. His ranch was described in 1874 by a reporter for the *San Jose Mercury* as having fine orchards of fruit and nut trees. The present day road follows the same route as the historic road that served the ranches of the 1860s.

In 1862, his daughter, America Evans, married Samuel

Ayer, another Milpitas pioneer rancher, who became a respected long-time county supervisor, for whom the first high school in Milpitas was named. That school (1959-1980) was located at 1395 E. Calaveras Blvd, the current location of the Milpitas Sports Center.

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### **Milpitas Historical Society Contact Information**

You can contact the Milpitas Historical Society:

- by phone at (408) 320-9587
- by mail at 160 North Main Street, Milpitas CA 95035
- or by email at: [tmhs@milpitashistory.org](mailto:tmhs@milpitashistory.org).

Our new web page offers general information on the Historical Society and its accomplishments over the years: <http://www.milpitashistory.org/historicalsociety/society.html>

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

**First Class**