

The Novato Historian

Fall 2024

Volume 48 Number 3

Novato 1961



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The Novato Historian

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Guild Mission Statement

To collect, preserve, and make reasonably available to the public, exhibits and information related to the history of the Novato area.

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President's Corner

Lynn Dawson

I hope that your Summer has been fun and relaxing! The Novato Historical Guild has been busy.

In June, we had a booth at the Novato Chamber Art, Wine, and Music Festival where we met lots of residents interested in Novato history! We also had a fantastic speaker for our June Membership Meeting. Andy Pansini told the story of how his father transformed an industry with the invention of the world's first automatic swimming pool cleaner – quite relevant in California! The Pansini Story embodies the American values of hard work, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit.

In July, the Guild participated in the 4th of July Parade with cars representing the Novato History Museum and the Hamilton Field History Museum. Docents from our Third-Grade Tour Program walked with us



and handed out lollipops to young parade viewers. It was a wonderful parade! In July, our Board also took a field trip to view another museum. We enjoyed touring and learning about the Petaluma

Historical Library & Museum.

In August, we completed the analysis and cost estimating for renovating the Scott House (across the green from City Hall) as the new home for the Novato History Museum. Just as a reminder, the City owns the Novato History Museum and the Hamilton Field History Museum and their artifacts. The Novato Historical Guild is a nonprofit organization organized for the purposes of advancing knowledge of the history of the City of Novato and the adjacent North Marin area and of operating the Novato History Museum and the Hamilton Field History Museum in cooperation with the City. The Guild receives no compensation for operating these City museums. For reasons we shared during our last membership meeting, including the safety of the students who participate in the Third-Grade Historical Tour Program and the need to be more accessible to older residents, we need to relocate the museum. The Guild will take all the responsibility for raising the funds for this renovation through private donations, grants, and other resources so that that no dollars will be requested from City funds. However, before we can begin fund raising in earnest, we are talking with the City to ensure that if we raise all the needed funds, the renovated Scott House would remain as the Novato History Museum.

In September, we will hold our Fall Membership Meeting on Saturday the 14th at the Hamilton Field History Museum. Learn about how Marin County played a role in the movement of Southeast Asian Refugees after the Vietnam War. See the last page of this Historian for details. Also, this Fall, the Novato Historical Guild is looking forward to again being a sponsor of the Novato Speaker Series. The next season will include four dynamic speakers (one every quarter) that are sure to educate, entertain and enlighten! The programs will be held at the Bill and Adele Jonas Center. Please watch for announcements about upcoming speakers and the schedule.

Once again, I would like to thank all our docents and volunteers who are the heart of the Guild. We have no paid staff and operate only because of the dedication of these individuals!

Lynn Dawson

1914



- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 – Old school house built in 1856 | 9— Flat Iron Building 1908 | 16 – E.R. Samuels store 1895 |
| 2 – Kuser House and garage 1906 | 10—Hamilton house 1890 and AD. Scott house c.1850 moved from old town | 17—Fashion Shop 1893 – Dr. Insomnia’s |
| 3—Nielsen/ Simmions house 1906 | 11—Train Station - 1903 | 18 – IDESI Hall 1908 |
| 4 – Presbyterian Church 1896 | 12—House – A. Hiribarren 1906 | 19—Unidentified |
| 5 – Sweetser mansion on Elm Dr. 1880 | 13—House – E.R Samuels 1907 | 20 – Novato Hotel - 1889 |
| 6 – Zunino House ? | 14— House – Oliver 1894 | 21 – School 1875 |
| 7—AD Scott building 1890 | 15—Station House – Armstrong 1888 | 22—Hamilton Store 1904 |
| 8 – Loustaunau /Druids Hall - 1899 | | 23—DeBorba store/bar 1894 |

1906



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 24—Guibbini house 1892 | 25—Depot Saloon 1900 | 27—Judge Haven house 1890 | 29—Haven’s barn 1889 |
| 25—Yelmorini house 1894 | 26—Carlile & twin house 1902 | 28—Almeida house c.1890 | 30—Sutton Saloon 1906 |
| | | | 1st Novato bank location |

A Cemetery with Lights

By Tom Keena

Back in the 1920's a late-night traveler from Central Marin to Petaluma was asked what he thought of Novato. Unfortunately, he didn't remember passing through Novato, but he did mention seeing a cemetery with lights. Little did he know what he saw was Novato! How did this tiny community become the city we now enjoy?

It's important to remember our town was quite undeveloped. Over the years many dedicated, civic minded individuals helped in the formation of the city we now know and love. I've always told my kids that our city has seen many changes over the last 100 years. Novato has developed from a town built on an agricultural base to a diverse and bustling community. It's important we pay respect and honor to those who made this transition possible.

Every student of Novato history knows about the Cain brothers and how they brought utilities to Novato. Trumbull, Sweetser, DeLong are all familiar names to most of us.

Unfortunately, there remain many unsung heroes who played pivotal roles in developing Novato. Most just went quietly about their business but for me, one man really stands out. That would be William "Bill" Cole.



Picture of William E. Cole (c.1962)

My father, Tom Keena Sr., moved to Novato in 1917. As I was growing up in Novato, he'd tell many stories about Novato life in the twenties and thirties. One name that was frequently mentioned was Bill Cole. To me, Bill Cole was just this old man in the back office of Pini Mill that dad would always go in and talk to; but to my dad, he was 'Mr. Novato'.

Bill Cole was born in 1891 in Capay, California. It's an unincorporated community in Yolo County in the area known as Cache Creek. Bill attended Oakland's Polytechnic Business College. In 1908 he was employed by Northwestern Pacific Railway. Bill began as the Tiburon station agent and later transferred to the Novato station. He married Miss Elodie Shreve in 1915.

June 23, 1916 was a fateful night. The Northwestern Pacific Novato station was consumed by a fire of unknown origin. After discovering the fire, Bill's quick thinking allowed many important documents to be saved. However, the warehouse filled with merchandise as well as a nearby railcar were completely lost. Sadly, at that time Novato had no firefighting apparatus. That was about to change. On July 29, 1916, concerned community members met at the Loustaunau Hall (currently Novato Druid Hall) to form a fire brigade. C.E. Edsberg was chosen as president with Bill Cole as secretary. This became the start of Bill Cole's dedication to his volunteer service to the Novato community.



Bill in front of the Pini Mill building

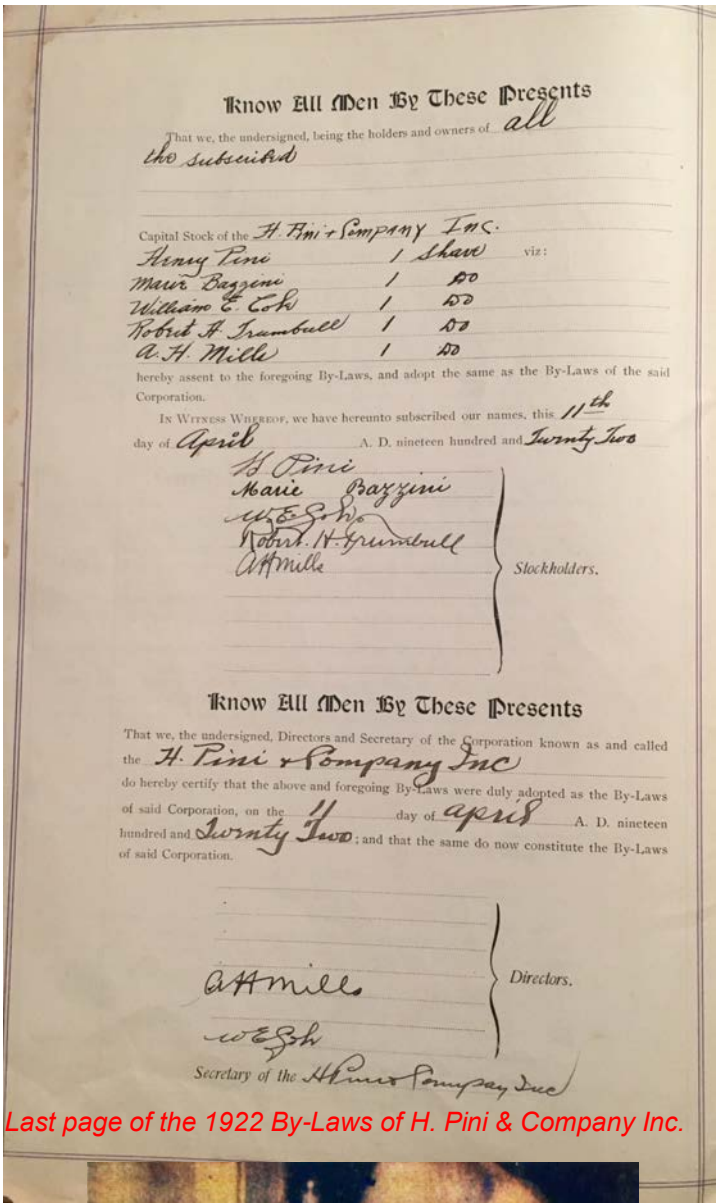
My father looked to Bill Cole as a mentor. Dad worked for H. Pini & Co. from 1922 until 1940. He would often tell me what wonderful man Bill was and just how much he'd done for Novato. Dad had many stories but one is perfect for this article. In the days when goods were shipped by railcar, once they arrived at the Novato station, they would be offloaded and stored temporarily in the railroad warehouse. Bill told my dad that Pini's business back in 1918 was growing so fast that the railroad warehouse was overwhelmed with new merchandise destined for the store. Bill asked Henry Pini to move some of it out of the warehouse to Pini's store to make room for other incoming shipments. According

to Bill, Henry Pini said I need a manager to help me. Why don't you come and work for me! Bill told him OK. They took a piece of scrap paper and quickly wrote up a contract. Bill told dad that he added the stipulation that "you can't fire me for two years". Both men signed it and formed a successful partnership that lasted many years.

In June of 1922, a large gathering of Novato citizens met at the Community House to form the Community House Council which functioned as a quasi-town council. Mr. Christiansen was elected president, Bill Cole vice president, C.E. Carlile secretary, and Mrs. J. Stutt treasurer. It would be another thirty-eight years before Novato was incorporated and had an elected city council.

Novato continued to grow and under the partnership of Henry Pini and Bill Cole H. Pini & Co. rapidly expanded the business. H. Pini & Co. became a full-service operation offering not only hardware, but also clothing, groceries, and agricultural feed. One could also purchase Fireman's Fund Insurance through agent Bill Cole. As an astute businessman Bill also realized the benefit of having an established fire department. Together with Dr W.H. Busher and L. Nave, Bill petitioned the Marin County Board of Supervisors to allow the three men to act as commissioners. Their charge was to designate the proposed Novato Fire District boundaries and call an election to form the fire district. This district still exists today. This is another example of Bill's foresight and leadership.

Perhaps the saddest day in Bill and Elodie's life was the evening of December 15, 1933. Their only child, Shreve Cole, age 16, was involved in a serious vehicle accident and died the following morning. Their lives were never the same. Understandably, many parents would have withdrawn into their sorrow. However, Bill's civic involvement continued. In 1935 he was elected as president of the Novato Chamber of Commerce; in 1941 was appointed Chief Warden of Wartime Civil Defense; in 1945 was appointed to Board of Marin Housing Authority, where he served until 1957.

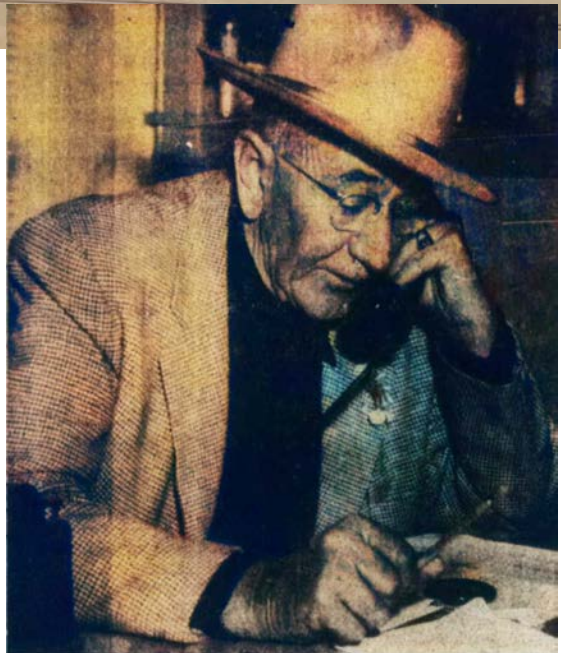


Last page of the 1922 By-Laws of H. Pini & Company Inc.



Teacher Mrs. Elodie Cole and Eugene Zunino at Grant Ave School.

In April of 1964, Novato lost a wonderful citizen at the young age of 72. His was a life lived fully. Perhaps the best way to acknowledge the contributions that Bill Cole made to our city would be for each of us to follow his rich example of civic involvement.



Picture of William E. Cole taken from the Novato Advance, December 8, 1955, when they wrote a story about Bill in the "Who's Who In Novato."

A Highwayman Near San Rafael

Marin Journal, January 27, 1881.

GEORGE S. HAVEN, OF NOVATO.

INTERVIEWED BY A FOOTPAD.

About the last of December, as Geo. S. Haven, of Novato, was returning from San Francisco to his home, he was overtaken on the road between P. Moran's and Dixie schoolhouse by a seemingly genteel person, who accosted him with the remark, "You are a fast walker," and who inquired the time of day, after asking for four bits to buy something to eat, as he was tired and hungry.

Mr. Haven was on foot at the time, as the Buckalew hill was impassable for teams, and he was expecting to meet his man on the Novato side of the hill, to take him home; but the man was a little later than he expected, so that he had passed P. Moran's before he was overtaken by the stranger. To the request of the stranger for money he replied that he had nothing to spare. Thereupon the stranger fell in the rear, and in a moment

Mr. Haven's attention was called to him and looking around. I found myself confronted with a cocked revolver, with a demand to throw up his hands, and not to come any nearer to him than he was.

The villain considered a moment, and then said, "This place is too public for my purpose; we might be molested here before I get through with you. Get over that fence and proceed."

Mr. Haven, still covered with the pistol, could do no less than comply, and when they were well out of sight of the road, he was ordered to take off his watch and turn his pockets and divest himself of his valuables. Mr.

Haven had only a small sum of money, and some valuable papers, mining stock, etc., which the scoundrel took.

On seeing the small amount of money that he had he remarked, "I have a mind to shoot you for not having more."

Mr. Haven expostulated with him regarding the papers and told him that they would do him no good and were worth nothing to anyone but the owner.

"All right, pard," says he, "I will take them along and look them over at my leisure, as it is getting dark, and I have no time now; and if they are useless to me, I will return them to you. Give me your address. But if you blow about this affair, you will not get them, and I will kill you by the light of your burning buildings."

"Now let us finish this business. You seem to have a better suit of clothes than I have, so let us change," and Mr. Haven was compelled to exchange.

While this was going on Mr. Haven's man could be heard talking with Mr. Moran, but he was admonished not to speak loudly or give any alarm, as the least move in that way would cost him his life. After keeping him in the hills until late in the evening he told him to go on his way, but not to divulge this affair, as if he did, he would not get off so easily the next time they met.

The robber then took to the hills and Mr. Haven started for his home, where he arrived about twelve o'clock, to meet his wife in a state of great excitement and alarm on his account, as his man had been informed that he had been seen to pass Mr. Moran's some time before dark and they could not account for not meeting him; but all their anxiety was at an end when they saw him come into the house

with a full suit of somewhat worn and strange clothes on. A short time afterward, Mr. Haven on going into the post office found a package addressed to himself, and on opening it, to his surprise, found the papers that had been taken from him by the robber. About this time Sheriff Mason received information from the Sheriff of Napa County, that a man had given himself into custody there, stating that he had robbed a man by the name of Haven near San Rafael, and inquiring if there had been a man robbed there by that name. Mr. Haven had kept the affair to himself so well that even the officers and his most intimate friends did not know of it. And after going to see Mr. Haven, Sheriff Mason found that such an affair had transpired, and sent word to the Sheriff of Napa to that effect.

LATEST -THE FELLOW A LUNATIC

The footpad turns out to be a confirmed lunatic, with that "method in his madness" which so often characterizes a "mind disease." A dispatch to the S. F. Bulletin of Monday evening says his name is A. A. Tubbs, and he has been committed to the insane asylum. While in the jail at Napa he fired his bedding, and when discovered he was almost asphyxiated. He has lucid spells, in one of which he made a full confession, which, in connection with his exploit with Mr. Haven, will interest our readers. The whole story shows that if Mr. Haven had failed to comply with his orders, when his pistol was pointed at him, he would undoubtedly have killed him.

George Sherburne Haven. Born in North Yarmouth, Cumberland, Maine, September 2, 1837, where he resided and engaged in clerking until he emigrated to California in 1859. Arrived from Panama in San Francisco during the last days of April in that year, and went direct to the mines in Placer County, where he remained for three years and a half. Came to Marin in April 1864; paid a three month's visit to Arizona; returned to this county and located at Novato, where he now resides, being engaged in dairying has one of 7 tenants of the Sweetser-DeLong ranch. Married, September 6, 1872, Mary M. Humphrey, a native of Maine, and has Frank, Grace, Charles, and Frederick. Sept 17, 1885, IJ Mr. George S. Haven has sold out in Novato and will take a trip East to see old friends, and revisit the scenes of his boyhood in Maine, leaving next Saturday. Mr. Haven has been a tenant on the famous Novato ranch for about eighteen years, and there is universal regret among his neighbors at his departure. Mrs. Haven will remain in Los Angeles for the present. Nov 28, 1889, IJ Geo. Haven and family are here, well and hearty. He keeps a restaurant, and often looks back with longing to his old dairy life in Novato. April 16, 1896, IJ George S. Haven died a few days ago in the city of Los Angeles, where, with his family, he has lived for many years. Mr. Haven was formerly a resident of Novato, where, as tenant of one of the Sweetser & DeLong dairies, he was very prosperous and very highly esteemed by all who knew him. He was a member of San Rafael Lodge, No. 24, A.O.U.W., and retained his connection here during all his long absence to his death. Note: he was probably a relative of Judge John Haven (1808—1874) and John's son John Quincy Adams Haven (1849 - 1921), John was from Cumberland Count Maine.

June 16th General Membership Meeting

Fifty-year Novato resident Andy A. Pansini was the featured speaker at the June 16 General Membership Meeting. There were about 70 attendees. His topic: "Fathers of Invention: An American Story of Family, Faith and Innovation." He was introduced by his friend Lowell Smith, former Novato Community Hospital CEO and Novato History



Museum docent. During the 1990s, Andy, as NCH board chairman, worked closely with Lowell in building a sparkling new campus on Rowland Blvd. Andy shared many fascinating stories about the business exploits of his grandfather and father:

- In 1916, 24-year-old Italian immigrant Andrew Pansini, Sr. arrived in Los Angeles with 11 cents in his pocket. He came up with the idea of renting a downtown dirt parking lot and charged a nickel to park all day. It was the world's first paid parking facility. He named his company Savoy Auto Parks. By 1929, some 90 Savoy lots were scattered throughout Los Angeles.
- In 1942, the world's first underground garage was built in the heart of downtown San Francisco (Union Square Garage). Savoy negotiated a long-term lease to operate it. Despite being stricken with polio at the age of 24, Pansini's son, Andrew L. Pansini (our speaker's father), ran the new garage for the next 40 years.
- In 1952, Andrew L. moved from San Francisco to Greenbrae. One day, as he was cleaning backyard deck, he accidentally dropped the garden hose into the pool. He observed the hose swishing back and forth, raising the dirt on the pool floor. He went on to invent the world's first automatic pool cleaner. In 1958, he founded Jandy Industries.
- In 1964, Pansini expanded Savoy's vision when he built and opened the first exterior car wash west of the Mississippi at Fisherman's Wharf. He also made a deal with Crocker Bank, which wanted to build their world headquarters in Los Angeles. He negotiated a 99-year ground lease with Crocker. While in high school in the 1960s, Pansini's son Andy parked cars at the Union Square Garage and, for 30 cents an hour, would count the tickets.
- In 1972, Jandy was growing. Young Andy, who graduated from the University of San Francisco with a degree in economics, would come in on the weekends to help with accounting. By 1975, Jandy sales had grown to a \$1.5 million company with 25 employees.
- In 1985, Jandy moved to a sparkling new 30,000 square-foot facility at 23 Pimentel Court in the Bel Marin Keys industrial park. Annual sales grew from \$8 million to over \$20 million.
- In 2011, Andy's father passed away. An inventor until the day he died, he held over 40 patents spanning a half-century. Andy stressed the importance of family-owned businesses, the backbone of the U.S. economy, accounting for almost 2/3 of the American GDP and 78% of new jobs. He has written four books: "A Family of Invention", "Fathers of Invention," "Coaching For Life," and "Beyond the Diamond." For over twenty years, Andy served as a coach, board member, and president of Novato Little League.



Andy and Pam Pansini with Bob Manzoni.

September 14 General Membership Meeting

At Hamilton Field Museum

10am to Noon

Hamilton's Transit Center 1980-1983

Learn about how Marin County played a role in the movement of Southeast Asian Refugees after the Vietnam War. Hear from Laurie Reemsnyder, whose personal and professional journey is a testament to the power of empathy and service. From her early days in Providence, RI, amidst the first wave of refugees, to her impactful work in California, Laurie's stories breathe life into history. Her tales span the spectrum of human experiences - from the struggles of Vietnamese soldiers adapting to a new climate to the cultural shocks faced by Khmer and Hmong families. Laurie, alongside her team, "The Fire Breathers," showcases the extraordinary impact of dedication and support to those in need, illuminating the sacrifices and resilience of refugees and their helpers. This is not just a recounting of past events but a vibrant homage to the indomitable human spirit. Her journey intersects at the heart of compassion and unity, offering invaluable insights into our shared humanity, weaving together a tapestry of survival, gratitude, and the transformative power of helping others. This narrative is meant not only to enlighten but also to motivate each of us to acknowledge and celebrate the unsung heroes in our own lives and histories.

[See Novato Historian Sept 2020](#)

FORMER BLACK POINT POSTMISTRESS

Josephine Bobo

Marks 90th birthday at party

Novato Advance, July 30, 1975 B-1

By GWEN FRANKEL

Josephine Bobo was postmistress of Black Point before there was a Black Point.

"It was called the Grand View Post Office and it was located in what's now the Black Point Inn which was a



grocery store then," she recalled Friday — her 90th birthday.

Mrs. Bobo, who now lives in Santa Venetia, was in Novato for the occasion and was all dressed up to go out to dinner with her son and daughter-in law, Fabian and Florence Bobo of Novato.

She was born July 25, 1885, in Switzerland but moved to Plumas County with her family when she was about age six.

Later her family operated a dairy ranch in Iowa Hill in Placer County, and in 1908, she married Perry Bobo in Sacramento. The couple came to the Novato area in 1920

to work on the large ranch owned by her aunt, Heanora Redoni in Black Point.

(That property is known in some circles as "the Kenny property" or "the place where the Renaissance Faire is held." But to Black Point old-timers, it's still "the Redoni ranch.")

Aside from working on the ranch, Bobo became a bridge tender for the railroad bridge at Black Point, and, in 1929, he fell off the bridge and drowned leaving Josephine with two teenage sons, Elwood and Fabian.

She worked in the grocery store then owned by Mae Nave who was also the postmistress, and in 1936, Mrs. Bobo herself became postmistress, a job she held until 1946 by which time it was the Black Point post office.

At 90, she enjoys good health and keeps her own house in Santa Venetia where she lives alone.

"It's a big yard and I do a lot of walking," she explains. I had to quit driving when I was 85."

The grandmother of six, and the great-grandmother of five, she still has a trim figure although she eats "just about everything." She also likes to take a cocktail or two or two now and then, but she's never smoked.

What did she have for dinner to celebrate her 90th?

"A big dinner of fried prawns," according to her daughter-in-law.

The First Catholic Church

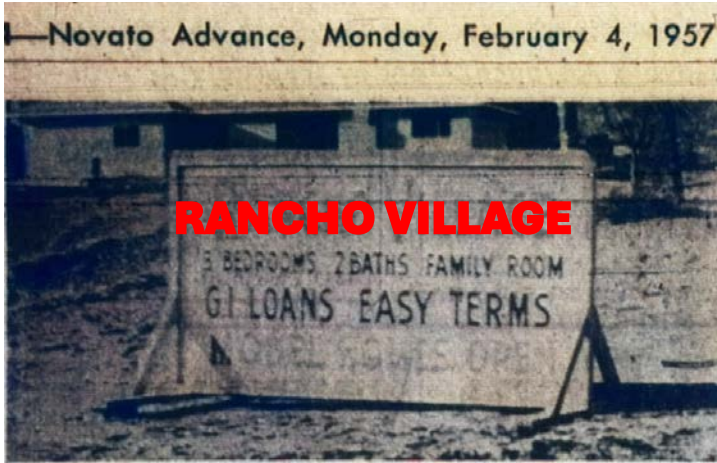
The first Catholic Church was dedicated June 29, 1890. In March 1892, the first marriage and baptism were celebrated at Our Lady of Loretto in Novato. (Previously the town had been under the jurisdiction of St. Vincent de Paul parish in Petaluma.) Built at a cost of \$9,000, the new church was named in honor of the Blessed Mother, to whom there is a shrine in Loreto, Italy. The frame structure on what is today South Novato Boulevard was destroyed by fire on December 1, 1936, and rebuilt on Grant Avenue. The baby boom after WWII necessitated another move to its present location on Novato Boulevard.

See the Fall 2017 Issue of the Novato Historian for the full history of the first Novato Catholic Church.



Photograph taken September 8, 1935, of a St. Anthony celebration in the First Our Lady of Loretto Catholic Church, located on South Novato Boulevard on property given to the church by Mrs. Mary Connell. Choir loft: Edna Baccaglio Kriel (organist), Edith Connell, Olivia Connell, Anita Baccaglio Johnson, Dr. Walter Cuthbertson, & Eleanora LaFranchi
Right side of picture: Manuel Nunes, Sr., Carlos Valim, Mary Pimentel Pacheco, Mrs. Manuel Nunes, Sr., Mrs. Irene Pimentel Medeiro, Miss Sylvana Silva, Mrs. Jose Azevedo, Mrs. Mary Nunes Azevedo, Mary Mendoca, Mrs. Mendoca, Sr., Mary Fagundes Killough, Mrs. Manuel Fagundes, Sr., Isabelle Pimentel Nunes, Mrs. Pio LaFranchi, Mrs. Joseph Valim, Mrs. Adelaide Lemos, Mrs. Tony (Mary E.) Silveira, Sr., Mrs. Angelo (Rose) Lopes, Eleanor Lopes Furtado, Mrs. Joe Mendoca, Mrs. Fannie Baccaglio, Amelia Connell
Left side of picture: A.T. (Tony) Nunes, Manuel Pimentel, Jr., Frank Silva, Thomas Nunes, Joe Mendoca, John Cardoza, Jr., Manuel Nunes, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. John Cardoza, Sr., Mr & Mrs. Joseph (Gloria) Amaral, Mary Annel Amaral, Eleanor Amaral Gladden, George Cardoza, Irene Simas Myers, Mrs. Frank (Rosa) Silva, Mrs. Rose Simas, Sr., Mrs. John Cardoza, Sr., Mrs. Frank (Mary) Taylor, Guido Paladini, Mrs. Taylor's mother. Angelo Lopes, Joseph Valim, Sr., Marie Taylor Bettencourt, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph (Rose) DeBorba
Standing rear: Joe Nunes (center of doorway) - on his right John Alvernaz
Altar Boys: Louis Paladini, Frank Paladini, Priests: (L.) Father Martin O'Fahey, (R.) Father Porta, visiting Mission Priest, Altar Boys; Bill Alvevedo, unknown

Families Begin To Move Into Rancho Village, Westridge As New Novato Area Opens Up



CAMBRIDGE STREET now runs from this point in Forest Park subdivision through Monte Maria and then through both Westridge and Rancho Village in gradual extension of street. The street actually starts now in Holiday Manor, subdivision that neighbors Forest Park on the south. Bend in street in distance is where the street crosses dividing boundary and enters Westridge.



THIS VIEW taken last summer shows period when grading work was being undertaken at the area where two subdivisions were to be built. This view looking south towards Monte Maria shows graded area. The area is now dotted with houses. Novato high school is being rapidly completed nearby. Also in the immediate area two churches are being or will be built.

AERIAL VIEW of two new subdivisions in which a total of 27 families have moved in during the last few weeks with the tracts beginning to open up show Westridge bottom right and Rancho Village top left. Top right is Oakview subdivision across South Novato Boulevard. A total of 450 homes are to be eventually built in the two subdivisions which will fill former open pasture land along South Novato Boulevard.



Familiar scene in the two subdivisions now filling up with new families are moving vans parked in front of the new houses. Here a moving van is in front of the recently purchased home of Mr. and Mrs. Romolo Benedetti who moved here from South San Francisco. Their address is 1436 Cambridge Street. Rancho Village is being developed by the Crown Development Co., while the Marsh Realty is acting as the sales agent.

THE TWO MODEL HOMES of Rancho Village are located on Arthur Street which leads to Novato High School off South Novato Boulevard. Of some 43 homes built or under construction, 40 have been sold and 21 are occupied by now families. There are 88 lots in the first unit with some 350 to 375 lots eventually planned in the whole subdivision. Prices of homes range from \$17,500 to \$18,500.



Gerald G. Hoytt—Developer

Novato Advance February 29, 1974

By GWEN FRANKEL

Gerald Hoytt, developer of the Downtown Shopping Center, ([Lucky grocery store](#)) sits in his cushy new office overlooking Gerner Park and ponders the future of his so-far thriving center.



He still has about three acres left to develop (mostly between Tijuana Taco and Goodman's Home Center) as well as some 1400-square feet of unoccupied "shell space" in the Mayfair-Ross-Longs complex. Hoytt says he's in contact with prospective tenants "all the time" but, for the moment at least they are tending to take a "wait and see" attitude.

What they're waiting to see is what happens with the Hanna Center, according to Hoytt. "Novato has had this problem with fragmented commercial zoning and it seems it still has," says Hoytt. "It makes tenants very insecure when a community continually puts in new commercial zoning and rezonings across town with no concentration in one place ... it weakens everybody."

He says he was more than somewhat confused by the city's commercial zoning of 35 acres of Hanna Ranch (at the Rowland interchange).

"After spending all that money on the Downtown Plan and study, why did they do something that was detrimental to that plan?"

L. Burns, prospective developer of the downtown Pinheiro Center had asked that same question of the city council and was told the city had to be "opportunistic." Unlike Burns, Hoytt has not been noticeably vocal at council meetings, but he had a one-word comment for the "opportunistic" contention: "Ridiculous."

Hoytt, whose Hoytt Enterprises, Inc., has long been headquartered in the East Bay moved his office to Novato a few months ago.

The incentive was the "city's decision to improve the creek area (now Gerner Park)," says Hoytt. "It made for an extremely desirable setting and since it adjoins one of our large investments, it was a natural."

A native of Denver, he spent his childhood in southern California and studied "general business" at the University of Southern California.

He went into the general contracting business "right out of college" and from a "modest start" managed to become

one of the Bay Area's largest land developers. He makes it sound simple.

Hoytt says he began building houses on speculation in the early '50's through FHA and VA projects, took the profits and reinvested in more land, mostly in the East Bay, to build more homes.

By now he has built nearly 3000 homes in the Concord and Pinole areas, and he also developed Marinwood. He retains commercially zoned land adjacent to Marinwood, some of which is already developed. He'll expand that center "when the need develops."

About ten years ago he consolidated with "some other building entities" and formed Hoytt Enterprises, a closed corporation of which he is president and chairman of the board. He also bought the old Patterson ranch where the Downtown Center now stands.

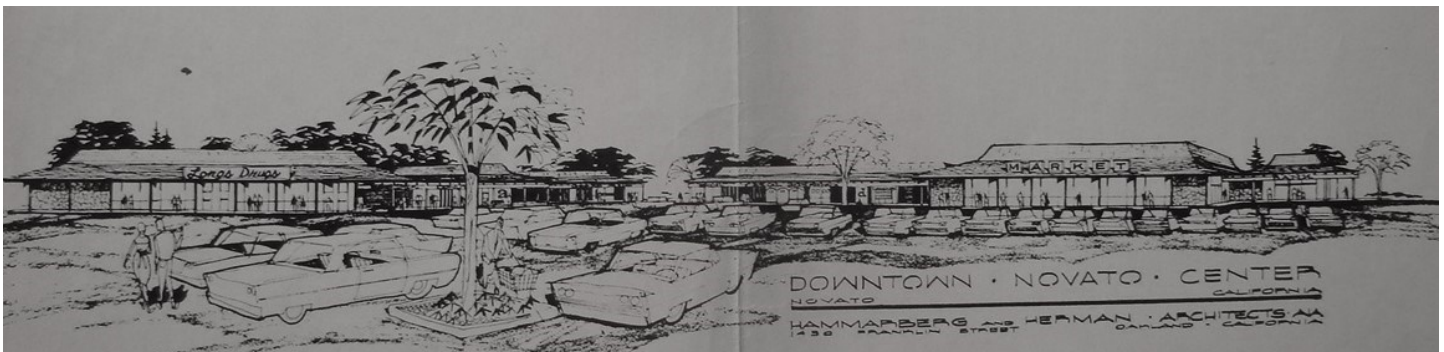
Hoytt is the possessor of rugged good looks (he keeps trim playing tennis and skiing) and in another day, he might have been termed an "eligible bachelor" by society writers. He is divorced and has two children living in the Bay Area.

His new office, in a recently completed building east of the library, looks like something one might comfortably live in. It's complete with bar, stereo, couches, and deep leather chairs. An art appreciator, Hoytt points with pride to a



collection that includes sculpture, collages, and paintings, some of which he commissioned himself for the office. However comfortable, Hoytt does not live there but commutes from Tiburon. One office in the new building has been leased to an optometrist but there are still 2000 square feet available for "one or two tenants," he says.

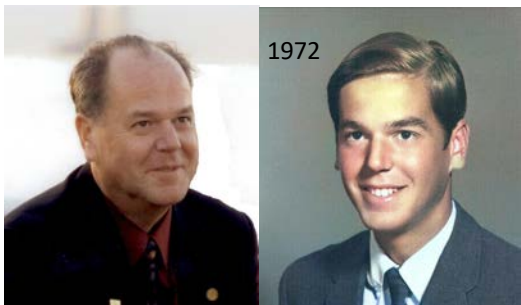
Nov. 4, 1959—Groundbreaking ceremonies for the Novato Plaza Shopping Center at Seventh and Grant. From left, kneeling are Lee Wise, president of the Chamber of Commerce, William Gness, county supervisor, and Ross Wright; standing are Walter R. Castro, chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Gerald G. Hoytt, developer of the 25-acre site, and Clark M. Palmer Jr., chairman of the Novato Home Rule Committee. First to go up at the site will be a service station.



Novato – 50 Years Ago

(July, August & September 1974)

by Michael Read



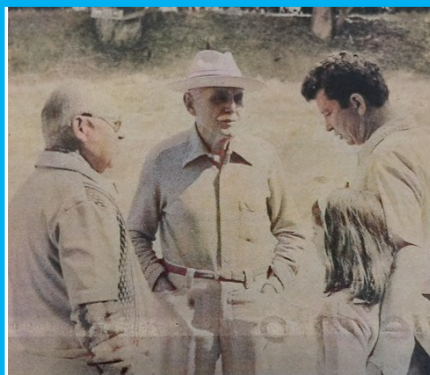
Here it comes—curving gracefully toward the Rowland Boulevard overpass, the new freeway bypass enters the final stages of completion as pavement is laid along the southern portion where the bypass will connect with Highway 101.



The venerable IDESI Hall was recently repainted, along with the meeting hall adjoining it on Sweetser Avenue. The two-story structure was built in 1906 and probably has stood in white array since then, until the new soft beige color was applied this month. The adjoining meeting hall was built in 1937. The site was the scene Sunday of the annual Holy Ghost Festival of the local Portuguese society. Some 2000 citizens of Portuguese descent from throughout the Bay area attended.



Supervisor Arnold Baptiste, left, and Mayor David Price Jones, second from right, were on hand to honor Lee Gerner, center, at the unveiling of a new sign for Gerner Park. City Manager Phillip Brown looks on at right in this scene snapped just before the unveiling of the 15-foot long sign which is located behind Sambo's restaurant. The sign is of heavy Douglas fir timber with Sonoma field stone to match the existing rock work in the park which was built almost singlehandedly by Gerner as a Novato Creek demonstration project.



At Deer Island—an 'open space' picnic—Former Supervisor William Gnos, left, chats with Dr. Frank DeBorba and George Amaroli and daughter at the open space picnic to honor the DeBorba family. A large throng consumed 400 hot dogs, 300 hamburgers, 40 gallons of beer and

untold soft drinks thanks to an anonymous donor who wanted the DeBorbas to have their day. The event was sponsored by the Novato Citizens' Open Space committee which obtained many pledges for help in its efforts to pass the open space bond issue in November. Speakers included Supervisor Arnold Baptiste, county planning commissioner Bill Long, Dr. DeBorba, and his niece, Mary Sousa. The Deer Island flood plains owned by the DeBorbas were recently purchased by the flood control district, and the DeBorba family is offering to sell the Deer Island Hill at a reduced price for open space.



Nature is their classroom—Summer school ain't what it used to be, it's apparent from this glimpse of a nature study class from Lynnwood School. Instead of slaving over a hot desk, the youngsters are having a lark as they explore Scottsdale pond looking for crayfish, frogs, and other samples of pond life. According to their teacher, David Tofanelli, the kids will also get some survival training—learning to make a wood shelter and find water and food. And they will learn animal tracking by making plaster molds of footprints at the Ignacio wildlife sanctuary. The students are in fourth through sixth grade. This is typical of the freedom and fun of new summer school classes, which probably explains why summer school enrollment is up tis year.

HISTORY IN NORTH MARIN

January 24, 1957

Local History Column To Start In Novato Advance

A column on the history of North Marin will start in the Novato Advance next week in answer to many requests that have been made here for more articles of historical interest.

Last year the Advance wrote a number of stories concerning some of the history and background of the area that met with unusual response.

Contributor to the column will be Ed Mannion of Petaluma, an avid amateur historian, whose specialty has been collecting data on the origins of the local area of Marin and Sonoma counties.

The column will appear once a week on the editorial page and will be one more feature helping the Advance to keep its preeminence in giving more local news coverage than any other newspaper.



Chris and Ed Mannion courtesy Petaluma Museum

January 28, 1957

HISTORY IN NORTH MARIN

Columnists Report History Books Few On North Marin

By CHRIS and ED MANNION

Starting right now, Sunday night's television and Monday's Advance editorial page have something in common: both have "amateur hours."

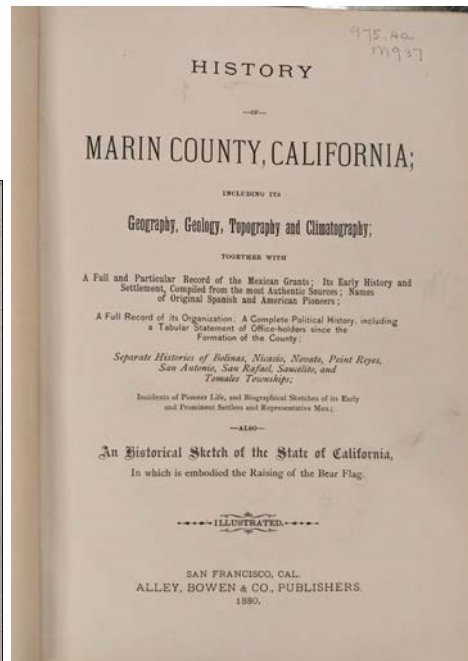
It was the local editor, not Ted Mack, who asked the by-lined husband and wife above to write a weekly historical column dealing with North Marin subjects. Double dealing might be a better word, unfortunately. The sad truth is that the two (hereafter referred to as "we" and "us") live in Petaluma and have studied Sonoma rather than Marin County history. Why try then? Well, there are several reasons, one being it is nice to be asked. There is the fact the history of the two counties naturally overlap at many points. We have had our eyes on several stories and now will have to work at them. Then there is the reason that a column done by carpet-bagging foreigners should attract some "Letters To The Editor." We are bound to make mistakes and many omissions, and our hope is that people who know the right dope will inject it on this page. It will be a pleasure to be corrected and even bawled out as long as all of us learn something.

In other words, as a couple of ham operators, we would like to

raise some historical static.

There are professional operators in Marin who will make the job easier, excellent regional historians as A. B. Dickinson of Tomales and George Marian of Sausalito. A San Franciscan, Roy Graves, has promised to let the Advance use several Novato vicinities pictures from his mammoth collection of western prints.

A visit to the San Rafael public library meant an introduction to its newspaper files and the help of Mrs. Irving Furlong. There we learned that the bible of Marin history is the 1880 Alley, Bowen & Co, or Munro-Fraser account and such smaller books as Helen Bingham's "In Tamal Land" and the 1893 "Souvenir of Marin County California."



A pleasant surprise was to learn of a two-volume unpublished typewritten history done in chronological order by Clifford J. Flack, of Kentfield.

Interesting enough, Marin seems to be a Johnny-come-lately among the historians. Sonoma County has had at least seven major books devoted to it, including one by Monro-Fraser, and several more in combination with Napa, Solano, Lake and Mendocino counties. But never

Marin.

Would-be historians would enjoy going to places like the Wells Fargo Bank history room and talking to its curator, Irene Simpson. North Marin items are not plentiful in a display room of that type, of course, but it does contain several Pacific Coast business directories that mention this vicinity.

For instance, an 1867 directory lists three residents under the name Novato: H. T. Jones, groceries; James B. Sweetser, postmaster; G. F. Von Hollan, hotel proprietor and butcher. Novato got its mail through Black Point in 1884 but a directory four years later showed a local post office. A description for 1888 said "The soil, water and climate are not excelled in any part of the state, and fruit, grain and dairy products are shipped; (Novato) is connected with Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Co.'s system; (Novato has) daily mail": J.B. Redmond, postmaster. Other names in the year's listing included: Galen Burdell, grape grower; F. C. DeLong, fruit grower; J. B. Faggiano, constable; J. Q. A. Haven, justice of the peace and agent of San Francisco and North Pacific R. R.; E. W. Hayden, fruit grower; William Johnson, blacksmith; McDonald and Scott, general store, agents for Wells Fargo Co. and Fireman's Fund Insurance Co.; P. McKenna, blacksmith; J. B. Redmond, farmer; A. G. Scown, saloon, and Mrs. Scown, hotel.

This space will carry several columns about the Burdells as we go along. Does anyone know anything about the other gentlemen and gentlewomen mentioned above?

Next week we will tell about a mass outbreak of prisoners from San Quentin with North Marin sidelights to the story.

From Historian June 1981

Letter From Peg

Some years back when a very active and busy lady, Bea Carpenter, had to move from Novato, she wrote a letter to the Advance expressing how much she had enjoyed her many years' stay in Novato, and she had some suggestions. In a way, this is a letter to you the members, officers, volunteers, everyone in the Guild. In a very direct way, we can all thank Bea for our beginning. It was she who asked me to collect pictures of early Novato to put into our city hall which she was redecorating. That request was our beginning. It can never be said often enough that the distance we have come - what we have accomplished - could not have been done by one person. It has taken the interest and caring of each of you to bring us where we are today. And, I know we have only just begun. I really cannot tell you how much I do appreciate every one of you: My dream of a membership/donation supported history museum with archives came true five years ago this month. We have an excellent start on a collection of archival material and memorabilia that is of great value and will become more valuable as time passes. My dreams for the future? Some for soon and some as time goes on:

A membership of at least 250 that will include a junior division for students. The museum is open five days a week, perhaps Tuesday through Saturday. Annual history essay contests for junior and senior high school students with monetary and scholarship awards. The winners' essays added to our archives. A building for our large outdoor items. Work with senior high school history departments to have Novato history seminars, using the museum archive material. A paid director. This is at least the equivalent of a 4-day week position of 3 to 4 hours a day.

A large order? I don't think so. Why not think big and thus become big. Let us grow?

It has been an exciting, wonderful 28 years in Novato. I thank you for the last five as director of your museum. Peg Coady.

Welcome New Guild Members

**Novato Historical Guild
Membership Report
September 2024**

Individual Membership

Dana Brewer
Mary Jane Burke
Marisa Hoke
Jean Mariani
Rick Palumbo
Neil Rodas
Father Tony Vallecillo
James Gildea

Family Membership

Mark & Lori Bailey
Andy & Pamela Pansini
Paul & Sandy Thompson
Brian Whitlow &
Emily O'keeffe

Life Membership

If you have questions about membership, call or email
Lorne Magnone
415-897-4320

lornemagnone@peoplepc.com

Volunteer Opportunities:

The Novato Historian has an opening on the Editorial Board. If you like writing and/or editing this is the position for you. Please contact the Guild at info@novatohistory.org or ask for Michael Read at 415-717-1412.

Please Support Our Guild Business Members:

A.D. Scott Building
Andrew McAgnon Landscaping
Bank of Marin
Creekside Bakery
Indian Valley Golf Club
Novato Chamber of Commerce
Marin Color Service
Marin Landscape Materials
Mclsaac Dairy
Nave Enterprises
Novato Grove Druids #113
Pini Hardware
Red Barn Productions
The Bluffs at Hamilton Hill
Valley Oak Wealth Management
Valley Memorial Park Cemetery & Funeral Home



Historical Guild Board Members; Anne Russell, Lynn Dawson, Susan Magnone, Lane Yee, Sharon Azevedo, Ray Shanahan, Ray Dwelly, Jeanne MacLeamy. Not in Picture, Jim Crumpler and Michael Read

Hiribarren Pioneer Family

DeLong and Sweetser had long shipped their produce on barges, sloops, and schooners that sailed up Novato Creek almost to the present-day Nave Shopping Center on South Novato Boulevard. The creek was dredged to insure it was deep enough for the boats to reach the wharf. Feed for dairy cows was shipped from San Francisco to Novato, and then Novato products were shipped back to San Francisco, including butter, wheat, and other produce.

One such vessel that traveled Novato Creek was the "Solferino" which was owned and operated by French Captain Jean Michel Mazeas which, on March 19, 1893, made its last voyage because of the captain's untimely death.

The "California", piloted by Captain Leon Hiribarren, was another important vessel carrying goods into and out of Novato. The "California" was a 23-ton schooner built about 1875 in San Francisco. He also owned and operated a schooner known as the "Novato".

Captain Hiribarren was born in France on March 1, 1839, and during the gold rush days in California, he shipped as a cabin boy on an old sailing vessel and sailed around the Cape, arriving in San Francisco around 1857. He was naturalized in San Francisco on February 15, 1862.

The captain went on to marry Marie Paguesorhaye, whose homeland was Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, on February 7, 1871. The couple lived in San Francisco and had three children: sons Leon and Augere and daughter Leonie. Captain Hiribarren became acquainted with the community of Novato when he piloted a scow up Novato Creek in the 1890's to load the apples and pears which grew in Novato's world famed orchards. On his trips to Novato, Captain Leon brought in many supplies that were needed by the budding community such as tools, hardware, and other staples that could not be produced here. This also included young shade trees such as pines. These were then planted along Novato Boulevard, some of which still stand.

October 3, 1884, as reported in the Sacramento Daily, the bay schooner "Novato", laden with hay, was burned off the coast of San Rafael.

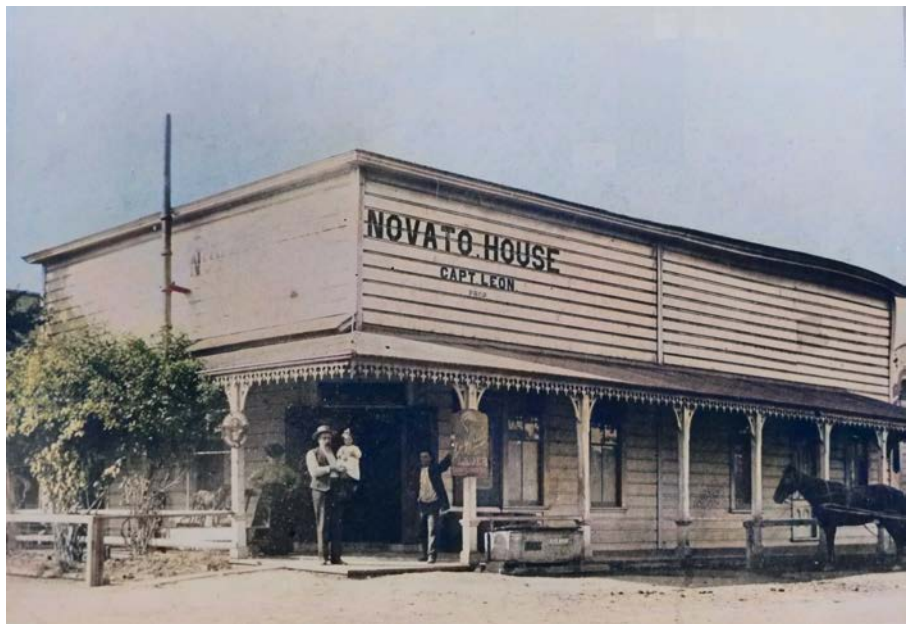
With the advent of the railroad into Novato in 1878, shipping goods by water was quickly replaced by train. Since it was no longer profitable to move goods by ship, in the mid 1880's Captain Leon sold his remaining scow and moved from San Francisco to "old town" Novato. He became the manager of Adolf Scown's Halfway House and the Scown Hotel. In 1899 he resigned his duties and became proprietor of the Novato House hotel and saloon on the corner of what is now Scott Court and Grant Avenue. The building still exists at that location, currently housing a paint store. He also operated a livery stable which was located at Reichert and Grant Avenues. Wonderful meals were prepared by Marie Hiribarren to serve to hotel guests at a charge of fifty cents a meal, which included a bottle of wine. In the early 1900's his son Augere and daughter-in-law Annie Casey assumed the duties of running the hotel.

After relinquishing his role as proprietor of the hotel, the Hiribarren's built a home on Railroad Avenue. Shortly after moving, a neighboring home was converted into the Novato Hospital.



Hiribarren Halfway House Ca. 1887. Caption Leon Hiribarren's "Halfway House" was on the Connell Property, next to the Nave's Cabbage patch. L-R Marie, Capt. Leon, his son Augere, behind Augere is his daughter Leonie. Holding the gun to right of the deer is son Leon P. who passed away March 14, 1900. Adolf Scown is petting the dog.

Although Mrs. Hiribarren did not have formal training as a nurse, she had great compassion for others. She was known to frequently accompany Dr. Kuser on his rounds and was a professional when it came to delivering babies. Mrs. Hiribarren and her daughter-in-law Annie were lauded for giving aid to the engineer and fireman scalded during the Novato train wreck in 1908. Captain Hiribarren died on October 6, 1920. His will was signed with a simple X and witnessed by Justice of the Peace Hermann Rudolff. Leon's wife Marie passed away on the 30th of March 1911. Their family remained in Novato long after their passing and continued to contribute to the community as their parents did.



CA. 1902 -Captain Leon Hiribarren is holding grand-daughter Madeline. Her mother, Annie C. Hiribarren, and friend, Gene Fischer, are in the background. Captain Leon turned the hotel over to his son when he married in 1900. They sold it in 1906. (Madeline died December 10,1975). She was married to Bert York.

2024 Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of the Month
Margaret Todd Senior Center
1560 Hill Road

Time: 1:30 – 3:00 PM

Jan. 9	July 9 (field trip)
Feb. 13	Aug. 13
March 12	Sept. 10
April 9	Oct. 8
May 14	Nov. 12
June 11	Dec. 10

Membership Meetings

March 16	10 – 12
June 15	10 – 12
Sept. 14 (at Hamilton)	10 – 12
Dec. 14	10 – 12

Guild members are welcome to attend the Board meetings. Please check with the President, Lynn Dawson at (303) 888-5922, in case a meeting has been changed.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

You may make a gift of appreciated securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) to the Novato Historical Guild. Your gift is not only tax deductible, but if you have held the shares for more than one year, your tax deduction will equal the full value of the securities on the date of the gift.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE GIFTS

You may honor a friend or loved one by having their name engraved on an individual brass plate on the Memorial Plaque in the Novato History Museum. Please call the Museum at (415) 897-4320. Each plaque costs \$250 per person named and is tax deductible.

In Memoriam

Susan Binford Thompson
Paul Scheller
Richard P Nave
Gerry Gause
Gil Medeiros
David Johnson
Joan Davis

THE GUILD EXTENDS SYMPATHY TO

David Thompson and family on the loss of Susan Binford Thompson

Edna Scheller and family on the loss of Paul Scheller

Nave family on the loss of Richard P. Nave

Cleo Gause and family on the loss of Gerry Gause

The Medeiros family on the loss of Gil Medeiros

The Johnson family on the loss of David Johnson

Julie Davis on the loss of her mother, Joan Davis

Contact Us

Hamilton Field History Museum

Manager: Ray Dwelly
Museum phone: 415-382-8614
Email: Hamilton_museum@att.net
<https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonFieldHistoryMuseum/>

Novato History Museum

Manager: Susan Magnone
Museum phone: 415-897-4320
Email: info@novatohistory.org
<https://www.facebook.com/NovatoHistoryMuseum/>



More than 20 people attended the July 20th Novato Cemetery walk hosted by Sharon Azevedo.

Membership Form

Please mail checks to Novato Historical Guild. P.O. Box 1296, Novato, CA 94948.

Yes, I want to join the Novato Historical Guild and help preserve Novato history!

New Renewal

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual membership | \$30 year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family membership | \$40 year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life membership, individual | \$350 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life membership, joint | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business membership | \$75 year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Free for 90+ | |

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

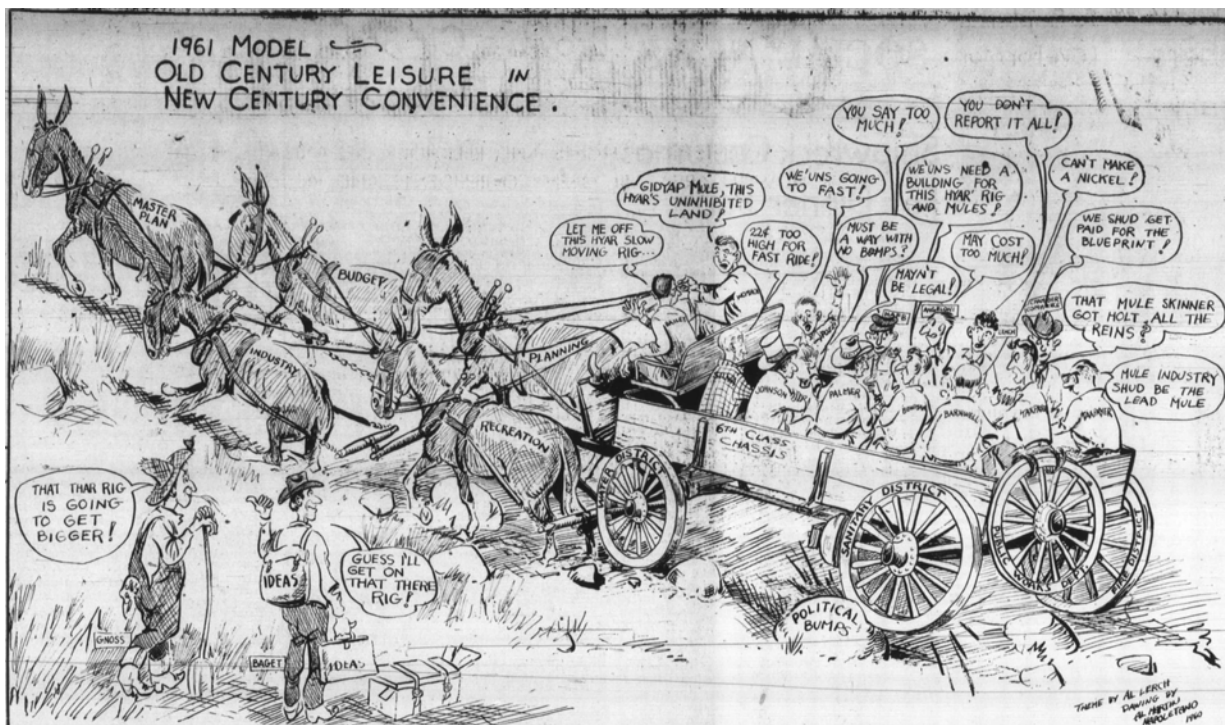
State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Additional donations? _____

Interested in volunteering? _____

Email address: _____



Novato Advance, October 14, 1960: Commissioned by Al Lerch for his movie on Novato history and incorporation and executed by Novato cartoonist Al Napoletano, this cartoon gives an amusing picture of city government and community involvement in present day Novato.

Volunteer opportunity

The hospitality committee is looking for volunteers to assist with set-up and refreshments at the Historical Guild's general meetings. The Guild hosts four general meetings a year which offer a great opportunity for members to gather and enjoy presentations from some very interesting speakers. Assistance is needed from 9:00 a.m. until noon for each of these meetings. If interested please email info@novatohistory.org, or call the Novato History Museum at 415-897-4320.

★ YOU ARE INVITED ★

General Membership Meeting ~ Novato Historical Guild

Saturday, September 14, 10:00 to Noon
Hamilton Field History Museum, Novato

Hamilton's Transit Center 1980—1983: The story of 180,000 Southeast Asian refugees and survival in the South China Sea

Anyone interested in Novato History is welcome to attend.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Novato History Museum

815 DeLong Avenue

(415) 897-4320

Hamilton Field History Museum

555 Hangar Avenue

(415) 382-8614

COME VISIT AND BRING A FRIEND!

The Museums are open three days a week -- Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday - Noon to 4 p.m.
 Closed Major Holidays