



Saratoga Historical Foundation

PO Box 172, Saratoga CA 95071

September 2015

Join Us For a Fun Event at Hakone Gardens on October 18 For the Museum

The Saratoga Historical Foundation is holding a special fundraiser at Hakone Gardens on Sunday, October 18 from 4:30-6:30 PM. The event is open to the public.

Sample Gunther Catering's special selection of hors d'oeuvres, sip wine and other beverages, listen to the tunes of renowned Soul Doubt, meet friends and bid on a silent auction bursting with items-- are among the fun that will take place. A special treat will be a docent led tour of the Hakone Gardens. Bring your camera!

The silent auction will have a host of items to choose from including gift cards for your favorite restaurants, wine, home décor, jewelry, plants and more. Something for everyone and just in time to shop for Christmas!

All funds will go towards building the outdoor blacksmith exhibit.

Don't Delay

The cost is \$45 for Saratoga Historical Foundation members; \$50 for nonmembers. Tickets can be purchased by sending a check to Saratoga Historical Foundation, PO Box 172 at Saratoga, CA 95071. Question, call 408-867-4311, e-mail info@saratogahistory.com. October 11 is the cutoff date for reservations.



Reception for Exhibit— September 20—Don't Miss It!



A reception will be held September 20 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM Sunday, September 20 to highlight the exhibit, "Center Stage: Theater Groups in Saratoga." The exhibit is at the Saratoga History Museum and is free and

open to the public.

The reception will include classical guitar music by John Snyder and light refreshments.

The exhibit highlights 100 years of Saratoga culture and artistry beginning in 1915. Some believe that theater is important not only for entertainment, but also to build culture. Theater is an art that when participating allows people to escape from every day life. It is a form for learning. It is a collaborative art form because it can combine singing, dancing, and other skills. Many talents go into theatrical productions—including directing, stage construction, lighting, costumes, makeup, and more.

Attendees will recognize many of the theater groups highlighted in the exhibit—which starts with Villa Montalvo in 1915 and goes to present day theater groups. Famed former Saratogans including actress Olivia deHavilland, Joan Fontaine, Lance Guest, and Steven Spielberg are included in the exhibit.

The exhibit has wonderful ephemera, play bills, photos and original costumes on display—don't miss it!

The Saratoga History Museum is located at 20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road in Saratoga. It is open from 1-4 PM Friday through Sunday. The new exhibit will run until November 15.

Celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival on September 27—

The Mid-Autumn Festival will include a special exhibit, lecture, live entertainment, arts and crafts, and more on September 27 from 1:30-4 PM at the Saratoga History Museum. The festival is produced by the Organization of Chinese American Women, Silicon Valley Chapter.



“The festival is very exciting this year with--musicians, story hour, calligraphy, folk art demonstration, arts and crafts and

more. It will be a wonderful afternoon for people of all ages,” says Carol Yuan, President of the Organization of Chinese American Women, Silicon Valley Chapter.

The festival is sponsored through a grant by the City of Saratoga.

Lots of Entertainment

Councilwoman Emily Lo says, “The Mid-Autumn Moon Festival celebrates a tradition dating back thousands of years in many Asian countries honoring a good harvest, youth, families, and community. The Mid-Autumn Moon Festival is often compared to America's Thanksgiving tradition, and is a time honored Asian holiday that marks the end of the summer harvest.”

The Mid-Autumn Festival will open to the beat of the Chinese drums by the Tamkang University Drum Team at 2:30 PM. Chinese calligraphy will be demonstrated by the Huafeng Chinese Calligraphy

Saratoga Historical Foundation Officers

The mission of the Saratoga Historical Foundation is to preserve the unique history of Saratoga for the education and enjoyment of the community.

Executive Committee

Annette Stransky, President

Bob Himel, Vice President

Recording Secretary, Open position

Yuchi Wang, Treasurer

Newsletter

The Saratoga Historical Foundation newsletter is produced 6X a year. If you have comments or suggestions, e-mail: annette@saratogahistory.com

The Saratoga History Museum, McWilliams House and schoolhouse are located at 20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road and open from 1-4 PM Friday through Sunday. Call 408-867-4311 to arrange group or docent-led tours. Be sure to visit our gift shop. Visit our website: <http://www.saratogahistory.com>.



Association and Lanting Calligraphy Club. The Musical Key Choir, a children's group will sing songs. Of special interest will be sugar painting, an old Chinese art form by Let's Paint using sugar to form animal shapes. Other activities include music and story telling. Many arts and crafts opportunities for children will also be available including making paper lanterns. The Saratoga Library will have a table promoting services and programs.

Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad Exhibit and Lecture

Andrea Yee, a descendent of one of the railroad workers will give a presentation at 1:30 about her grandfather's experience in working on the railroad. He was one of 10,000 Chinese who helped complete the railroad. The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental is an exhibit providing an historical overview of the Chinese railroad workers who were instrumental in building the United States' first Transcontinental Railroad. It was produced by the Chinese Historical Society of America Museum and the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford University. The exhibit will be at the Saratoga History Museum for one month and is sponsored by the Sereno Group Real Estate in Saratoga.

The Saratoga History Museum is located at 20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road in Saratoga. The museum is open from 1-4 Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Museum admission is free.



Calendar at a Glance

July 10-

Nov.18: New Exhibit— Center Stage, Saratoga Theater Groups

Sept. 20 Exhibit Reception

Sept. 27 Mid-Autumn Festival

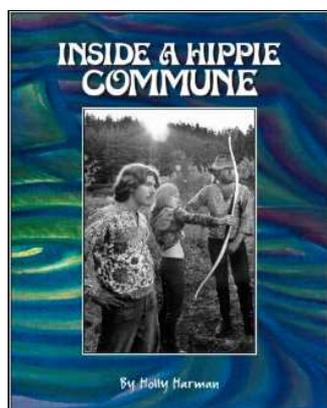
Oct. 18 Hakone Wine & Appetizers—Fundraiser

Oct. 24 Festival for People of India

Nov. 27 Holiday Exhibit & Open House

Put on Your Love Beads—

Inside a Hippie Commune—Reliving the 1960s



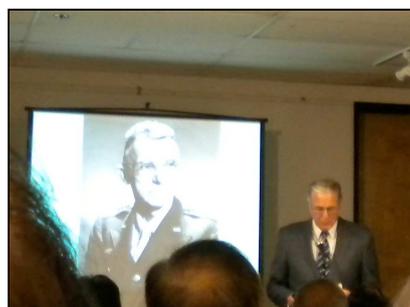
Many remember reading about the antics of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters who enlivened Woodside during the 60's. But locally, yes, locally there were several communes in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Holly Harman recently wrote a 236-page book documenting the story of a

hippie commune in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The book begins with stories leading up to the time of the commune, the commune itself in 1967-68, and eventually, the demise of the commune. Holly Harman recounts her own experiences in those times. The book is available through Amazon.com for \$29.95.

Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Victory Over Japan

The Silicon Valley Asian Art Center held a special presentation and exhibit on August 15 celebrating the ending of the Sino-Japanese War. The exhibit entitled, "The Sacrifice Never Forgotten" included important memorabilia including Chiang Kai-shek's orders,



diaries, calligraphy and other items.

Saratogan Colonel John Easterbrook gave the opening speech and provided context for the decade long conflict between China and Japan. His

grandfather, General Stilwell was one of the important leaders. "The key to success for soldiers everywhere," according to Easterbrook, "is to not give up."

Connie Young Yu talked about her father's experience in the war and said he went on to fight in the Korean War. She read excerpts from his diary written during the war in which he noted more people were dying from starvation and dysentery than from bullets.

Dr. Raymond Yeh talked about his father General Yeh Pei-Kao who fought in the battle of Teng Chong. He noted in his presentation that, "There were many great soldiers in World War II—that generation was very tough. They were short of everything but yet able to conquer the impossible."

History Museum Estate Sale Summary



People cleaned out their closets, brought treasures to the museum to be sold and many came to buy other people's treasures!!

Doris Cooper donated potted spider plants and noted, "I could have just thrown these out but I kept thinking of Betty Peck who always encouraged everyone to share."

The estate sale held August 15 brought in \$4300 to add to the blacksmith exhibit fund. Not to mention several trips to the drug store to buy liniment for aching muscles. Congratulations to Laurel Perusa and Bob Himel and a host of others who helped make the event a success.

India Festival on October 25



Join us on October 25 for the first India Festival held at the Museum from 1-4 PM. The event will include traditional music, dancing, and children's arts and crafts.

Historian Ray Cosyn will give two presentations on the history of Saratoga. The festival is coordinated by Rina Shah.

The festival is being held very close to the date that Diwali (or Deepavali, the "festival of lights") is traditionally held. Diwali is an ancient Hindu festival celebrated in autumn every year. Diwali is the biggest and the brightest festival in India. The festival spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness.

Come and enjoy this colorful festival!

100 Years of Theater in Saratoga!

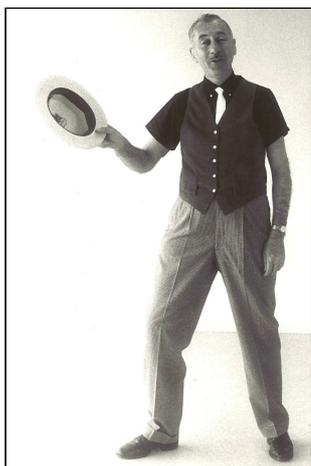
“Center Stage—Theater Groups in Saratoga”, a new exhibit, is open now and runs until November 18 at the Saratoga History Museum. The exhibit covers over 100 years of theater in Saratoga from 1915-2015. A reception will be held at the museum from 1-4 PM on September 20 with live music.



The exhibition will show how theater has shaped the taste of Saratogans for culture over the years. Actress Lilian Fontaine taught students in the Los Gatos Theater Workshop in 1949. The plays were performed in the Los Gatos High School auditorium since Saratoga did not have one. Local lore is that

Fontaine would recruit friends, neighbors or pull strangers off the street to act in the plays. Some of these students later became the Los Gatos-Saratoga Community Players. Fontaine directed events at James Phelan's home, Villa Montalvo. In 1978, the outdoor theater was named after Lilian Fontaine, who was not only a good personal friend of James Phelan, but was also a longtime supporter of the theater until her passing in 1975 at the age of 89. Fontaine, who lived in Saratoga, also starred in plays presented at the Saratoga Foothill Club and the Theatre of the Glade.

The Theatre of the Glade was created by well-known producer and actress Dorothea Johnston during the 1930s. Her mother owned the Saratoga Inn and the property below the Inn had a natural amphitheatre formed by redwoods and eucalyptus trees. The woody setting attracted hundreds to sit in the tiered seats and enjoy the plays. Productions were famed throughout the state and the casts who were made up of both amateurs and professionals drew a wide audience. Johnston influenced many budding actors and actresses and helped launch the careers of Olivia deHavilland and Joan



Fontaine. Others influenced included Judith Baum, Patricia Ironsides, Ann Edmunds, Audrey Long, Margaret Goodrich, Robert Baines who achieved success both on stage and in Hollywood films.

Saratoga Federated church also advanced theater in Saratoga. The Federated Drama Group's first show produced in 1963 was “Our Town” in Richards Hall. By 1966 the audience had

grown so large that the group moved its productions to

the Saratoga Civic Center. The group had a tradition of saying a prayer together before the opening performance. In 1969 the group changed its name to the Saratoga Drama Group and continued to produce a variety of plays. They later changed their name to South Bay Musical Group, continuing to produce a mix of popular musicals.

The West Valley Light Opera (WVLO) was formed in



1964 with the objective of promoting cultural activity in

the area and providing opportunities for anyone with dramatic aspirations to take part in theatrical productions under the guidance of experienced directors. WVLO continues to perform three Broadway type musicals each season at the Saratoga Civic Theater.

King Dodo's Playhouse came to Saratoga in 1967 and was located in the Azule shopping center on Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road. Founded by Jaleen and Ivan Holmes in 1953, the playhouse was the longest running, self-supporting not-for-profit theater in California. It originated as the first dinner theater in the US at the Hawaiian Gardens in San Jose. The playhouse was unique in that the audience sat around the stage so close they could touch the actors. No cue cards, minimal set, and homemade sound effects were used. The all-volunteer actors sometimes studied up to 3 plays a week to keep up the pace. The playhouse stayed in Saratoga until 1980 when it moved to Sunnyvale.

Theater on the Ground, another outdoor theater, was



created by the late Willys Peck, Saratoga's town historian and popular newspaperman in 1953. Peck's family got the acting bug and at an early age along with his parents and brother appeared in the early Theater of the Glade performances and later the Saratoga Federated Drama Group. Peck built an amphitheater on the slope behind his house just a few houses down from the original Theater of the Glade. The entrance has two massive Grecian columns among the towering trees. The stage has a platform and a balcony where annually mostly original plays and variety shows were performed for over 40 years. Family and friends were invited to perform as well as be in the audience. Invitations were

Cont. from page 4
 printed using Peck's hand press with hand set type.
 Actor and Broadway star Lance Guest and others
 performed in the plays.

VITA, the Valley of Theatre Arts, was launched in



1975 by son
 Bill Peck,
 John
 Schwartz
 and Saratoga
 High School
 drama
 teacher,
 Judith
 Sutton. The
 group shared

space in the old Saratoga library on Oak Street with the BookGoRound. VITA later was renamed Shakespeare Theatre Arts Reperatory (STAR). The popular group held performances in many locations including Villa Montalvo, the Mountain Winery, and other locations. Actress Annette Bening was in Romeo and Juliet.

The Sanborn Park provides a sylvan setting for theater when VITA later changed names and ownership to the Shady Shakespeare Theatre Company formed by Dinna Moore. The company was dedicated to providing more local opportunities for artists to perform and audiences to experience Shakespeare and other classic works. Later, in 1999, Moore co-founded Silicon Valley Shakespeare (then Shady Shakespeare Theatre Company) with Sara Betts and Jeff Day. The award winning repertoire theater produces interesting drama including Shakespeare in Hollywood, Antony and Cleopatra and more ---using both indoor and outdoor venues.

Bay Shore Lyric Opera got its start in Saratoga and was founded by the late Claire Der Torossian and her husband Papken in 1996. The mission of Bay Shore Lyric Opera is to make opera accessible to the widest possible audience. Their daughter Jenny Studley has continued the tradition bringing exciting performances to the community.

Saratoga High School's drama group produced its first



play, Our Town, in 1962 when the school had its first graduation. In 1994, the "Little Theater," was

constructed with donations from the school community and dedicated in December, 1994. Previously, all performances were held in the cafeteria. The school converted the end of the cafeteria into a small "black box," theater with light and sound systems and black out curtains to cover the windows. This type of theater allowed the department to construct a stage in any configuration to accommodate different types of shows. The theater seats 100 people. In 2011, the "Little Theater," was renamed the Thermond Drama Center in appreciation of Catherine Thermond and family for their service to keep the theater alive at the school. In 2005, The McAfee Performing Arts and Lecture Center was opened.

Today, in addition to theater, the high school offers thespian and improvisation classes.

Happy Birthday, Willys



We would be remiss to not note the fact that the late Town Historian Willys Peck would have celebrated his 92 birthday in August. One of his laments was that Saratoga no longer had a hardware store. The gods have responded and an Ace hardware store recently opened in Argonaut shopping center. Happy birthday, Willys.

Change in the Board of Directors

Ann Waltonsmith, Membership Director of the Saratoga



Historical Foundation, recently resigned citing health and other commitments. Waltonsmith had been on the board since 2009. Prior to that she had been a liaison to the board when she was on the City Council. Waltonsmith is thanked for her many contributions to the board and the role she has played in the

Foundation's growth and success.

Imagination Land in Saratoga

Once upon a time at the end of Wood Acres Road in Saratoga, there was a house called Imagination Land. Nestled in the woods, the house had a train track that chugged joyfully around the yard. Colorful statues of fairies, dainty elf homes, rustic gnome towers, and bubbling fountains added interest to the train's journey as it wended its way around the yard.

Imagination Land was the brainchild of Dick Houghton. A graduate of the College of the Pacific in Stockton, he worked for Southern Pacific Railroad and was the editor of their monthly trade magazine.



Fascinated with trains, he built a large miniature railroad, in his basement which was chronicled in a 17-part series in Model Railroader

magazine during the late 40's.

He would go on to write and publish several books on railroads. He moved to Los Gatos in 1964 and later to Saratoga. He lived in a brown house with a cat named Oobleck until his death in 1983.

At the beginning of Wood Acres Road there was a small billboard (now gone) with this message from Houghton:

“Life is like a journey taken on a train
With a pair of travelers at each window pane.
I might sit beside you all the journey through
Or I might sit elsewhere, never knowing you.
But if fate should mark me to sit at your side,
Let's be pleasant travelers—it's so short a ride.”

What is a Beetle?



For some a beetle might be slang for a once popular Volkswagen car. Or maybe – a six legged winged insect. Or even a carpenter tool. But in this instance it is a mallet shaped tool used to tenderize meat. Depending on the recipe and use, there are a variety of pestle-like, wooden mallet and hammer

types used for tenderizing meat, softening fish, mashing and pulverizing food.

And another use of the word, beetle? To make one's way hurriedly or with short, quick steps. "the tourist beetled off"

Items for the McWilliams House

The McWilliams House Committee is looking for a few items for the kitchen and the new laundryroom. If you have items you would like to donate, please let us know by e-mailing info@saratogahistory.com or calling 408-867-7411.

The items should be in the 1860-1880 time period. A few of the items we are looking for:

- flour sack towels
- Mason canning jars with zinc lids
- Baskets (note the time period!) any size
- Kitchen crockery

Volunteer!!

Did you know the average American spends \$39 per



month on membership to a gym and uses that membership less than 67%!! Did you know you could be burning calories by helping

setup and cleanup

events for the Saratoga Historical Foundation??? Look at the money you would save in your gym membership and the exercise you would get.

Here are some ways you could be helping!

- volunteer to help with the hospitality at membership meetings
- help setup or cleanup events
- volunteer to be a museum docent—only 3 hours a month or be an on-call docent. Let's get the museum open more than 9 hours per week!!
- volunteer to be an education docent—all kinds of fund activities in the Pioneer Living program—and a great group to work with
- write an article for the newsletter or research an article

If you are interested, send an e-mail to info@saratogahistory.com. Someone will contact you.

Open Positions

The Saratoga Historical Foundation presently has two open positions—recording secretary and membership director on the board of directors Descriptions of the positions are available as well as qualifications. If you are interested in either position, please send an e-mail to info@saratogahistory.com.

Yabba Dabba Doo



Driving north on Highway 280 toward San Francisco someone in the car will always notice the interesting collection of orange pods on the hillside.

Affectionately dubbed the “Flintstone house” after the cartoon, the structure is sometimes called the “dome house”, the marshmallow house,” and even the “Gumby house.”

Architect William Nicholson designed the home in 1976 and pioneered the idea of forming houses with gunite (concrete) on giant inflated aeronautical balloons. The theory was that the building would be insulated and energy efficient. This was later changed to rebar and wire mesh for improved sturdiness. The result was an assembly of rooms in which every surface is round. Inside the home, the design was equally creative.

According to Wayne Da San Martino, the builder, “a huge conversation pit was built with the window cut at a level to hide the freeway but show the Crystal Springs reservoir. The upstairs bedroom, in the tallest dome, had

a spiral staircase inspired by a sugar-cone; the diameter increases to equal that of the floor above. And in the master bathroom, a mixture of big round rocks took the place of tiles.”

The house was controversial enough for Hillsborough to form an architectural review board to keep experimental architecture out of the neighborhood.

Today the unofficial landmark that once sold in 1999 for \$800,000 is listed for \$4.2 million.

As Fred Flintstone would say, “Yabba dabba doo.”

On the Street Where You Live



Vickery Avenue is named after Dr. Frederick Vickery. Vickery was a geologist by training and a good friend of the late Senator James Phelan. His father operated the art firm of Vickery, Atkins and Torrey in San Francisco. The Vickery family owned

property in Saratoga bordering the Phelan estate.

Vickery was hired at Montalvo on a temporary basis to serve as the art director after Phelan’s death. His wife, an art expert in her own right, provided assistance. He gave tours to visitors and acted as a host while the lawsuit took place—deciding which group would have control of the Phelan estate.

Honoring Saratogans On July 19

"Kindness. Friendship. Character. Hard work. These are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness," said President Annette Stransky in welcoming guests to the Honoring Saratogan event on July 19. People came from Florida, Nevada, and Oregon to honor Henry Clarke, Rhoda Porter and Adrian Stanga. A cheering crowd of over 100 clapped in appreciation for each as their achievement



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”— Margaret Mead



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Return service requested.

A Man's Castle is His Home



Robert Howden's Ben Lomond home was his castle, and his stone castle was his home. He called himself

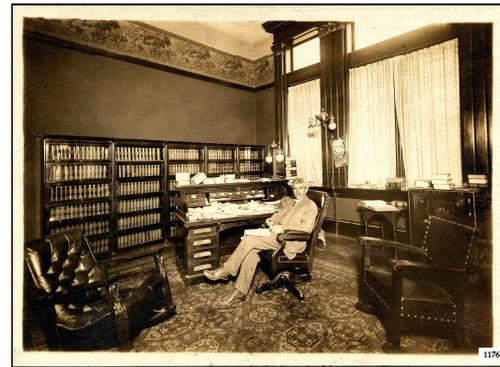
an "everyday Scotsman," but his burning desire was to live in a castle. He did. He built it himself. He selected a beautiful bend on the San Lorenzo River in Ben Lomond, and there, in the early 1920s, with local hired help, he built his castle. He patterned it after castles he remembered from his boyhood days in Scotland.

The castle went together slowly. Every stone was hand-picked and hand set. Howden's regular home and business were located in Oakland, where he operated a tile factory, but his heart was in the "highlands" of Ben Lomond.

The castle was completed in 1926, with only three rooms. Howden had spent his early life in Scotland as a

stone carver, and he used his talent to etch the panes of the glass windows in his castle. They depict Scottish scenes and the poems of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns. Written by Margaret Koch

New Donation to the Saratoga History Museum



A desk once used by Judge James R. Welch has been donated by the Welch family to the museum. Welch was a Superior Court judge

from 1904-1931. Prior to that he was city attorney from 1894-1897. Welch is often credited with being the father of Skyline Blvd. He was one of the first and most ardent advocates for opening the Santa Cruz Mountains to the public for their enjoyment. His summer home, a large log style summer cottage is on the National Register of Historic Places in Santa Clara County.

