



# Saratoga Historical Foundation

PO Box 172, Saratoga CA 95071

May 2017

## Casa Tierra--- House of Earth

Casa Tierra, House of Earth—a new exhibit opened August 11 at the Saratoga History Museum. The Saratoga house is 13000 square feet and is the largest non-secular adobe house in North America. The unique house was built from handmade bricks from the earth it stands on by two women in 1941.

The exhibit will run from August 11-November 12.

The house is located on Quito Road and is listed on Saratoga's heritage resource inventory.

Maude Meagher, 46 and Carolyn Smiley, 51 came to Saratoga in 1941 seeking a new home to live in

and a place to publish their children's magazine World Youth. They had successfully launched and published the magazine in 1936 in Boston for five years and decided to move west.

They liked the land they saw in

Saratoga and purchased two acres on Quito Road. At that time the land was surrounded by orchards. Using string and stakes made from a crate of oranges they plotted the house they wanted to build. The earth was mixed with straw, water and oil in a mixing machine made from an old Studebaker stripped of parts and used to make bricks. The earth was hand shaped into bricks 18x12x4 and weighed approximately 75 pounds each! It took six years to complete the house.



The over 800 windows provide natural light for the house. Because of the number and irregular size of the windows, the women chose discontinued plate glass windshields from a junkyard. Using a glass cutter, they hand cut the glass needed for the windows.

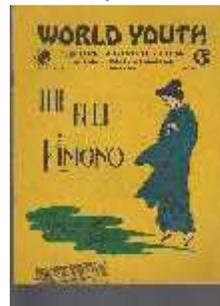


Over 23,000 handmade roof tiles were used to cover Casa Tierra. These tiles were the last of the replacement tiles used on California's Spanish missions. The replacement tiles are almost identical to those original tiles made by the Native Americans. Under direction of the Spanish builders, Native American women would form

the original mission tiles on their thighs. This gave the tiles a shape that was wide at one end and narrow on the other. Many unique and colorful tiles made locally are featured inside the home and in the yard.

The women printed World Youth magazine from 1946 to 1956 from their Saratoga home.

Come to the exhibit and find out more!



## President's Corner

In June the Board of Directors voted to elect Annette Stransky as president; Bob Himel, vice president and Yuchi Wang as treasurer for a term of one year.

The Saratoga Historical Foundation Board of Directors had its annual meeting with the City Council on July 5. The City Council expressed appreciation for the events and work the Foundation has been accomplishing during the year.

Among those achievements, we had a successful Honoring Saratogan dinner in May honoring four Saratogans. Each year the event seems to get better.

Good job Bob Himel for coordinating the event.

An estate sale of donated items was held August 12 to raising money for the blacksmith exhibit. The estate sale generated approximately \$3000.

Thanks to Bob and his crew and the many donors!

We recently held the annual

volunteer party to thank the many volunteers who help us produce events like the Blossom Festival, walking tours, docents who keep the museum open, education docents who coordinate the pioneer living classes, folks who decorate the museum for the holidays.... and the list continues. We had a good turnout with over 40 attending. The food was delicious, the music great and



the conversation perfect. Our thanks to Rina Shah for organizing this event.

Rina also coordinates India Day scheduled for October 8. This will be the third year the event has been held. If you haven't attended, stop by.

Other highlights of the year included:

\* The popular pioneer living classes produced by the education docents under the direction of Linda Hagelin. The first George and Louise Cooper essay contest for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades was also held with much success.

\* The Peck Blessing bench is scheduled for completion in November thanks to Hugh Roberts for spearheading the project.

\* Ray Cosyn gave several popular presentations in the Bay Area on Saratoga history.

\* The Blossom Festival continues to be a success in preserving our heritage.

\* Three interesting exhibits and three membership lectures were produced.

\* The blacksmith exhibit fundraising continues with expectation of building in 2018.

\* The hutch for the McWilliams house is being constructed and will be beautiful when completed.

President Annette Stransky adds, "We can always use a few more volunteers to help. If you have an hour or two--- let's talk."

## On Orbit

According to Nancy Lee, the story of how "On Orbit" drive got it's name is very interesting. She said, "Donald Rodoni was in construction just as his ancestors were. John Rodoni, as you might know, built several of the buildings on Big Basin Way. Donald chose this piece of property in exchange for building the road, "On Orbit" around 1950. At that time, the Apollo Mission was in progress and the roads were named with that in mind. So, we have "Apollo Heights", and "On Orbit" which is a loop. The scientists and engineers that work on these missions don't say something is "in orbit" like many of us would. They use the term "on orbit."



### Saratoga Historical Foundation

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

The Saratoga Historical Park is open from 1-4 Friday and Sunday; 10-4 on Saturday. It is located at 20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road in Saratoga. Call 408-867-4311 for more information or go up to [www.saratogahistory.com](http://www.saratogahistory.com). For comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter, e-mail the newsletter editor at: [annette@saratogahistory.com](mailto:annette@saratogahistory.com)

### Circle These Dates on Your Calendar!

Now	Casa Tierra—House of Earth— exhibit runs until November 12
Sept. 12	Film: The Indomitable Theodore Roosevelt
Oct. 1	Mid-Autumn Festival
Oct. 8	India Day
Oct. 12	Film: If You Knew Sousa
Nov. 24	Open House and New Exhibit opens

### Free Film September 12 Walk Softly and Learn about Roosevelt



Join us for a free viewing of the film “The Indomitable Theodore Roosevelt” on Tuesday September 12 at 7:30 PM at the Saratoga History Museum (20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road in Saratoga). The event will be hosted by Ray Cosyn, Director of the Saratoga Historical Foundation. Roosevelt was an author, explorer, soldier, naturalist as well as the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. He authored over 26 books, initiated the First US Volunteer Cavalry Regiment known as the Rough Riders, is one of four presidents depicted on Mount Rushmore, won the Nobel Prize for Peace for mediating an end to the Russo-Japanese War and secured the route and began construction of the Panama Canal. Join us and find out how he came to be known as “Indomitable.”

**March On Over For A  
Free Film October 12 on Philip Sousa**  
Enjoy a free viewing of “If You Knew Sousa” and delight in the marching music of John Philip Sousa on Thursday, October 12 at 7:30 PM at the Saratoga



History Museum (20450 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road in Saratoga). The event will be hosted by Ray Cosyn, Director of the Saratoga Historical Foundation. John Philip Sousa is known as the “March King” for his work. His best known marches are The Stars and Stripes Forever; Semper Fidelis, the official march of the US Marine Corp; and Liberty Bell to mention a few. Sousa also invented the sousaphone, a large brass instrument similar to a tuba. Find out more about this talented musician.

### Mid-Autumn Festival is Almost Here!



Mid-Autumn Festival will have a lecture, crafts, and performers on October 1 at the Saratoga History Museum from 1-4 PM. The event is free.

### India Day is Coming!



Join us for an afternoon of music, dance, and crafts on October 8 at the Saratoga History Museum from 1-4 PM. The event is free!

## All Fired Up Reminisces of an Anonymous Fire Fighter

Recently a written "history" of the Saratoga fire house was dropped off to the museum and written by an anonymous fire fighter. Excerpts are shared here.

Around 1925 the second "firehouse" was acquired in a stall or two in the Russell-Tarleton Garage later known as the Saratoga Garage. It was a full-service gas station and garage located at the southeast corner of the Saratoga crossroads.



After renting space at the Saratoga Garage for 25 years, the property was finally on the market and the Saratoga Fire District acquired the property.

Many Saratogans still remember that the firehouse had an electric siren on top of the roof that produced a distinctive but memorable wail.



Here's where we pick up the story written by our anonymous fire fighter:

"Among the changes to the building were the creation of offices and AMR quarters, reconfiguring the bedroom and dayroom areas, and removing the corrugated metal roof. In order to reduce the time spent cleaning the white ceilings, they were painted black. The floors were refinished several times with a red epoxy surfacing material. The incredible strength of the epoxy could be seen when the fire engines were rolled over the freshly painted floors too soon. Patches of the floor would rip up and stick to the tires for months at a time before finally wearing off.

'I remember those floors,' said a current fire fighter. 'We used to steal John Campbell's soft hat and run over it with the fire engine over and over again. Man did we laugh.'

Within the confines of these walls, were some of the world's most treasured and precious artifacts. I'm not referring to the Model A fire truck that was retired in 1950, or the Model T that was sold at auction to Walter Worden in 1937, or the LeFrance fire engine that is still sealed in the building wall... No my friends, the truly cherished relics were the inhabitants of the game room-- a pool table, a shuffle board, and the granddaddy of them all...the beer machine!

The pride of the station was the refreshment dispenser. For two shiny nickels you could get one of the world's finest mood altering substances. I mean the real cold, old fashioned, fresh from the barrel, straight to the glass, into the package, up to the store, and then into the machine...BEER! It was definitely a station centerpiece.

One fire fighter remembers, 'Coming back from a long day fighting a grass fire...that beer machine looked pretty damn good.'

Eventually the machine was decommissioned. It was given to the first person that agreed to haul it away. Although it was never given a proper send off, it is still remembered and even brings a tear to some eyes. Today it remains one of the eight wonders of the ancient world lost in time, but engraved in memory.



The game room had a vintage pool table made of red oak and mahogany with drop slots and a ball return that would put a golden retriever to shame. e 5  
Continued on page 5

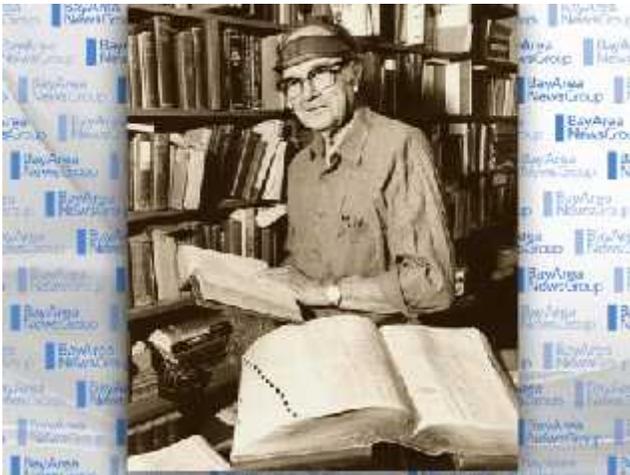
The pool table was eventually moved to the Fireman's Hall on Oak Street and sold for scrap felt.

Along the wall sat one of the world's first ever shuffle board table which glistened from over 57 layers of hand brushed varnish. This table met its maker when the value of its services were ignored and the demand for space took precedence. Rumor has it that an unnamed butcher who had a patch on one eye, three missing fingers on one hand, and walked with a limp jogged into town one day. He offered to take the table off the station's hands. Everyone was shocked when he took out a circular saw and chopped the table in thirds. It's believed that the three pieces were sent to the four corners of the earth where they are still used to this day as cutting boards for raw meats and vegetables.

These stories only scratch the surface. So much lies within the memories of this place. While the building may soon be gone, it's important to know that memories of it will last. Reminiscing about an old friend is never a bad thing."

Editor's Note: The old fire station was torn down on August 18, 2003. The new fire house was built and dedicated in the same location in 2004.

## Here Comes the Sun



August 21 was a special day for the total eclipse of the sun seen across the US. A day celebrated in song—Total Eclipse of the Heart, by Bonnie Tyler; Here Comes the Sun by the Beatles; Bad Moon Rising by Creedence Clearwater; Blue Moon by Billie Holiday and many more memorable tunes. The other significance of this date is it is the late historian Willys Peck's birthday. He was born on August 21, 1923. We are sure he was looking down and celebrating in his own style-- wearing his signature green eye shade, favorite brown corduroy pants and

enjoying Hagen Daz ice cream while thinking of an appropriate headline for the event.

## Sweeping Event by Saratoga High



Activities Director and History Teacher Matt Torrens organized a crew of Saratoga High students to perform community service for the Saratoga Village. Students came to the Saratoga History Museum and clipped spent roses, washed the McWilliams porch and rails, and swept the sidewalk. Thank you!

## Block Party on DeHavilland Drive



Residents living in the vicinity of Shubert Court and DeHavilland Drive celebrated with a block party on August 20. The LaBamba theme included music, food, and friendship. As part of the party program, Councilmember Rishi Kumar invited SHF Historian Ray Cosyn to talk about actress Olivia deHavilland whose name graces the street and who once lived in Saratoga.

## Saratoga.

### Home Grown Fame---

Saratogans contribute to the rich fabric of life in many ways. The following are some of the people who have had an impact in art, athletics, performing arts and more. Some were born in Saratoga—others moved here to enjoy the community. See how many you recognize or remember!

#### Art

*Sarah Brown* (1846-1916), daughter of abolitionist John Brown. Taught art as well as painted.

*Helen Caswell* (1925- ) painter, author and illustrator of children's book on religion.

*Albert DeRome* (1885-1959) In his youth he worked at the Congress Springs Hotel in Saratoga. He became a California landscape painter, especially of natural landscape formations, seascapes and marine scenes near Carmel and Monterey.



*Josef diSigall* (1891-1953) also spelled Josef

Sigall lived on 70 acres behind Senator Phelan's home, Villa Montalvo. In Europe he painted nearly all contemporary monarchs including King George VI. He came to the U.S. in 1922 and painted portraits of Presidents Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, their families and cabinets.

*Theodore Wores* (1859-1939) Converted a church into a studio in Saratoga. Painted in Japan, Europe but said his best work was in California.

*Victor Zane* (1921-2010) In 1976 his work was displayed in the Louvre as part of the "American Painters in Paris" exhibit. His subjects reflected his wide travels and many interests: marine, American West, Africa, Haiti, Caribbean, Mexico, and the Canadian Rockies. His last series of paintings were studies in ballet.

#### Athletes

*Brett Bonvechio* (1982-) (Prospect High School) Minor League baseball player

*Melaney "Laney" Diggs*, (1992-) figure skater competing in 2005-2009 U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

*Lee Hancock* (1967) (Saratoga High 1985) Major League baseball player

*Bill Haselman* (1966-)(Saratoga High 1984) Major League baseball player

*Patrick Marleau* (1979-) San Jose Sharks 1997-2017 now hockey player for Toronto Maple Leaf

*Patricia Noriko Miranda* (1979-) (Saratoga High 1997) bronze medalist in 2004 Olympics First woman in Olympic wrestling to receive a medal.

*Carrie Steinseifer* (1968-) (Saratoga High 1986) gold medalist in swimming in 1984 Olympics

*Yosh Uchida* (1920- ) Successfully lobbied to have judo considered as a sport rather than martial art.



Team coach of the [first Olympic Judo Tournament](#) at the [1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo](#). *Kerri Lee Walsh*, (1978-) volleyball gold medalist in multiple Olympics and World Championships

Performing Arts (music, drama, dance, poetry)

*Judith Baum*, granddaughter of Frank Baum, creator of the Wizard of Oz series. Career launched by Dorothea Johnston.

*Gordy Carbone* (1975) (Prospect High 1993) lead singer in the bands The Forgotten, Lars Frederiksen and the Bastards

*Olivia deHavilland* (1916- ) Went to Saratoga Oak Street school and graduated from Los Gatos High school. Two Oscars and Golden Globe awards were won. Returned to Saratoga many times to see friends. *Ann Edmunds*, actress known for the films: The Nurses' Secret, Here Comes Happiness and Thieves Fall Out.

*Stephanie Elam* (1974- ) (Saratoga High school) currently anchor reporter for NBC in Los Angeles.

*Joan Fontaine* (1917-2013). Went to Saratoga Oak Street school. Author and actress, won two Oscars.

*Lilian Fontaine* (1886-1975) actress—moved from Japan to California and had a home built in Saratoga. Continued acting. Daughters: actresses Olivia deHavilland and Joan Fontaine.

*Zach Gill* (Saratoga High 1993) Animal Liberation Orchestra, singer, songwriter

*Lance Guest* (1960- ) (Saratoga High 1978) Actor, *The Last Starfighter*, film and Broadway. Grew up on an 11-acre prune ranch in Saratoga.

*Mike Gurley* (1960- ) (Saratoga High, 1978) singer, songwriter, guitar player formed dada band.

Published 300 songs, sold one million records. Shown below.



*Patricia Ironsides*, established the Summer Circle Theater in the Hotel Lyndon in the 1950s. She and her husband also experimented with one-act plays in the Saratoga Theater.

*Alex Lagemann* (1989- ) (Saratoga High 2007) singer, songwriter, formed band: Radical Something.

*Les Landin* (1923-2010) teacher, principal, author and was “Buckskin Bob” on local television in the 1950s. Started singing group called the Skillet Lickers.

*Jen Levin* (1983- ) (Prospect High) actress, *Single Parent Date Night*

*Audrey Long* (1922-2014) actress 1942-1951

*Glen MacWilliams* (1898-1984) cinematographer for Laurel & Hardy films, Alfred Hitchcock films

*Paul Magid* (1954- ) (Saratoga High 1972) cofounder *The Flying Karamazov Brothers*



*Mildred Manning* (1890-1963) silent film actress who starred in 36 films

*William Mayes* (1965- ) (Saratoga High 1983) TV spokesperson, actor  
*GW McGrew*, (1861-1900) Saratoga’s first poet, *The Story of A Bell and Other*

*Poems.*

*Mekenna Melvin* (1985) actress in *Chuck*, *3 Rivers*, *Lie to Me*

*Tom Miller* (1961) actor, director *Jersey boys*, *American Beauty*

*Joe Murray* (1961- ) animator, creator *Rocko’s Modern Life* and *Camp Lazio*. Had studio in Saratoga.

*Jon Nakamatsu* (1968- ) (Prospect High 1986) classical concert pianist

*Korla Pandit* (1921-1998) musician, composer, pianist, television pioneer. Known as the Godfather of Exotica. Lived in Saratoga during the 1950s.

*Dan Rusanowsky*, sports broadcaster for San Jose Sharks called the Voice of San Jose Sharks. He lives in Saratoga.

*Ed Solomon* (1960- ) (Saratoga High 1978) actor, director, writer and producer, *Men in Black*, *Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventures*

*Steven Spielberg* (1946- ) (Saratoga High School 1965) director of Oscar winning films—*Jaws*, *Jurassic Park* and *ET* established box office records

*Vienna Teng* (1978- ) (Saratoga High 1996) singer, songwriter, pianist

*Clarence Urmey* (1858-1923) first native poet of California. Lived brief time in Saratoga He published three volumes of collected verse: *A Rosary of Rhyme*, *Vintage of Verse*, and *California Troubadour*

*David Warshofsky* (1961- ) (Saratoga High 1979) actor both in film and television

*James Williamson* (1949- ) guitarist for *Iggy and The Stooges*; went into high tech for 30 years; made a comeback with *The Stooges*. Shown in photo below.



### **What about the Authors?**

Next issue will cover authors born in or living in Saratoga as well as inventors. Editor’s note: If your favorite performer is missing from the list—email [info@saratogahistory.com](mailto:info@saratogahistory.com) or call 408-867-4311.



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**A Donation that is More than “So-So”**



William Jones started making sewing machines in 1859 and in 1860 formed a partnership with Thomas Chadwick. As Chadwick & Jones they manufactured sewing machines at Ashton-under-Lyne until 1863. Their machines used designs from Howe and Wilson produced under license. Thomas Chadwick later joined Bradbury & Co. William Jones opened a factory in Guide Bridge, Manchester in 1869. In 1893 a Jones

advertisement claimed that this factory was the "Largest Factory in England Exclusively Making First Class Sewing Machines". The firm was renamed as the Jones Sewing Machine Co. Ltd and was later acquired



by Brother Industries of Japan, in 1968. The Jones patent for his popular Serpent Neck model appeared in 1879. These were manufactured until 1909.

Thank you Bill Cooper for donating this new addition to our permanent collection.

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In memoriam  
 Bob Cancellieri  
 Greg Lynch

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