



# LOS MEGANOS

Newsletter of East Contra Costa Historical Society

Volume 23, Issue 2

June, 2023

## In This Issue

**Local History Days**

*1638 students visited this year!*

**Railway Express Safe**

*Now in Homer's Shed*

**Your 2023-2024 Officers**

*Goals Moving ECCHS Forward!*

**Business Memberships**

*Support Those Who Support Us!*

**Davis Auto Camp**

*Do you know its history?*

**Annual BBQ is Coming!**

*September 10<sup>th</sup>*

**Donation Thank You's**

## Museum Welcomes Visitors!

**Open Saturdays & third Sunday thru October 2:00-4:00**



## Wagons, Ho!!

**Our Covered Wagon  
is Ready to Head West**

Eagle Scout Evan Overzet, proudly stands with the restored covered wagon and informational board on wagon travel of 1800's.

Evan Overzet, age 16, of BSA Troop 93 in Brentwood, recently completed his Eagle Project. His project was the restoration of a covered wagon replica originally built by Bob Bailey for the East Contra Costa Historical Museum in 1997. He also created a new informational board for the museum's wagon train display.

Chuck Hunter was Evan's ECCHS project contact and oversaw the 341 service hours the troop performed under Evan's leadership. Chuck's role was one of mentor as he taught Evan the correct way to sand and varnish so Evan could, in turn, lead the younger boys of the troop. In addition to mentoring in restoration skills, Chuck shared his love for history with the boys as they found great interest in the museum.



Eric's first visit to the museum as a Tiger Cub in first grade

Eric's visit to the museum for **Local History Days** as a third grader.



Thank you, Chuck, for all the time you gave to our Scouts, and all the time you give consistently to the youth of our community!

And thank you to the East Contra Costa Historical Society for allowing Evan to do his project at this amazing museum.

~ Alison Overzet, Evan's Mother



# East Contra Costa Historical Society

Bethel Island ~ Brentwood ~ Byron ~ Discovery Bay ~ Knightsen ~ Oakley



## Kathy Leighton

1947-2023

East Contra Costa County lost an icon of local history on March 4, when Kathy Leighton peacefully passed away surrounded by her family at her home in Byron.

Kathy's impact on local history is immeasurable. As a founding member of the East Contra Costa Historical Society and a self-appointed local historian, Kathy spent over 40 years compiling the written and oral histories of the East Contra Costa area and its people.

Her passion and enthusiasm for local history was boundless and infectious. Photos, memorabilia, and items related to local history found their way from local families to her and became the early collections of ECCHS. The **Kathy Leighton Resource Center** at the museum is named in her honor.

ECCHS was honored to host the family's Celebration of Kathy's Life at the museum on May 21<sup>st</sup>. It was a wonderful gathering of family and longtime friends who shared an afternoon remembering this remarkable woman.



*Gene Metz introduces Kathy at 2019 BBQ when the Resource Center was dedicated in her name.*



## ECCHS Welcomes New Members

Catherine Bartling	Porfirio Medina
Tony Campagna	Catrina Mygrant-Lip
Cynthia DeMaggio	Erica Pantle
Sarah Dillon	Judy Paulson
Bill & Norine Dolyniuk	Barbara Pinkston
Jon & Julie Elam	Gilbert Somerhalder
Joe & Lori Favaloro	Gregg & Xenia Stephens
Bryan & Shelly Mason	Ed Valenzuela
Jeanette McKinney	Lena Regina Wilkerson

Welcome aboard!

We hope you will be active participants in ECCHS events and activities.

## Do You Know?

# 925

## Why our Area Code is 925?

*See answer on Business Member insert!*

*Thank you to Antioch Historical Society for sharing this interesting fact!*

## Enjoy a Bit of ECCHS Everyday!



*Photos by Steve Verduzco Magnets by Gretchen Tovar*

Post a touch of ECCHS on your refrigerator and enjoy it every day!

**Magnets \$4**  
(2"x3")

Available in Resource Center Gift Shop

# The Breakers



## Our Railway Express Safe

*Safe at last*

*But by no means an 'Express' journey!*

Another piece of local railroad history  
has arrived at the museum!

The long awaited Railway Express Safe,  
which was in the Brentwood train depot  
50 years ago is now inhabiting space in  
Homer's shed, thanks to Porfirio Medina,  
who donated this treasure to ECCHS.

The enormous black steel safe weighing more than 2000 pounds  
required a boom truck, a 7' Johnson bar and four men to move.  
Time to load, transport, and unload at Homer's Shed: 2½ hours

## Special Thank you to

**Danny Navarette**  
Resource Center threshold repairs

**Tom Bushman**  
**Mt. Diablo Insurance Service**  
Bathroom supplies for museum

**Delta Scrap & Salvage**  
Dumpster for cleanout of storage barn  
Transportation of 2,000 lb safe  
*(Original safe from Brentwood RR station)*

## Our Museum Collection is Growing!

ECCHS depends upon the donation of photos, documents & artifacts to build collections and displays.



**We are  
looking for  
artifacts from**

## Farm Camps & Housing of 1930s, 1940s

If you have anything to help us put  
together a display on this treasured  
part of East Contra Costa history,

CONTACT

[ecchs@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:ecchs@eastcontracostahistory.org)

or

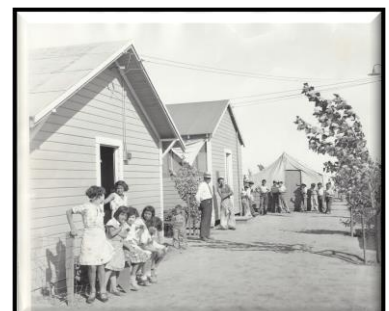
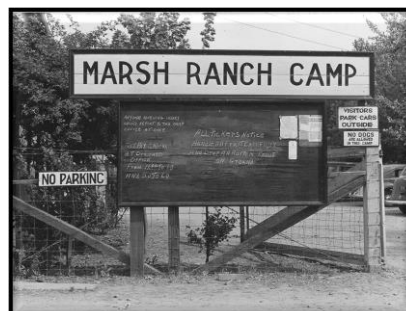
call/text 925-963-6440

Looking for photos, maps, letters,  
family stories

Davis Camp BG Camp  
Marsh Ranch Camp Prellie's Camp  
Garin Court Hellman's Court  
other motor courts, camps

## Thank you to these Donors

Craig Andrews	Caterpillar tractor, buggy, welding table
Dan Burrows	Rancho Los Megnos survey report
Carol DeVera Dominguez	Iron House book
Gregory Frederickson	Robert Wallace's model ship, family photos
Carol Jensen	books on the Delta
Gerald Marshall	school desk
Randi McCall	match books
Porfirio Medina	Southern Pacific safe, phone, telegraph
Dorreen Oxford	Co. Co. Co. Firemen's Association minutes





# Local History Days Bring History to Life!

Voices and laughter of third grade students from local schools were heard at the museum during April & May as they learned how their life would have been in the late 1800's. Morning tours and afternoon hands-on activities take students back in time to experience a day in school, play games, and do chores of the late 1800's.

1,638 students plus about 400 parents participated in the Local History Days at the ECCHS Museum this year. Many report that it is the best field trip ever!



## Thank You to the Team of Docents who 'Bring History to Life'

Diane Alexander	Kathy Griggs	Lisa McLaughlin
Cheryl Allegro	Kathy Gursky	Susana Melgoza*
Tony Allegro	Kathi Houseman*	Diane Musumeci
Deborah Allison	Chuck Hunter	Catrina Mygrant-Lip*
Catherine Bartling*	Pat Hunter	Dennis Nunn
Barb Bartz	Sharon Johnson	Erica Pantle
Jerry Black	Ginny Karlberg	Judy Paulson*
Mary Black	Tim Karlberg	Tom Snyder
Julie Bretz	Tim Kelley*	Sheila Sparacino
Cynthia DeMaggio	Lynn Machado	Jo Tennant
Lori Favaloro*	Barry Margesson	Gretchen Tovar
Sandy Gill	Charlene Margesson	Ed Valenzuela

\* NEW Docent 2023-2024



## What's in the Midden\*?

\*archeological 'dig'

In addition to the visit to the museum, our ECCHS team of 'Archeology Docents' travel to all third grade classes to overview local history through artifacts.

A short presentation about Mt. Diablo watershed, Round Valley as natural area for Native Americans, Rancho days of John Marsh' Rancho Los Meganos, and the settling of towns, students sift through mini Middens to discover artifacts that 'tell the story' of each of these areas.



## Thank You to our Archeology Docents

Joe Darr J.C. Cici Migay\*

\* NEW Docent 2023-2024



Want to join the Docent Team?

Contact Mary Black email

[docents@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:docents@eastcontracostahistory.org)

or call/text  
925-206-5087

Training provided in Fall for  
2023-2024 school year!

## A SPECIAL THANK YOU to Brentwood Café

for supplying all of the ice cream and butter ingredients needed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade school tours  
(milk, whipping cream & eggs)

## From Your Board



### Your 2023-2024 Officers

2023-2024 Officers were installed at the Member Dinner on May 7<sup>th</sup> at the museum

**President:** Mary Casey Black

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:** Gretchen Tovar

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:** Sheila Sparacino

**Recording Secretary:** Randi McCall

**Corresponding Secretary:** Shirley McCall

**Treasurer:** Kathy Bushman

*If these names look familiar to you, they should!*

*All 2022-2023 officers elected to continue for a second year!*

*We look forward to continuing our work to keep ECCHS moving forward!*

### Our Goals

#### Keep ECCHS Moving Forward

#### Membership

##### Increase number of Members

*ECCHS has welcomed 22 NEW members in 2023*

##### Increase number of Business Members

*See our list of Business Members in this newsletter and support these businesses who support us!*

##### Increase number of members actively involved

*We have increased Docents (8), Greeters (7) Breakers (3), Resource Center Crew (2)*

#### Promote ECCHS

##### Promote ECCHS throughout ALL ECC Communities

*See ECCHS at events in Bethel Island, Brentwood, Oakley*

*Banners of Oakley history created and on display*

*ECCHS booth at Brentwood's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party a Hit!*

Like the colorful gears at the top of the page, your 2022-2023 Board has worked together as a team to keep many projects moving forward. Refreshed displays in Homer's Shed and the House, have welcomed increased number of visitors this past year. Many comments have been shared about how the displays 'tell a story' about local history and engage visitors.

Work on displays has also underscored the importance of a solid inventory process, which has been implemented. Board members attended workshops on care and preservation of historical items and measures such as proper storage, and installing black-out shades to reduce light in museum during closed hours have been instituted to help maintain those items in good condition.

ECCHS has participated in more events and activities in our communities. And with new front wheels on the fire engine and beautiful Halflinger horses from Fancy Ferriage by Horse & Carriage of Oakley to pull the Byron Hot Springs wagonette, our presence in community parades continues to delight community members of all ages.

Increased number of Breakers, Docents, Greeters, and Resource Center Crew noted above keep those gears turning, as do the many members who have answered the calls for help to represent ECCHS at community events such as PAL BBQ Cookoff and to help ready the museum and grounds for Opening Day. All of those helping hands make a positive difference!



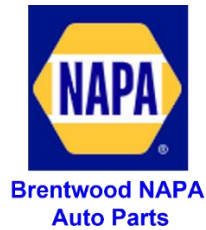
Docent-led Group Tours and ECCHS speakers for clubs and organizations have generated enthusiasm for the museum and encouraged more community members to join.

More exciting projects are 'in the works'  
Watch for them in upcoming newsletters and email blasts!

# Support Those Who Support Us

ECCHS values and appreciates our Business Members.

We encourage all members to frequent these local businesses who support YOUR ECCHS



380 W Country Club Dr. Suite G  
Brentwood, CA 94513  
925-754-OILS (925) 754-6457



1921 Apricot Way, Brentwood



6901 Brentwood Boulevard (Hwy 4) 925.634.5990

Does your business already belong to ECCHS?

**THANK YOU!**

Do you own a business that should belong to ECCHS?

**Join today!**

Do you work for a business that should belong to ECCHS?

**Encourage them to join!**

Contact Shirley McCall for a Business Membership  
application

[membership@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:membership@eastcontracostahistory.org) or 925-634-4049

**Do You Know?**

**Area Code 925**

Area codes were established in 1947.  
CA had 3 area codes: 213, **415**, 916

In 1991, 415 area code was split. East  
Bay Area was assigned area code **510**

In 1998, 510 split. East of Berkeley  
Hills was assigned **925**.

**415 + 510 = 925**



## Memorial Donations



A gift to East Contra Costa Historical Society is a special way to remember or honor friends and loved ones.

The person's name will be honored on a plaque displayed on the Rose Garden Memorial Board.

### January – May, 2023

Honoring	From
Lucille Ambrosino	Rich & Kim Ambrosino
John Bushman	Kin & Mary Lou Klovee
Ray Carter	Kathy Hampton
Kathy Leighton	Rich & Kim Ambrosino Kathy Bushman Family of Richard & Helen Cakebread Kathy Hampton Ken & Mary Lou Klovee Cathy Massoni Shirley McCall RoseAnne Yanes
Anthony Massoni	Mark & Sharon Johnson
Patrick McHenry	Ken & Mary Lou Klovee

## Buy-A-Brick

Engraved bricks border the sidewalk of the Resource Center. The bricks can honor family members, pets, organizations, or others.

**\$100 per brick**

Contact Kathy Bushman  
530-519-2404

or Shirley McCall  
925-634-4049



Click here for a Brick Purchase Form

### Thank You to our Brick Donors

Steve & Sherri Ayers	for John Ayers
Phyllis Conary	for Kathy Leighton
Alan & Randi McCall	for Lynette Hanberg
Shirley McCall	for Ray Carter for Peter Holdiman
Debra Medina	for Porfirio Medina for Donna Medina

### Thank You for Financial Donations

Argonaut Book Shop	Diana Thomas
Connie Conover	The Men's Club
Juli DelBarba Favalora	

## Bakeless Sale – Thanks!

ECCHS wishes to express our thanks to the following members who donated to the Bakeless Sale which so far has raised about \$2,400. Not only did ECCHS benefit from this fund raiser, but no one had to turn on their ovens on these hot summer days!

Roger & Mary Kay Aldous	Earline Dal Porto
Frank & Diane Alexander	& Vicki DellColletti
Tony & Cheryl Allegro	Bob & Terry Damico
Kim & Rich Ambrosino	Dewey DeMartini
Joanne Ashmore	Bill & Jan Ebersole
Steve & Sherri Ayers	Robert Fletcher III
Lilly Beatty	Steve & Margaret Guettettaz
Kathy Bushman	Gursky Ranch
Nick & Kathy Canata	Frank Hill
Billie Casey	Mark & Sharon Johnson
Gladice Celoni	Dr. R. Paul Krey
Pat Cheney	Marylin Lamport
Jean Chrestenson	Christine Lerch & Roger McMasters
Blanche Clark	Jim & Lynn Machado
Linda Cseak	Richard & Jayne Marchioni
Linda Curran	Orlando & Megan Martinez

Cathy Massoni
Alan & Randi McCall
Shirley McCall
Cindy McMillan
Helen Myers
Bob & Sue Olsen
Dawn Onalfo
Erica Pantle
M.J. Rock
Leslie Servin
Dennis & Sheila Sparacino
Marilyn Stacy
Dorothy Strauch
Debra Thomas
Nancy Treichelt
Peter & Jane Wolfe



# Resource Center Treasures



*As photographed by Dorothea Lange, an American documentary photographer and photojournalist, best known for her Depression-era work for the Farm Security Administration*

## Davis Auto Camp

One of the last local vestiges of the many farm camps of the 1930's & 1940's in our area is the small area along Marsh Creek at SE corner of Brentwood Boulevard and Sunset Road.

Commonly known as Davis Camp, it was established by Cal Davis who came to Brentwood from Oklahoma and saw an empty lot full of trash, but he saw more than that. He saw a place where people could live with dignity and respect while they worked toward a better life in the fertile fields of East Contra Costa County as they fled from lost jobs and farms during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl of 1930's.

Over the years there were probably thousands of families who lived at Davis Camp. Most were from the states of Oklahoma and Arkansas, but there were families from other states as well.

My grandparents were one of those families. Dewey and Frankie Wilson arrived at Davis Camp with four small children after hearing from other family members about work and a place to live. They were hard-working, honest people who lost their homes due to circumstances beyond their control. They were not seeking a handout, but rather opportunity to work and raise their children with a brighter future.

I began researching Davis Camp at the Historical Society because of their story, soon realizing it was the story of countless others who arrived in Davis Camp with hope and a promise of work. I began on the advice of Kathy Leighton by going through page after page of decades of old newspapers stored at the Resource Center. I soon realized I had worked with a Davis descendant, Frank Davis. With the help of Steve Verduzco and his Our Town Brentwood, Ca Facebook page, I soon connected with Frank and shared three days of interviewing Frank and his wife Hiwanah. One of those days was spent sitting behind the currently boarded up Davis Camp store.

Listening to and recording Frank's memories of living there, I soon saw a common story develop. It is the story of Cal Davis, who came to Brentwood from Oklahoma and saw an empty place people could live while they looked for work. With Brentwood's approval Cal slowly turned that lot into a community: A community where everyone helped one another, sharing food they brought from the fields they worked in, sharing stories of their lives, and helping one another when children were sick. There were dances on Saturday night and foot races on Sunday afternoon. A large table was set up on Thanksgiving Day and hundreds of people shared Thanksgiving dinner. They suffered sickness and floods, but they suffered together.

Cal Davis would drive a sick person to Stockton for medical treatment and pay for that treatment himself. He soon had tents for people to live in, a grocery store, bathrooms, showers, and laundry rooms. As my grandmother said, "No one was hungry, chickens ran in the yard, and fruit and vegetables the farmers had shared with the workers were brought home to share with the community."

Many of the descendants of the families who lived at Davis Camp still live in the area. Cal Davis saw an empty lot full of trash and imagined it a place for people to stay while they sought work, but he could not have imagined what he had truly started, a community with a long future and a permanent place in Brentwood's history.

*Did your family come to this area during time  
of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl?*

*ECCHS is seeking information on ALL local farm camps of this period.*

**Contact us!**

Email: [ecchs@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:ecchs@eastcontracostahistory.org) Call/Text: 925-963-6440

*This article written by  
Sharon Ellingson,  
Oral Historian  
for ECCHS.*





# 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Community BBQ

September 10, 2023

2:00 – 4:00 pm

Enjoy an afternoon with friends and family at the Museum

## Good Food

BBQ Tri-Tip   Corn-on-the-cob  
Tomato Salad   Beans   Dessert



\$35/Dinner

\$15 ages 6-12

Under 6 free

Docent led tours through House & Homer's Shed  
Lessons in Eden Plain Schoolhouse ~ Music ~ Raffle Prizes

BBQ Tickets will be mailed to members by August 1



East Contra Costa Historical Society  
P.O. Box 202  
Brentwood, CA 94513

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BRENTWOOD, CA  
PERMIT 42

Thank you for subscribing to the digital version of Los Meganos

Savings on printing and mailing costs  
directly benefit the ECCHS Operational Budget

## Museum Greeters Needed!

We need friendly faces to welcome visitors to the museum.

*You can help out your museum in this easy and fun way.*

Contact [docents@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:docents@eastcontracostahistory.org)

