



# LOS MEGANOS

Newsletter of East Contra Costa Historical Society

Volume 24, Issue 1

February, 2024

## In This Issue

**Opening Day Coming!**  
*Saturday, April 6*

**Goals for 2024 & Beyond**  
*Bringing Local History to Life!*

**A Local Treasure**  
**Finds Its Way Home**  
*See Page 3*

**Davis Camp Project**  
*ECCHS works to retain history*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Local History**  
*1,600 Students will be coming!*

**March Member Dinner**  
*Reservations due March 5*

## Looking to 2024

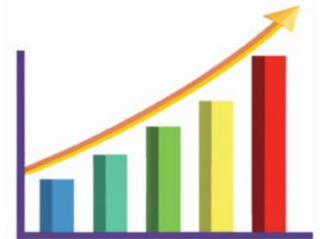
Growth and expansion of projects and activities to **Bring History to Life!** at the ECCHS Museum made great strides in 2023.

During 2023 the Board of Directors focused resources on:

- Increasing membership and active participation of members
- Increasing number of visitors to the museum
- Increasing ECCHS participation in community events
- Improving inventory process and display of our collections
- Upgrading museum buildings and grounds to expand exhibits and make available for community use

**Over 6,000 volunteer hours dedicated to our museum this past year resulted in many gains toward these goals:**

- Membership gained 45 new members and 8 new business members
- A **Members Night at the Museum** with special displays was instituted
- Museum Open Hours welcomed a record **443 visitors** in 2023
- Pole Barn was cemented to create an inviting space to host events
- ECCHS participated in 10 community events *(up from 7 in 2022)*
- 1,623 third graders plus 400+ parents participated in Local History Days
- The Resource Center welcomed local residents and organizations researching community and family histories.



Board review of the 2023 goals not only took stock of current projects and programs, but also identified activities and actions to continue to

**Bring Local History to Life! in exciting ways in 2024**

*See these exciting ideas on page 6*

## Your Board Members

### Elected Officers

**Mary Black**  
President

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

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

**Randi McCall**  
Recording Secretary

**Shirley McCall**  
Corresponding Secretary

**Kathy Bushman**  
Treasurer

**Doreen Forlow**  
Past President

### Directors

Dennis Nunn  
Maggie Northcut  
Tom Snyder  
Sharon Johnson



## Be Part of Making It Happen!

Make a 2024 resolution to engage in at least 1 activity, a workday, or project at the Museum this year!

Keep up with ECCHS online  
[www.eastcontracostahistory.org](http://www.eastcontracostahistory.org)

## Breakers Update

Did you realize that the US Postal Service and the ECCHS Breakers have nearly identical mottos?

***NEITHER SNOW NOR RAIN NOR HEAT NOR GLOOM OF  
NIGHT STAYS THESE COURIERS FROM THE SWIFT  
COMPLETION OF THEIR APPOINTED ROUNDS***

Forget the snow part and you have in a nutshell what our dedicated crew happily endure in tirelessly restoring, creating, and maintaining projects on the museum grounds a minimum of 104 times a year.

During the winter months it can be bitterly cold and damp, and the pole barn is a wind tunnel that does serve to keep the rain off while we freeze! In the summer months the burning sunshine can only be escaped under its' roof, but many of their jobs must be carried out in the open.

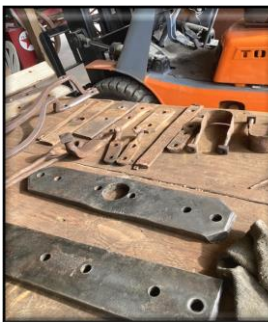
There is not a better gang of workers than **Bob Byer, Dennis Nunn, Tony Campagna, Joe Niec, Tim Karlberg, Tim Kelly, Tom Snyder, Paul Krey**, and emeritus but frequent visitor **Loren Robinson**.



A special shout-out goes to **Joe Senn** who, in spite of being home recuperating from major surgery, continues to be our on-line research guru who scouts out arcane bits and pieces which often can't easily located.

If you should wander out under the pole barn and adjacent open area near the schoolhouse you will find the **Heidorn water wagon** dismantled into several hundred pieces and, other than the water tank and a body frame without wheels, it is basically unrecognizable.

Hundreds of hours have already been spent in reducing this very large wagon into piles of wood and rusted metal which will ultimately be reassembled and become a 100+ year-old water wagon with many original parts.



Special Thank You to



for donating all lumber to rebuild  
the **Heidorn Water Wagon**

## ECCHS Holiday Cheer

### Brentwood Christmas Parade



The Byron Fire Engine, always a crowd favorite, was decked in lights.

### Knightsen Hometown Parade



Ford Tractor was  
decked out in  
greenery for the  
Knightsen Home  
Town parade



### ECCHS Tree Decks the Park



Brentwood City Park  
hosted a forest of trees  
beautifully decorated by  
local organizations.

Special Thank You to  
**Kathy Gursky**  
who coordinated the  
decorating of our  
**Tree of Local History!**

Large bulbs with  
pictures of Brentwood  
history, colorful crate  
labels, and fillers of  
wheat and corn husks  
shared lots of local  
history!



Scan QR code to see  
the pictures and history  
shared on our tree!



## A Local Treasure Finds its Way Home to ECC

In a small box found in a house in San Francisco by a person who recently moved to Brentwood, tucked among momentos and postcards was a small treasure to our local community.

A letter written by Brentwood resident Paul DeMartini to a friend in San Francisco gives insight into life in 1902.

Brentwood, Calif.  
July 27<sup>th</sup> 1902

My dear Friend Fred—

I was glad to receive your kind and welcome letter last week. You told me that you are coming here on Saturday, and I quickly send a letter to you, for you can come here on Monday, before you got a job in San Francisco. I went to the town of Brentwood for waiting for you coming here in three times, but you don't come here so that we felt disappointed.

But you said to me that you got a job & will come here before you are going to the school. We hope that you are surely to come here. You will eat grapes enough if you are coming here. I think you better work in the Rope Factory so you must make money for yourself. I am great, great surprised that your sister got a baby and you are a uncle.

We finished shipping corn for market and then make almost \$750.00 in 4 weeks. Now my horses are eating corn in the cornfields. The fourth of July we did not go to Black Diamond for a celebrated Day, because 6 men were working on the header in my ranch. Now they finished doing so. We got mad. Everyday the wind continues to blow from the West. We don't feel warm except feel warm during our dinner.

Last Sunday the Byrons defeated the Tracys at baseball by a score of 22 to 4 runs. I was a pitcher & helped the Byrons doing against the Tracys. Next Sunday the Byrons will go to Tracy to play baseball against them. Today we are going to Concord for having our big party. There are a couple of people in the big party. We hope that we will have the lots of good times.

I must close My best regards to all your family.

I am  
Yours Truly  
Paul Demartini

P.S. My family give your sister's baby regards. We think that your nephew is fine. We like to see your nephew.

P.S. If you are coming here before the school will be opened,

Do you like to pick the grapes in the boxes? But I try to question you. Answer



**Byron Baseball Team, 1902**

Back row: Bob Fletcher, Clark Scott, Paul DeMartini,  
Dick Fletcher, Frank Elsworth

Middle row: Charley Elsworth,  
Jimmie Torre (manager), Jess Barkley

Front: Sumner Barkley, Tony Larue





## Museum Opening Day

**FREE**

**Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup> 9:00-2:00**

**A fun-filled, family-oriented day of old-fashioned fun!**

Music on the front lawn \* Museum Tours \* Petting Zoo \* Games of 1800's  
Schoolhouse Lessons \* Quilts in Trees \* Homemade Ice Cream  
Covered Wagon \* Caboose \* Fire Engine \* Tractors

### Pancake Breakfast

**9:00-12:00**



Brentwood CA

Start your morning  
with a yummy breakfast  
Pancakes and sausage  
Coffee, hot chocolate, orange juice



**\$10/adult \$25/family**

Purchase advance tickets at [www.eastcontracostahistory.org](http://www.eastcontracostahistory.org)

*Ticket sales open March 1*

Tickets also available on Opening Day at the museum

Thank you to Brentwood Lions & Rotary Clubs

*\*\* All proceeds benefit ECCHS \*\**



## Museum Open Hours April ~ October

**NEW**

**10:00am – 2:00pm**

**NEW**

Open hours were extended to 4 hours each day  
and shifted to earlier times to avoid summer heat

**In 2023, we welcomed 443 week-end visitors to our museum!**

*Prior to pandemic: 50-75 visitors 2022: 284 visitors*

**2024 goal is to continue to increase visitors to our Museum**

**To welcome our visitors, we need Week-end Greeters!**

Week-end Greeters are the welcoming, smiling faces of our museum  
Greeters do not lead tours, but help guide visitors around the grounds.

A brief training is held to acquaint Greeters  
with the museum and historical information.



I would  
like to be  
a Greeter!



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

or call/text 925-206-5087

**ECCHS Members  
Support the  
PAL Program**



Say "Hello"  
to your fellow  
ECCHS members at  
the ticket table  
and salad bar.



**Support your local PAL Program  
Super Bowl Sunday, February 11**

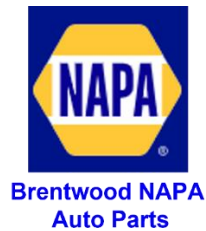
ECCHS members will be volunteering at the BBQ King  
CookOff on Super Bowl Sunday that raises funds for  
the local Police Activities League.

Thank you to **Kim Ambrosino** for organizing our  
helping hands to contribute to our community!

# Support Those Who Support ECCHS

ECCHS values and appreciates our Business Members

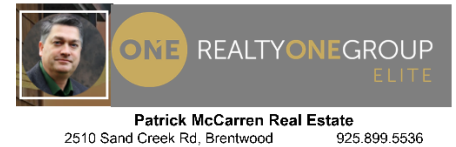
We encourage all members to frequent these local businesses who support YOUR ECCHS



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



1921 Apricot Way, Brentwood



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

# Keeping ECCHS Moving Forward – 2024 & Beyond!

*Strategies and Activities to translate our goals into action and keep ECCHS moving forward.*

## Membership

*Continue: Increase business memberships, participate in chambers of commerce, Downtown Brentwood Coalition*

*Continue: Increase number of members who actively contribute to ECCHS projects, programs, and events.*

**NEW:** Develop strategy to reach out to new community members through realtors

**NEW:** Host business members & non-profit organization meetings as a Member benefit

## Museum Programs and Events

*Continue: Consistent Museum Open Hours with increased number of Greeters, simple handout*

**NEW:** Extend and shift Open Hours to 10:00-2:00

**NEW:** Budget to hire a person to manage opening/closing of museum grounds for Open Hours

**NEW:** Update Museum booklet with fuller local history information – *available for purchase to cover print cost*

**NEW:** Reinstate Opening Day activities on first Saturday of April

**NEW:** Host Summer Sundays at the Museum with themed family activities

*Continue: Reach out to community interest clubs to host activities at museum (Car Show, Photography, Art)*

*Continue: Third grade Local History Days, Christmas on the Farm, BBQ*

## Promotion of ECCHS in Larger Community

*Continue: Promote ECCHS at community events throughout all communities of ECC.*

*Continue: Replicate success of Oakley History Banners by creating Brentwood History Banners*

**NEW:** Develop Satellite mini-Museums in each community served by ECCHS

## Facility Maintenance and Improvements

*Continue: Maintain current buildings and grounds with established cleaning & maintenance schedules*

**NEW:** Work with Harvest Time as they develop land adjacent to museum grounds.

**NEW:** Implement facility use agreement developed in 2023 to rent out grounds on limited basis

## Museum Displays & Collections

*Continue: Review & update permanent and rotating displays throughout museum.*

*Continue: Monthly process to facilitate intake and inventory of donated items for display and/or storage.*

**NEW:** Expand exhibits & displays to include new topics of local history

## Internal Coordination and Communication

*Continue: Procedures and processes to facilitate internal communication*

*Continue: Expand 1 board meeting per quarter to be planning session*

*Continue: Annual 'Thank You' gathering for museum volunteers*

## Financial Solvency

*Continue: Maintain separate Operations and Special Project budgets*

**NEW:** Create targeted fundraising drives and research grants for specific projects, expanded exhibits



*"Many hands make light work."*

*- John Heywood*



Many helping hands are needed to keep our current programs operating and to implement our ambitious **NEW** plans for 2024 to **Bring Local History to Life!**

**You will find colorful raised hands throughout this newsletter.**

Each notes a way YOU can be actively with ECCHS activities



## Local History Days are Coming!

The Museum will once again come alive with the sound of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from local schools starting in April.

East Contra Costa Historical Society works hand-in-hand with Brentwood, Byron, Knightsen, and Oakley School Districts to enhance study of local history for all third grade students. Children tour the museum to learn about the rich history of their local community in the morning, followed by lunch under the Pole Barn.

In the afternoon, that history is brought to life through hands-on activities when students step back into the late 1800's to experience a day in school, play games and do chores of the time period.

1,600 students plus 400 parents participate in the Local History Days at the ECCHS Museum annually. Many report that it is the best field trip ever!



**A special THANK YOU to Brentwood Café**

**who provides all the whipping cream, milk, and eggs for these field trips!**



Want to be part of this program? It's a fun way to bring history to life for all – Plus, where else can you enjoy a cup of homemade ice cream as part of your job!

**32 days of class visits are scheduled for April – May. We need docents!**

**Contact:** Mary Black [docents@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:docents@eastcontracostahistory.org) call/text 925-206-5087

A Docent Orientation/Training will be held March 27<sup>th</sup> 9:00-12:00

## ECCHS Welcomes New Members

J. Dall & Patricia Barley

Cathleen Griebing

Patty Martin

Frank & Gloria Spinelli

Kimberly Barnett

Mark & Cyndee Heer

Doug & Robyn McCall

Steve & Toni Thomas

Michael Berumen

Debra Janis

Joe Niec

Dolores Gamino Ward

Timothy Gallegos

John & Janell Largent

Diane Stater

*\*Correction to previous newsletter: Jyoti and Janak Patel joined with a lifetime membership*

**Welcome aboard! We invite you to be active participants in our events and activities.**

## Have you sent in your 2024 Membership?

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

**Thank You**



for providing year-round garbage collection service



**Thank You**

for your support of ECCHS

# Easy Ways to Give to ECCHS

## Buy-A-Brick

### Look for Bricks Recognizing These Community Members

Irv & Carolyn Sherman  
*purchased by Charles & Susan Hamlin*

Laura & Zeke Brooks  
*purchased by Patty & Dennis Loosli*

John & Barbetta Pastor  
*purchased by Rick Pastor*

Susannah & John Meyer

Patrick & Donnalee McHenry  
*purchased by Richard & Meredith Tiras*

Cora & Russell Harris

LUHS Class of 1973



Recognize a family member, organization, pet with a brick at the Museum!

**Contact:** Kathy Bushman 530-519-2404 or Shirley McCall 925-634-4049

Donation \$100  
per brick

## Make a Memorial Donation



A gift to East Contra Costa Historical Society is a special way to remember or honor friends and loved ones. The family of the individual will be notified (*no amount will be mentioned*). The person's name will be honored on a plaque displayed on the Rose Garden Memorial Board.

### Memorial Donations October thru December, 2023

Honoring	From	Honoring	From
Alta Ackerman	Norma Lewis	Barbara Brandt	Gladice Celoni
	Linda Taylor	Earline Dal Porto	Linda Taylor
Mary Ambrosino	Linda Taylor	Kathy Leighton	Linda Taylor
Anthony Massoni	Linda Taylor	Patrick McHenry	Linda Taylor

## Contribute to our Display Collections

### Artifacts & Documents

Kelsey Aguiar	Steamer Trunk
Bob Byer	Military knives from WWII & Korea
Roberta Byer	Handmade quilt
Tony Campagna	Parts & supplies for restoration projects
Janet Drumm	Iron & Slate
Dwellely Family	Indian basket collection
Lynn Fleming	Washing machine ringer & stand
Barbara Graves	Picture of fruit packing
Kathy Gursky	Beiber silk cord haners
Lynn Gursky	Clothes drying rack
Virginia Karlberg	Fort Cheyenne game
Ken Klovee	Wooden crates
Chris Lauritzen	Engine from Ferry, Father's log book
Charlene Margesson	Woman's sidesaddle
Porfirio Medina	10 Railroad calendars
Linda Mitchell	Ceramic tea pot
Harumi Murata	Map
Gary Ross	Brunswick phonograph
Frank & Gloria Spinelli	Oakley Fire Dept paraphernalia
Sandra Torres	Charro pants
Joe Tovar	Baseball scorebook, newspapers
Cathy Voortman	Digital photographs
Jane Wolfe	Brentwood Hotel guest register



*Maggie Hurtado donated 3 theater seats originally found in basement of Delta Theater*

### Monetary Donations

Anonymous Givers Foundation
Bloomfield Vineyards
Gladice Celoni
Sharon Ellingson
Juli Favalora
Robert Fletcher III
Traci Gibbons
LUHS Class of 1973
Barry & Charlene Margesson
Ron & Shirley Nunn
Janak & Jyoti Patel
Jerry & Jo Tennant
Peter & Jane Wolfe



# EAST CONTRA COSTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## March Member Dinner

Sunday, March 10

1:30 Gathering    2:30 Dinner

Presentation - TBA in reservation form

San Joaquin Yacht Club, Bethel Island



### Corned Beef Dinner

Corned Beef  
Cabbage  
Potatoes, Carrots  
Cornbread  
Cake

Cost: \$35.00

*Reservation forms and self-addressed envelopes  
will be mailed to all members.*

**Reservations due by Tuesday, March 5**

## ECCHS and City of Brentwood Work Together to Honor Migrant History



As development starts on the site of what was once **Davis Auto Camp**, East Contra Costa Historical Society has been working with City of Brentwood to design an area to honor the great influx of farm workers to our area from the Midwest during the Depression and Dust Bowl and from Mexico as part of the Bracero Program. These workers came for work and contributed to the agricultural heritage of our area.

What began as personal research into her family story by ECCHS Oral Historian **Sharon Ellingson** soon extended into deeper research on the history of camps as well as clusters of houses to meet housing needs for the influx of population.

ECCHS shared the important role camps and housing clusters such as Davis Camp holds to our local history with the Brentwood City Council and was pleased with their enthusiastic positive response to a proposal to dedicate a small area to honor this important part of our past. We have been meeting and will continue to provide content for interpretive panels to be placed near the trails on the Davis Camp property.

### ECCHS is asking for the community's help!

We are compiling a list of camps and packing sheds that were throughout East County.

Do you have photos, memorabilia, documents, and memories you, your parents, grandparents or any other relatives or acquaintances have of those times and or buildings and grounds?

Please email all to [resourcecenterecchs@gmail.com](mailto:resourcecenterecchs@gmail.com). If you have anything you would like to bring in, please make arrangements via email so someone will be present to receive it.



*See full content of Sharon's  
story on Davis Camp in  
June, 2023 newsletter.*

# Museum Cleaning Day

House, Grounds, & Vehicles

Saturday, March 30 9:00-12:00



Our museum opens to the public & for third grade field trips in April  
We want our grounds, vehicles, and buildings to be shiny and clean



**All helping hands are welcome!**

I can help dust, wash, sweep, polish

**Contact:** Sheila Sparacino [ecchs@eastcontracostahistory.org](mailto:ecchs@eastcontracostahistory.org) or call 925-354-8376

**Thank you for being an EMAIL subscriber!**

*Money saved on printing and mailing costs  
will be used on museum projects!*



**Watch for Your March Member Dinner  
Reservation Form in the mail.**

Reservations due March 5