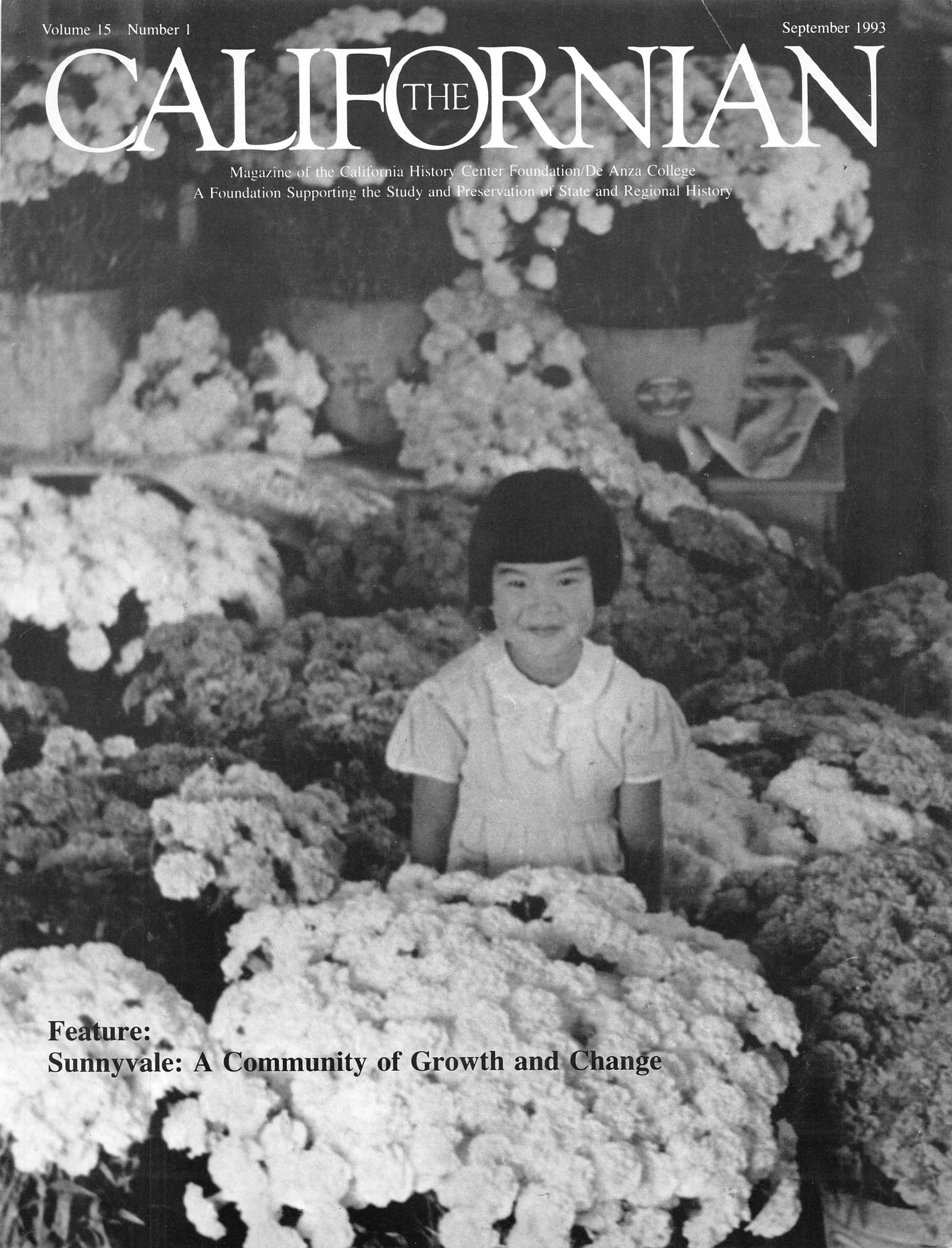


Volume 15 Number 1

September 1993

# CALIFORNIA THE ORNIAN

Magazine of the California History Center Foundation/De Anza College  
A Foundation Supporting the Study and Preservation of State and Regional History



**Feature:**  
**Sunnyvale: A Community of Growth and Change**

## A Change at the Helm

As readers of **The Californian** know, the California History Center Foundation's host institution, De Anza College, has been struggling with serious financial problems as a result of California's economic recession. For a time it looked as though the history center would be irreparably damaged by college financial cutbacks, and many of you came to our support with letters and phone calls. Thanks to your help and support from historians and history organizations across the state and nation, we were able to reach a compromise agreement between the college and foundation this spring which renews the relationship between us and we think will move the history center forward in a positive way.

The major part of this agreement is a change at the helm of the history center. On July 1, Kathi Peregrin officially takes over as the Executive Director of the California History Center & Foundation. I will remain affiliated with the center as Director Emeritus and Historical Advisor, continuing to represent the history center before state and national historical organizations as well as advising staff on the content and quality of historical exhibitions, publications, and other programs. My principal duties, however, will be full time instruction in De Anza's history department.

I believe the agreement we've reached serves everyone well. The history center and foundation will continue to receive full funding for two staff positions, supplies, a classroom program, and facility support. The college will continue to see history center activities and programs benefit from the advice of a professional historian. Kathi Peregrin has the chance to bring her leadership to the center and foundation, and I am able to make a move back to teaching, research, and writing, all of which I have wished I had much more time to pursue.

It has been a great pleasure and sincere honor to have served as director of the California History Center Foundation since September 1985. During the past eight years, I believe the foundation has enhanced its reputation across Santa Clara County as well as throughout California. It has carried out a

wide variety of important and highly praised history programs, including development of award winning exhibits and publication of award winning books. Its library and archive has blossomed and become a highly professional research center under the guidance of Lisa Christiansen. As a result, its holdings have been expanded substantially with donations of very important collection of books, manuscripts, and photographs. All in all, I could not be prouder of my association with the history center.

I know that you will extend to Kathi Peregrin the same strong support and friendship that you have given me over the past few years. I look forward to continuing to work with the history center and foundation in my new capacity as historical advisor.

Warmest regards,  
**James C. Williams**

### Cover:

*Tsunegusu Yonemoto immigrated to Sunnyvale from Japan in 1917. The family opened the Yonemoto Carnation Nursery which had green houses on North Murphy Avenue. Kiiko Yonemoto is shown standing among the carnations in the sorting and bunching shed. Photo courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.*



*Volunteers from the history center helped out KTEH, Channel 54, during its March pledge drive. This was the second year our group donated its time to another worthy cause.*



# CALENDAR

**9/14** **CHC opens to the public.** History center hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays; closed from noon to 1 p.m.

**9/16** **CHC is closed.**

**9/20** **De Anza College classes begin.**

**10/4** **Lecture by Charles Sullivan at the history center.** Free. Seating is very limited; call 408/864-8712 for reservations.

**10/28, 29, 30** **"Little Shoppe of CHC":** handcrafts and specialized services on sale to benefit the history center; sponsored by the CHCF volunteers and supporters. Call for details.

**11/12** **Veterans Day observed.** CHC is closed; De Anza classes do not meet.

**11/25, 26** **Thanksgiving holiday.** CHC is closed; De Anza classes do not meet.

**12/3** **Christmas party at the history center;** sponsored by the CHC De Anza College part-time faculty. Call 408/864-8712 for information and reservations.

**12/10** **Fall quarter ends.**

**12/13-1/4** **CHC is closed for the holidays.**

## It's Coming, So Watch for It!

### Little Shoppe of

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a 3-day fund raising event sponsored by volunteers and supporters of the California History Center & Foundation featuring arts, crafts, skills and services. The Little Shoppe will be located in the California History Center Trianon Building.

9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Thursday, October 28

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Friday, October 29

10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Saturday, October 30

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## State and Regional History

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*As a benefit of membership in the California History Center Foundation, the center provides registration assistance to members who are taking only history center classes. All other students wishing to take history center classes — or members taking classes in other departments — must register through the De Anza College Admissions and Records Office. CHCF members who would like registration assistance must come to the center to register. Members may register 9 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m., Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays beginning September 14.*

*For complete course details, including times, dates and fees, please see the De Anza College fall schedule of classes.*

### **PLEASE NOTE**

In addition to the courses listed below, the history center will be offering three sections of the four-unit, general survey, History of California class during fall quarter. The two day sections meet at 8:30-9:20 and 10:30-11:20 M-Th and the evening section meets 6:20-10 p.m. Mondays.

### **The Architecture and Times of Hearst's San Simeon:** *Betty Hirsch/Skip Norfolk*

The vision and fortune of William Randolph Hearst and the genius and energy of architect Julia Morgan combined to provide California with one of the most exotic mansions in American architectural history — literally a museum housing one of America's finest collections of European art. Class discussion will focus on Hearst and his world and on San Simeon as a symbol of the man and his success. The class will spend two and one-half days and two nights in the San Simeon area and will explore the castle, its grounds, and the surrounding towns.

### **Natural History of the Santa Cruz Mtns.:** *Tom Taber*

This course is an interdisciplinary study of the relationship between human history and the natural environment, using the Santa Cruz Mtns. to characterize significant trends in California history. Class sessions will include a general overview of the geologic, climatic, and ecological characteristics of the coastal mountains. Students will focus on the Ohlone Indians, Spanish Colonization, the Mexican period, logging history, the encroachment of urban development, and the increasing interest in environmental protection, including the establishment of public parks and trails. Field trips will offer a first-hand look at the themes presented in class.

### **Wine and its Impact on California Culture:** *Charles Sullivan*

The California wine industry has had a major impact on the culture of the state from the earliest days 200 years ago to the present wine boom. This course is for the student who wants to learn the very basic factual information about California wine, how it is grown, produced and influences culture. The material is presented in a geographical and historical setting.

### **South East Bay:** *Betty Hirsch*

South East Bay covers Southern Alameda County including Sunol, Niles, Fremont and surrounding areas and will focus on community development, significant historical events and the contributions made by pioneer settlers and other important



*On May 17, 1900, a group of about 30 people under the leadership of Andrew P. Hill, camped in Big Basin for three days near the base of what became known as Slippery Rock. The Sempervirens Club was formed to work for preservation of the Big Basin as a public park and for the conservation of its natural beauty. Courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library Archive.*





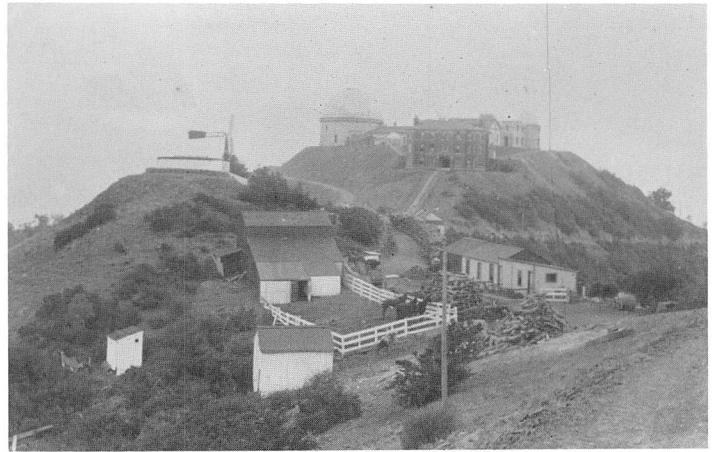
*Overlooking San Jose, 1890. Courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library & Archive.*

historical figures. Field study will highlight Sunol Water Temple designed by Willis Polk (twin to Pulgas Water Temple in Woodside); Niles Canyon Railway, featuring rides aboard vintage trains; Niles Railway Depot Museum; site of Essanay Studios, pioneer movie studio where Chaplin films were made; the beautiful Ardenwood Farm at Christmas, a working farm using authentic Victorian farming tools and implements; Coyote Hills Regional Park, site of Indian shellmound, and the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

**The Birth of California Narrow Gauge:** *Bruce MacGregor*  
Instructor Bruce MacGregor returns to the California History Center to offer this popular course which enables students to explore and understand the economic, social and technological forces which shaped the development of the first narrow gauge railroads in the state. From the North Pacific Coast of Marin County to the Monterey, Salinas, Santa Cruz and Felton railroads, students will also get a look at the fascinating “thread” of Carter Brothers, the first rolling stock, bridge and shop contractor for the short lines to be studied. Students will visit various sites studied.

**Historic San Diego:** *Chatham Forbes*

From its arduous early days as imperial Spain’s first California foothold, San Diego has benefited from strategic geography, a sheltered harbor, a fine pastoral hinterland. Its historical growth and development will be studied in the light of economic and



*One of the first photos taken of Mt. Hamilton's Lick Observatory, late 1800s. Courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library & Archive.*

industrial dynamics responding to political and social initiatives. A weekend field study trip is planned for mid-October.

**Economic History of San Jose:** *Chatham Forbes*

Students will be presented with a historical overview of California’s first civil settlement, with primary emphasis given to the shaping of economic, social, and political life by the successive industrial bases, from the earliest time to the present. Saturday field trips will enhance the classroom experience.

**James Lick and His Observatory:** *Jerry Ifft*

Eccentric millionaire and California philanthropist James Lick is the focus of this course. Lick grew up in Pennsylvania, spent years as a piano maker in South America, and made a fortune in San Francisco real estate. He used some of his money to build Lick House, the largest hotel in the West. But it was Lick’s will that brought him lasting fame. He bequeathed money for an observatory on Mt. Hamilton, east of San Jose. The telescope was the largest of its time and the first on the mountain top. Students will visit both the Lick Mansion and Observatory.

**Sunnyvale:**

**A Community of Growth and Change**

by Mary Jo Ignoffo

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*The following article is an excerpt from the book Sunnyvale - From the City of Destiny to the Heart of Silicon Valley. The California History Center Foundation is in the last stages of raising the money to publish the book this coming year. Any donor wishing to contribute to the fund raising efforts should contact the history center. Donors of \$125 or more will receive a free copy of the book and donors of \$500 or more will receive, in addition to a free copy, their name listed in the front of the publication.*

Many newcomers to Sunnyvale were also recent immigrants to the United States. Some ethnic groups, such as the Portuguese, Spanish, French and Italians, were able to work as tenant farmers with supplementary work in the canneries. Eventually, with money earned, they bought their own farms, and planted orchards to join the cycle of production. The Japanese, however, were victims of “yellow peril” hysteria sweeping California in the early part of the twentieth century, and were subject to the Alien Land Laws of 1913 which disallowed landownership by Asian aliens.

The San Jose Grange, which included Sunnyvale farmers, sponsored a meeting in August of 1913 to develop a plan to advertise Santa Clara County in order to draw “a good class of settlers” to the area. They were quite fearful, however, of “Asiatics and other unassimilable foreigners.” The Grangers felt that “it is pretty clear that, as far as farming is concerned, the only people worth while for us to attract here are those able to purchase small tracts of land which can be improved and cultivated by the family help.” Their sentiments were transparently anti-Japanese, merely reflecting the intent of the Alien Land Laws. The restrictions caused an uproar in Japan and in Washington, D.C., however, because politicians from both countries were attempting to maintain trade relations. Some Japanese farmers skirted the laws by purchasing land in their American-born child’s name or in the name of a fictitious corporation.

Tsunegusu Yonemoto immigrated to Sunnyvale from Japan in 1917 with his wife and fifteen-year-old son. The couple had another son in 1919, and since they were disallowed from owning land, they purchased it in the name of their American baby son. The 1920 census manuscript clearly notes Mr. Yonemoto as a renter, while his ten-month old baby owned the land, free and clear. The family opened the Yonemoto Carnation Nursery which eventually had eight green houses on the North Murphy Avenue property. The Immigration Act of 1924 put an end to additional

Japanese immigration and worked to suppress competition posed by already successful Japanese farmers who were independently shipping their own products to San Francisco. By this time, the Japanese had clearly grown beyond their status as migrant laborers and they no longer supplied the needed labor force to harvest other farmers’ fruit.

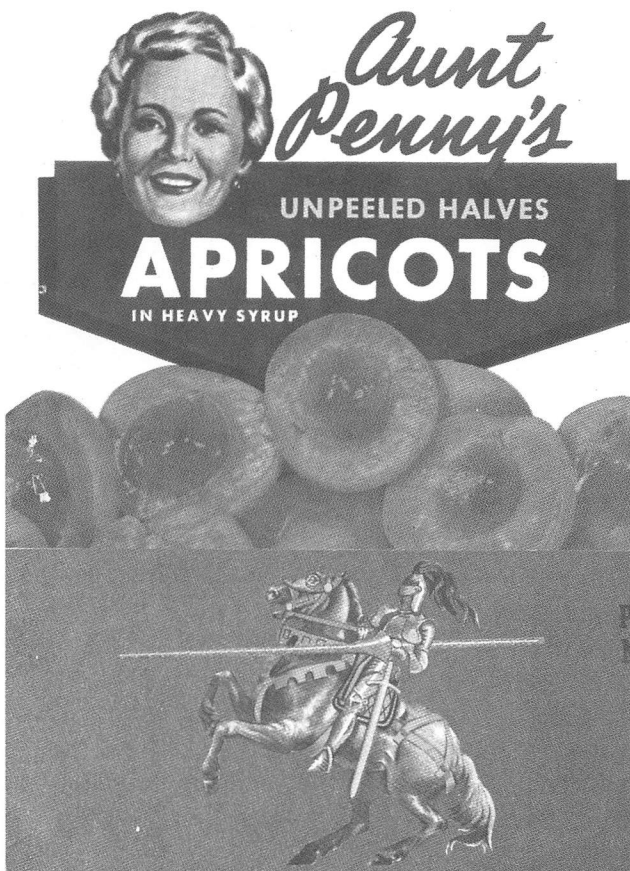
Spaniards were recruited to fill the labor gap left by the Japanese, and by 1916 a Spanish enclave had emerged in Sunnyvale and Mountain View. A large group of poor families had sailed from Spain in search of work in the sugar cane fields of Hawaii. They were promised grants of land after five years of labor, but the promises proved false. James Gil, the son of one of the Spanish immigrants, recalled his father’s disillusionment with Hawaii:

*According to my dad, when the ship arrived in Honolulu, they herded all of the Spaniards to a fumigation plant. They all stripped down and were fumigated with chemicals. . . . Looking back, a lot of the Spaniards were promised that if they stayed five years, they would get an acre of land, plus the house they were living in. I haven’t heard to this day of anyone getting the acre promised.*

Two dissatisfied men left Hawaii and ended up working in apricot



*The Yonemoto family stands among the carnations in one of the Yonemoto Carnation Nursery greenhouses on North Murphy Avenue. Courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.*



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1 LB. 14 OZ.  
OR 850 GRAMS

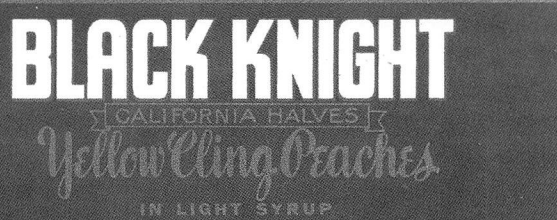


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SUNNYVALE,  
CALIF.  
NET WEIGHT 1 LB. 13 OZ.  
OR 822 GRAMS



PRODUCT  
OF U.S.A.



Sunnyvale was in the heart of prime agricultural land and was the home to numerous canneries. Labels and photo courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.

and cherry orchards in Sunnyvale. Word got back to their countrymen in Hawaii of the better working conditions, and almost the entire group of Spaniards transplanted itself to the Sunnyvale-Mountain View area.

Within a few years, many Spanish families formed the Sociedad Cervantes Espanola which was an association to raise funds to support Spanish families in time of crisis or death. The Sociedad became a social focal point of the Spanish community which sponsored dances and dramatic presentations. During the 1930s, the Sociedad purchased a former hardware store as a new headquarters which was torn down and replaced in the 1950s. At one time, 500 families belonged to Sociedad Cervantes Espanola.


World War I had a somewhat unexpected impact on Sunnyvale. Fruit growers, canners, and packers initially feared that the war would drain the local manpower, thus disabling the fruit industry. What they did not expect, however, was a huge increase in the demand for canned and preserved fruit and vegetables. The troops were in need of nutritious food that would keep for months at a time. These expanding markets fostered the commercialization of

fruit orchards in Sunnyvale which in turn demanded greater numbers of cheap seasonal laborers for both the canneries and farms.

The canneries geared up for increased production and urged farmers to produce as large a crop as possible. The farmers argued that they should only produce what they and their families could harvest because the cost of labor was so high. They complained that the restrictions against Asian immigration to California, which they had supported a few short years earlier, left them without a labor force and they lobbied for permitting Chinese laborers into the country as farm workers. Their reasons for wanting the restrictions lifted were not based on the best interest of the immigrants, but rather a desire to continue to expand the fruit industry. A *Sunnyvale Standard* editorial called for "contracts with coolie brokers . . . for three years at a fixed wage rate, and at the end of their term . . . [they should be] returned to their native land." The writer continued that "Japanese laborers could not be managed so easily, and once here they would become



# To THE PRUNE and Apricot GROWERS



colonists and remain” which was completely undesirable.

When the United States entered the war in Europe, a sense of patriotism surged in the country, along with strong anti-communist feelings. The conservatism extended to organized labor which was viewed as socialist, and therefore a threat and an affront to patriotic Americans. Thus, when labor disputes erupted at the canneries in neighboring San Jose and Santa Clara in July of 1917, and cannery workers struck, with the support of agricultural workers, tons of fruit rotted on the trees and the canneries came to a standstill. County business leaders were convinced that “outside agitators” and radicals were conspiring to destroy their crops so they bypassed Governor William Stephens and demanded federal troops to guard the canneries. The strike did not spread to Sunnyvale, but it did scare the town’s canners and growers. They did not want any interference in meeting increased demand for canned fruit during the War. They began to have high hopes that the war would permanently expand the canned fruit market which was being advertised nationally in nutrition education campaigns to encourage the general public to buy canned fruits and vegetables.

All the while, farmers felt pressure from both labor and canners. Farmers Union Corporation, a growers’ cooperative which had been formed in San Jose in 1874, had some Sunnyvale members and the National Grange had a chapter in Sunnyvale. These cooperatives were designed to help farmers protect themselves against canners, shippers and distributors taking too much of their hard earned profit as author Yvonne Jacobson put it, “so that David could have at least a toehold against Goliath.” The farmers sought more control over marketing their product. After the strikes in neighboring towns in the summer of 1917, Sunnyvale growers and town officials saw the need for a local growers’ cooperative.

The growers in Sunnyvale were soundly criticized for not forming cooperatives sooner. A *Standard* editorial claimed that the town would enjoy great stability and be less susceptible to outside influences or agitation if growers banded together to garner more profit for themselves and passed a portion of it on to labor.

*Farmers are recognized to be the slowest people on earth to get together for mutual protection. . . . ; the higher cost of living for the laborer must be taken into consideration. . . resulting in a better standard of living for all if some benefit is passed on to the laborers.*

The Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce and the local growers met in December of 1917 and outlined details to establish a packing-

house for the Prune and Apricot Growers’ Association (later called Sunsweet) in order to eliminate the “middleman.” Outspoken local advocates included banker Charles Spalding, suffragist Mrs. Sophie Durst, and local shopkeeper Mr. L. H. Vishoot.

Local growers’ cooperatives, together with the end of the war, soothed the wounds at home inflicted by labor unrest, but only temporarily. Sunnyvale veterans returned home to work the land, and many of the wartime employees of Joshua Hendy Iron Works went back to orchard work. The war era produced a very complicated network of relationships between farmers, canners, distributors and laborers, which prevailed until after the Second World War when local agriculture began to decline.

More neighborhoods emerged in Sunnyvale as a result of increased productivity at Hendy and the canneries during the war. In the Bayview and McKinley tract, California bungalows were built and occupied by the town’s new workers. The houses had single-car detached garages and front porches under gabled overhangs. The area just south and east of these neighborhoods remained orchards until the 1950s.

A \$17,000 bond issue came before the voters in 1919, which proposed creating a park from a nine-acre grove of oak trees, very possibly the same area where the famous Murphy barbeque was held. Hendy Iron Works contributed \$1,000 in support of the park and the Chamber of Commerce endorsed the project where “on this plot stand some 43 of the best oaks of the grove.” Unfortunately, the voters did not support the bond issue, and therefore the park was never established. The land was eventually divided and sold while the oaks, for the most part, were removed.

Since Sunnyvale’s incorporation in 1912, local business people still dreamed of establishing a deep water port on the Bay. Even in 1920, activity surrounding the proposed port drew crowds. The South Shore Port Company was established in order to build the long awaited port. On a sunny September Sunday in 1920, the company hosted a tour of the former Jagel’s Landing and future Port Sunnyvale. Despite numerous efforts, the port never became a reality, but the idea hung around for decades.

By 1920, the population of the incorporated area of Sunnyvale was 1,676, while the combined total of the township including the unincorporated land was 3,390. Even at this early point, it is clear that a relatively small number of people determined town policy since only those within the incorporated area were eligible



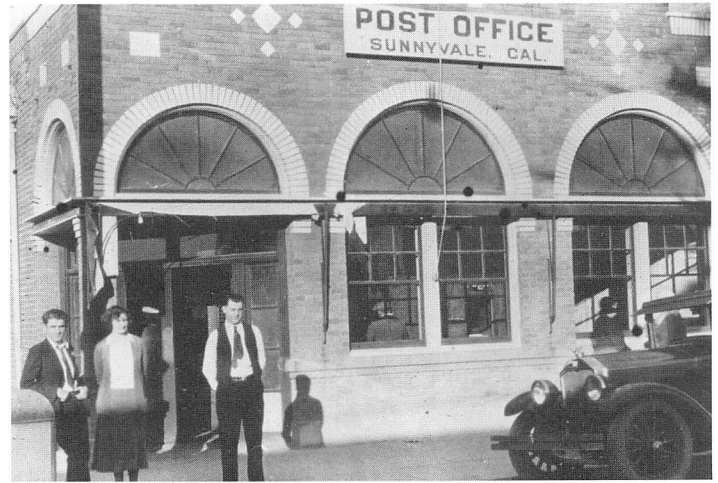
*Photo courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.*

to vote in town elections. Those living on unincorporated land remained uninvolved in town issues, which ultimately was their downfall in the 1940s and 1950s when their votes to preserve farm land would be critical.

Early in the 1920s, it became obvious that the number of high school students would continue to climb, and a high school was needed in Sunnyvale. William H. Weeks, the architect who designed the Spalding's new house, was contracted to draw plans for the new school. During his successful career, Mr. Weeks designed numerous buildings, among them several schools throughout California. In 1925, Fremont High School opened its doors to students for the first time. The building remains today a prime example of Mr. Weeks' work, and is a full-functioning and well maintained school.

Sunnyvale's local government officials also knew that they could no longer function out of the old bank building on Murphy Avenue. Plans were drawn for a new City Hall which was erected at McKinley and Murphy Avenues. The mission style stucco building had a red tile roof and housed municipal court, a library, while its auditorium served as host to numerous social and cultural affairs in Sunnyvale. When construction was complete in 1929, there was no money available for landscaping, so shrubs, cedars and redwoods were donated by local social groups and private citizens.

The Post Office in Sunnyvale had grown to keep pace with the town since the days of the general delivery box in Fred Cornell's store. By 1917, Sunnyvale had its own Post Office building on Washington Street, built by Charles Stowell, across from today's Sunnyvale Town Center. Young Joe Stanich, son of Eastern European immigrants, was hired by Postmaster Charles Fuller, for odd jobs. His first duty was to raise the flag every morning and stoke the lobby stove fire so patrons would be comfortable when the office opened. Joe became the delivery man when he loaded up the outgoing mail on the horse-drawn buggy to take the mail to catch the morning train. Mail was sorted into two pouches, one "North" and the other "South" and placed in a



*Photo courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.*

"catcher pouch" for the appropriate San Francisco or San Jose-bound train. A "mail crane" stood near the rail tracks, and the catcher pouch hung on the crane so mailcar workers on the train could get the mail even on those trains not scheduled to stop in Sunnyvale. When the mailcar workers "caught" the pouch, they also "kicked off" another, bound for Sunnyvale. An occasional error in this intricate system sometimes caused crumpled, chewed-up letters, but for the most part, was quite effective. Joe Stanich worked for Sunnyvale's Post Office until long after the horse and buggy were retired, and he witnessed the transition from general delivery to the first town mail carriers, Bill Golick and Willard Peterson. They split the town in two and delivered to every house and business.

Sunnyvale had several outspoken and colorful people who played their part in the town's political and social circles. Edwina (Cochrane) Benner was born at Butcher's Corners to Mary and Welford Cochrane in 1885 and was a lifelong influence in Sunnyvale. In 1909, Edwina married Carson Benner, the town's barber, and she worked for many years as office manager at Libby, McNeill & Libby. In 1920, Mrs. Benner was elected to the Board of Trustees, an early version of the City Council, and in 1924 she began her term as mayor of Sunnyvale. She is credited with being the first woman mayor in California, and she served a second term as mayor in 1937 and 1938. She was a continual member of the Board of Trustees from 1920 to 1945. During World War II, in addition to her many other responsibilities, Mrs. Benner was commissioner of finance and public works in Sunnyvale, chairperson of the local branch of the American Red Cross, and an active member of the Chamber of Commerce. So popular was Edwina Benner that in the 1950s, the school district named an elementary school in her honor: Edwina Benner School. When Mrs. Benner died in 1955, Mayor Ernest Stout ordered the city hall flags be flown at half mast in her memory.

Many southern and eastern European immigrants to Sunnyvale maintained their ties with families from the "old country." Luka and Kate (Gricich) Pavlina met in Sunnyvale, although their

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families had originated in what we have known as Yugoslavia. Luka (later anglicized to Louis) was from a small town outside Dubrovnik on the Adriatic coast, while Kate was from the village of Majhovi. They married in 1922 and struggled financially until they were able to purchase five acres of orchard for \$8,000 at El Camino Real and Mary Avenue. For a few years, they worked the land themselves, bought additional acreage in the Spalding Tract, and even made their own wine. They socialized with other Eastern European immigrants including the Vidovich and Sevely families. By the 1930s, the Pavlinas needed more help than their family and friends could provide, so like many other farming families, they hired migrant "Okies" and Mexicans to help harvest their annual fruit crop. After World War II, the Pavlinas packed and shipped their "Pavlina Beautys" cherries to Eastern markets.

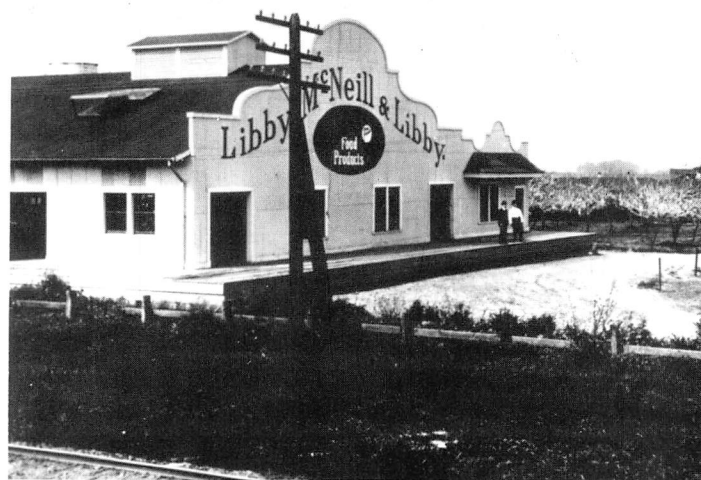
Sam and Nina (D'Amico) Monforte bought forty acres of land at Evelyn and Mary Avenues just after they were married in 1926. Sam, an immigrant from Sicily, had earned money as a bricklayer in San Francisco after the earthquake. For the first several years, the couple could not afford to hire any help and they worked the land themselves, primarily growing prunes. Nina, a seamstress by trade, told her grandchildren that she went overnight from making clothes for the wealthy ladies of Stockton, wearing white kid gloves and four-inch French heels, to driving a tractor! The Monfortes raised their daughter Mary Ann, who attended local schools, and was the organist at St. Martin's Church in Sunnyvale.

Mike and Frieda Kirkish opened a clothing store on Murphy Avenue in 1924. A farmer could buy a pair of overalls for \$1.25 and take home a dress for his wife for under \$4.00. Across the street, Billy Wetterstrom's Barber Shop opened about 1925. The shop's back room had a bathtub that was very busy late on Saturday afternoons when men would buy a shave and a bath before dances at Stowell Hall or a movie at Schurra's Sunnyvale Theatre. Seijo's Bakery opened in 1929, and John and Augustina Seijo provided baked goods for Murphy Avenue patrons. Schurra's Candy Store maintained a faithful patronage, and a few years later, folks would shop at Gimenez Grocers and have their car serviced at Raines Garage.

Rose Zamar, a young Lebanese woman, came to Sunnyvale in 1929, even though she did not have legal immigration status. Initially she lived with her sister and brother-in-law, Caramie and John Sayig. She worked picking cherries for Ruel Charles Olson, an orchardist and son of one of Sunnyvale's earliest couples, Charles and Hannah Olson. Rose married the young Olson and

they raised their children to grow up loving the trees and a farmer's way of life. Rose sold cherries from the Olson Cherry Stand on El Camino Real from the 1930s until well into the 1980s. Her presence became synonymous with cherry season for generations of Santa Clara County cherry lovers, a tradition carried on by her children and grandchildren.

The ever-present search for cheap migrant labor was solved for a time when Filipinos first arrived in Sunnyvale in 1923 and began working in the orchards. They were almost exclusively young, single men and were paid lower wages than any other immigrant group. California agriculturalists had learned that the Japanese had gained much of their economic independence and stability because they established families when picture brides came from Japan. Laws against interracial marriage applied to Filipinos as well as the Chinese and Japanese until the passage of the War Brides Act after the Second World War, and landownership restrictions kept Sunnyvale Filipinos from buying property. Both sets of laws kept Filipinos at the lowest possible social and economic status and ensured that farmers had a ready supply of farm workers. Growers preferred that Filipinos return to the Philippines when their economic usefulness expired each season. But the Philippine Islands were a United States territory, making Filipinos U.S. Nationals. Thus they had a legal status that protected them from deportation, if not discrimination.



*Courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.*





*By the 1960s industry had begun to overtake the land and many growers were moving their operations out of the valley. Courtesy California History Center Foundation, Stockmeir Library and Archive.*

In the summer of 1930, feeling that they were losing work to Filipinos, white farm workers threatened Sunnyvale growers: “Let go your Filipino help, or we’ll burn you out.” They made good on their threat, and a fire set at the Gallimore ranch in August burned several workers’ cabins. Nineteen-year-old Joaquin Somera was killed in the fire, but the county coroner ruled that the victim was “probably accidentally burned.” The scare tactics were evidently successful because two contracts for 120 farm workers were cancelled that summer and two hundred Filipino workers at canneries were let go.

Libbys had limited the workday to eight hours in 1922 for employees under age eighteen. Adults had a ten-hour workday, and except for those who worked on the sorting belt, were paid a piece rate. Employees who failed to meet the piecework quota were sent home, which was particularly difficult for older workers. Younger workers preferred the piece-rate system because they would be paid more for harder work. However, the higher wage for more work was a double-edged sword because faster work set new speed standards, causing more pressure for the workers.

Workers were never hired for a season but were hired for a particular fruit. This system “kept you a debtor,” as former cannery worker Elizabeth Nicholas recalled. There was no permanence or job security and the worker could not make any complaints if she wanted to be hired for the next fruit. There was simply no other work to be had, particularly for women and older people who were not hired at Hendy Iron Works. Until the formation of a union in 1937, workers were either hired for the

duration of a “pack” or had to line up every morning to hear if they would work that day.

According to Nicholas, a union organizer and worker at Libbys, management gave imported workers from the San Joaquin Valley priority in employment because they lived on site during the season. Local people who wanted to work in the canneries felt that the “imports” got preferential treatment. An avowed communist, Nicholas tried to organize the cannery workers and establish a charter with the AFL. Organizing committees were formed at 28 valley canneries, but Nicholas was fired because of her political affiliation and because she was a union organizer. The growers swayed public opinion in their favor by stressing the link between the union organizers and the Communist Party. It was not until 1939, however, that cannery workers in Sunnyvale were successful in establishing a union under the AFL umbrella, while the dried fruit packers organized with the CIO.

By 1930, the city officials and town merchants recognized that total economic dependence on agriculture was precarious at best. Young George Wilhelmy, a school principal, became mayor in 1930 and he agreed with the general feeling that new industry, specifically the United States Navy with its new dirigible air fleet, would bring long-term stability to the local economy.

*Ignoffo, who has a master’s degree in history, is a board member of both the Heritage Council of Santa Clara County and Sunnyvale Historical Society and Museum Association.*

# ANNUAL REPORT

1992-1993

## Reflections from the President

The '92-'93 year at the California History Center has been an exciting year, albeit a bit of a roller coaster.

Your Board of Trustees met at the beginning of the year for an all-day retreat at Vallombrosa. The retreat was facilitated by Bill Ralston and Jim Pardee from the Harvard Community Partners Program.

All of the board members left this retreat on a high and with lots of ideas and plans on areas we wanted to explore during the year. One which I'm sure you'll hear more of in coming years is a plan (or hope) to take over one of the cottages just north of the history center and expand our library and archives into it.

But almost before we could move on any of the ideas, we had to face the realities of money shortages at De Anza College as well as at the District level. And we devoted the next three months to attempting to minimize the impact of the budget crisis on the history center. Initially the District wanted to cut two of our staff positions. This would have left us with a part-time director and one staff assistant — clearly below the threshold of effectiveness. A compromise solution left us with a full time director and full time staff assistant — Kathi and Janet — and one Director Emeritus — Jim Williams. Jim will take on a full teaching load but will continue to be historical advisor to the center.

In spite of all the concern about money or the lack of it, we managed to have a good year anyway. We started off the year with a walking tour of outstanding architectural homes and buildings in Santa Clara. This tied in nicely with the previous year's exhibit on architectural drawings of early Santa Clara County buildings. In November we presented a special lecture given by Grey Brechin and Robert Dawson in which they compared California in 1915 with our California of today.

Many members remarked on how much they had enjoyed our English Christmas, complete with a tree decorated with Victorian ornaments, "olde" English food and merriment, English folk dances and a real Mummings Play.

Our exhibit program this year commemorated the 25th anniversary of the founding of De Anza college. The exhibit included several "hands on" activities, such as a computer where you could record all your personal memories of De Anza, a "grafitti" board where people could write whatever came to mind about De Anza and themselves, and a quiz developed around the exhibit itself. Both the computer discs and the "grafitti" board

will be kept in the archives so we can take them out again for the 50th anniversary!

In May we held a general membership meeting for the first time in many years. The change in staffing and budget was explained to the foundation membership, and a survey form was distributed in which we made an effort to determine the desires of foundation members in types of programs and special events. Also in May we had an open house devoted to the Stockmeir Library. Lisa Christiansen described the types of books, papers, magazines, newspaper clippings, photographs and other archival material kept on file at the library. Lisa showed examples of material and the card files to enable us to locate information on particular subjects.

During the year De Anza lost its first and only president when Bob Dehart died. Many of you remember him as the strong personality who led De Anza to many national awards.

One very special event held this year was the ceremony to dedicate the park bench in memory of Mary Jane Givens, CHC volunteer coordinator for many years. In recognition of her efforts the volunteers purchased a bench with a memorial plaque in her memory. The bench sits in the northwest corner of the patio. Meantime, Dee Liotta has taken over the role of leading the volunteers in outstanding fashion.

Next year we look forward to planning for a 25th anniversary celebration for the history center. Yes, the California History Center was founded even before we had the Petit Trianon. Some of us will be working this summer and we may give you a call. If not, see ya next year!







## Volunteers Have a Busy Year

This 1992-93 school year has been busy as usual for the volunteers; not only were we putting in many hours at the center, but we traveled to other sites and museums for visits. In addition, with the staff cutbacks we are feeling needed more than ever.

After our meeting in September we viewed the Lace Museum exhibit here at the Trianon and in October we went to the Cupertino Museum at the Quinlin Community Center.

Our November meeting was held on a Saturday morning in hopes that more members could attend. After a very nice continental breakfast Mary Jo Ignoffo provided docent training on the De Anza 25th Anniversary exhibit. On this day we also dedicated a Victorian bench in memory of Mary Jane Givens, longtime CHC volunteer.

In December a group of us went to Los Gatos for a luncheon at the Village House and Garden Restaurant, which is staffed by Eastfield-Ming Quong volunteers. There were 12 of us and we had good food and good company.

In February we had a "how-to" video on gathering information and doing our own oral histories. This video is in the Stockmeir library and is an excellent resource.

March was Women's History Month and in commemoration we had a roundtable reading from the book *So Much to be Done; Women Settlers on the Mining and Ranching Frontier*, a new



Trudy Frank staffed the front desk on De Anza Day, just as she has on Wednesday mornings this past year. Helen Riisberg and Marion Patton work the book sale checkout in background.

purchase for the Stockmeir Library. It describes what life was like for women in the years 1849 to 1900.

Fifteen of us participated in the KTEH Pledge Drive again this year. We had 10 CHC volunteers, three CHC board members and two friends of members. It is a fun and worthwhile way to spend a few hours on a Sunday. Think about it for next year.

April found us at Hakone Gardens in Saratoga. Our own Betty Petersen led us on a tour. She is also a member of that organization and was able to show us some special sights.

May took our volunteers to Filoli for a self-guided tour. This was also led by Betty Petersen, a member and frequent visitor there.

Our June picnic was to be held at Mt. View's Cuesta Park. But our unpredictable weather gave us rain that day. Mary Strong was kind to offer her home as a back-up site. Kathi Peregrin waited at the park, in the rain under a tree, and directed us all to the Strong home. Thank you, Mary and Warren, for giving us shelter and good company.

A big thank you is in order to all of our CHC volunteers. Following is a list of all those who volunteered their time during 1992-93 to the history center, contributing a total of over 1300 hours.

*Elizabeth Archambeault	Tess Moore
**Nancy Bratman	Marion Patton
John Breuner	*Betty Petersen
Francis Bush	Kay Peterson
*Marjorie Carrere	**Helen Riisberg
Lisa Christiansen	Eloise Rosenberg
Helen Coughlin	Fritz Sperling
Chatham Forbes, Sr.	***Mary Strong
**Gertrude Frank	Zee Tieger
Ken Givens	Evelyn Turkus
*Josephine Harper	Nell Ward
*Janet Hoffman	
Janet Ilacqua	*over 40 hours
Maureen Kelly	**over 100 hours
Mary LaPorta	***over 200 hours
***Dee Liotta	
Joe Liotta	
Elsie Matt	
Walter Matt	

We also want to thank the members of our Board of Trustees who also volunteer their time to the CHC: Roy Roberts, Willys Peck, Bill Lester, Austen Warburton, Audrey Butcher, Marion Grimm, Yvonne Jacobson, Barbara Rogers, Patricia Smith, Bob Smithwich, Ward Winslow and Margaret Wozniak. Also a special thank you to Jim Williams; we will miss you.

Because of California's rocky future your volunteer time and care are greatly needed and appreciated by all connected with the California History Center.

**Dee Liotta**  
Volunteer Coordinator

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*Kevin Fong, a dedicated De Anza student taking the spring quarter History of California class, helps set up for the book sale on De Anza Day.*

## Individual

Aubrey Abramson, Anne Bakotich, Brian Barclay, Russell Bartlett, Don Basist, Eugenic Bell, Merle Brendler, Marjorie Carrere, Mary Edith Clifford, Lawrence Coates, Alice M. Corboline, Rachel Currivan, Diane R. Etten, James Feng, Catherine Gasich, Ken Givens, Lorretta Grambsch, Josephine Harper, Evelyn Hobart, Merlyn S. Howell, Mary Jo Ignoffo, Lorraine G. Katusha, David W. Kean, Crissola Knudsen, Beryl G. Lane, Linda S. Larson Boston, Wilda Mellvan Layton, Elizabeth E. Martin, Leslie Masunaga, Edith G. Mathes, Mrs. Robert Moore, Mary Oakley, La Verne Prentice, Bobbie Raymond, Ruth Roche, Jean Rusmore, Vivian Schember, Robert Smithwick, Lynn Sprague, Jewel Stabler, Julia Stephenson, Charles Sullivan, Joseph J. Sweeney, Margaret Swift, Sara G. Turner, Beverly Walz, Nellie Ward, Ann Zarko

— In Memoriam —

Helen Ewbank  
Catherine Gasich  
Judge Robert Peckham  
Camilla Rokitiensky  
Wallace Stegner

Due to personnel changes at the district, the end-of-the-year financial figures were unavailable at press time. We will run the 1992-93 financial summary in the next issue of *The Californian*.



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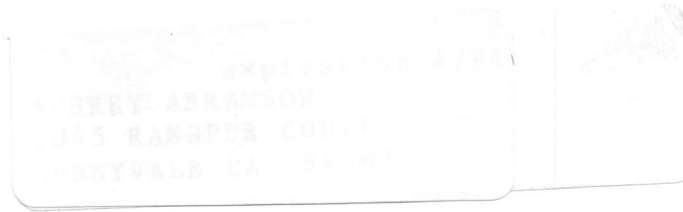
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