



# SARATOGA HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

PO BOX 172, SARATOGA, CALIFORNIA 95071  
May 2010

Join us May 17 for a lecture on the Erie Canal; Saratoga Landmark exhibit of original paintings runs through May 30 at the Museum; New heritage exhibit opens June 4 and stop by June 19 for a fun-filled Heritage day!

## Free Lecture on the Erie Canal, the Silicon Valley of 1825—including Music!!

Well-known author Martha Kendall will deliver a rousing, foot tapping, colorful lecture on, “The Erie Canal, the Silicon Valley of 1825,” Monday, May 17.

The free program will take place at the Immanuel Lutheran Church (14103 Saratoga Avenue) at 6:30 PM for the SHF membership potluck and 7:15 PM for the lecture. If participating in the potluck dinner, bring food to share, and your own eating utensils. Coffee, tea and water will be provided.

The construction of the Erie Canal, 363 miles long, was completed in 1825 and linked the waters of Lake Erie in the west to the Hudson River in the east.



### Eighth Wonder of the World

Viewed as “Clinton’s Big Ditch,” or “Clinton’s Folly” when construction was first authorized by Governor Dewitt Clinton, it became dubbed as an engineering

marvel and the eighth wonder of the world by some when completed.

The completion of the canal enabled shipping costs to be reduced dramatically. With the cost reduction, fresh produce could be shipped east and consumer goods shipped west. People could migrate more easily also. New York quickly became a center for shipping.

### No Civil Engineers

Those who were instrumental in the design and construction included James Geddes and Benjamin Wright, judges with experience in settling boundary disputes, laid out the route. Canvas White was an amateur engineer who went to Britain to study the British canal system. Nathan Roberts was a mathematics teacher and land speculator.

### Unforgettable Delivery

Kendall will tell the inspiring story of the construction of the Erie Canal, using colorful images of the canal today, and playing music of the canal era on banjo, penny whistle, fiddle and guitar. She notes there is much commonality with the drive, creativity that took to build the Erie Canal with today’s entrepreneurial Silicon Valley. Come find out the details!

### About the Speaker

Kendall holds a BA in English and Spanish from the University of Michigan, an MA in English from Stanford and an MA in Social Science from San Jose State University. She taught for many years at San Jose City College and retired in 2009 as Dean of Language Arts. She has written twenty books ranging from college texts to picture books for children.

## Celebrate Heritage Day—Circle June 19 on Your Calendar

The SVDC is sponsoring Heritage Day on June 19 with activities taking place in the Saratoga Heritage Park and on Big Basin Way. The all day event will go from 10 AM to 6 PM in the Village; 10AM to 4PM at the Museum.

The day will include music, vintage cars, and sidewalk sales. Many famous Saratoga characters dressed in costume will stroll the Village and Saratoga Heritage Park.

To date the following are some of the activities planned.

Saratoga Heritage Park, also known as the location for the Museum, historic McWilliams House and the BookGoRound-- will have activities you won't want to miss.

### Activities At the Museum

Town Historian and Town Character Willys Peck will appear as himself along with his wife, Betty at the Museum. On-going at the Museum will be an interesting slide presentation of photos of Saratoga, entitled "Then and Now."

Linda Hagelin aka Mrs. Whitehurst (teacher from the 1890's' and Tina Liddie in the persona of Miss Carrie Wooster (principal and music teacher from the 1890's) will conduct free games from the 1800's for all children.

Docent-led tours of the McWilliams House will take place. Be sure to say hello to Mrs. James McWilliams (Peggy Schoppe) dressed in vintage clothing.

Two blacksmiths will be in the backyard making sparks fly while busily pounding out horseshoes and other items. The McWilliams House was built out of local redwood by the town's first blacksmith, Henry Jarboe and who later sold the house and business to James McWilliams.

Chuck Schoppe, aka Charles Maclay will also be dressed in vintage apparel and will coordinate the classic cars participating in the event.

Don't miss the interesting new exhibit featuring Saratoga heritage at the History Museum.

### Get some exercise

Historic landmark walking tours will be coordinated by Michael Whalen. The long-time Saratogan always provides

a great tour. And these tours will be especially fun along Big Basin Way where interesting costumed Saratogans will be found.

### Visit Neighbor BookGoRound

Neighbor BookGoRound will also have some activities—stop by and purchase a gently used book or two.

### Check Out the Activities on Big Basin Way

Be sure to visit the Saratoga Historical Foundation booth on Big Basin Way for purchasing raffle tickets for the "win a bit of history baskets" assembled by Jane Asher. These baskets include some special items and will make perfect gifts.

### Meet Famous Characters

Over 30 historic Saratoga characters will be in effect from 11 AM to 2 PM—and will be introduced in Blaney Plaza at 11 AM. Stop by and say hello to Ever Lasting Sunshine Williams (Jack Mallory) and find out about the history of the Blossom Festival. Or inquire about the health of Actress Joan Fontaine (Laurel Perusa) former Saratoga resident. Actress Olivia deHavilland (Patti Himel) will be sure to direct you to the Fontaine's former house on LaPaloma. Jenni Taylor will tell you about Hannah McCarty and all her Saratoga property. Ask Myrna Thompson aka Mary Brown about John Brown and their family. Brian Berg will talk about Charles Blaney and the Plaza. Ann WaltonsSmith will tell you about Chris vonSaltza and her Olympic career. Linda Callon will appear as herself as the first female Mayor of Saratoga.

Bring a friend and discover Saratoga history.

## I Didn't Know That

According to Vice Mayor Jill Hunter, KGO Talk Show Host Ronn Owens had a category on his radio show, "Status: Classy and Tacky," for various items. For the city category, Saratoga was ranked in the "classy" category.



Well-known author Clive Cussler has written several books featuring Dirk Pitt as the hero. Pitt's special wine preference is none other than Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon. Martin Ray, of course, purchased the Paul Masson vineyard in Saratoga. You can see wine bottles bearing the Martin Ray label in the Saratoga History Museum.

Charcoal was once an industry in the early 1800's in Saratoga. But what about the origin of charcoal briquets? Henry Ford of the Ford Motor company and a frugal man, learned about the process of turning wood scraps into charcoal briquets from the production of Model T's. The Kingsford Company was formed when EG Kingsford, a relative of Ford's, brokered the site selection for Ford's new charcoal manufacturing plant. The company, originally called Ford Charcoal, was renamed Kingsford Charcoal in his honor.

### 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

Bob Himel, President  
Annette Stransky, Vice President, Marketing  
Ron Hagelin, Recording Secretary  
Jane Asher, Treasurer, Fund Development Director

#### Newsletter

The Saratoga Historical Foundation newsletter is produced 6X a year.

#### Museum and Gift Shop

The Saratoga History Museum and McWilliams House are open from 1-4 PM Friday through Sunday. Call 408-867-4311 to arrange group or docent-led tours.

Visit our website: <http://www.saratogahistory.com>.



## Save These Dates!

- On-going** Saratoga Landmarks—Through an Artist’s Eyes Exhibit at the Museum
- On-going** Roots and Wings exhibit at CHC ends in June
- May 15** Pet Parade, SVDC, 11-1 PM
- May 17** The Erie Canal—The Silicon Valley of 1825 by Marty Kendall 6:30, potluck 7:15 lecture at the Immanuel Lutheran church
- June 4** Celebrating Saratoga Heritage – new exhibit
- June 19** Heritage Day- visit Big Basin Way and Saratoga Heritage Park

## Fur Flies in the Village on May 15

Treasured pets have always been integral to the spirit of Saratoga. Artist Josef de Sigal once had a pet lion, Pasha at his home on Sigall drive. Sunshine, the sleek, roaming cat, used to fish in the pond in Blaney Plaza and live on Oak Place. And of course, Peeper the quail, once lived on Saratoga Avenue where Willys Peck now lives. Peeper even has a book written about him. He was also known to attend Oak Street grammar school—as a guest.



So all of this is leading up to....the SVDC Pet Parade scheduled for May 15 from 11 AM to 1 PM. Bring your pet. Bring your camera. And have a great time.

## Saratoga Landmarks—Through an Artist’s Eyes Exhibit, Ends May 30

Don’t miss this exhibit of water color paintings of local landmarks currently at the Saratoga History Museum. The exhibit will end May 30. The paintings were contributed by the talented Saratoga Community of Painters.



According to David D. Hunt, one of the artists contributing to the exhibit, “We painters do a worthwhile historical community service with our artistic impressions of the times and places as they were. Of course, some of my favorite places to paint--- Garrod’s

Ranch, Villa Montalvo, Saratoga Creek and Stevens Creek are relatively intact. Even so, significant changes occur with renovation and the addition of buildings, the simple shifting of creek beds and flora. The members of this remarkably stable group of painters, led by the able Judy Puthuff, have happily matured together and evolved into impressive watercolor artists, as is evident with the current exhibit.”

The artist reception held March 28 drew over 65 people including Artist Jane Garrod, husband Vince and daughter Vicki shown in the photo.

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## Permanent Exhibit Updated



The Ohlone exhibit in the Museum recently had some changes by Permanent Exhibits Chair Peggy Schoppe. Colorful images and narrative have been added to the exhibit. The artifacts comprise one of the largest collections of Ohlone artifacts in the Santa Clara Valley.

## Kirkwood Donation—Future Exhibit Material



Robert Kirkwood recently made a second donation of many precious items from his family including 1911 suffragette items and papers; papers from his father’s political career as an Assemblyman as well as State Controller. Kirkwood’s aunt, Isabella Blaney, shown in the photo, was one of the local leading women for suffrage. The board of directors are very grateful

for these materials. An exhibit is planned very soon around the donation.

## Historic Saratoga Village



The Saratoga Village has a new entrance sign thanks to the fund-raising efforts of Vice Mayor Jill Hunter and the SVDC (Saratoga Village Development Council). new

## Our Paper: The Saratoga News

When this writer was a child (late 1950's to early 1960's) there were two newspapers in Saratoga: the Saratoga News and the Saratoga Citizen. Prior to this (1940's) there was the Saratoga Observer.

The Saratoga Observer lost its exclusive focus when it was acquired by (or merged with) the Los Gatos Times. The "T-O," as the delivery "boys" referred to it, was a source of employment for the more energetic, responsible ones among us.

The Saratoga Citizen and the Saratoga News became locked into competition, not always friendly, for advertising and circulation revenue. The Saratoga News survived, partly by focusing on news that mattered.

This worked for the Saratoga News from 1963 until the paper was published in Saratoga or about 1977. The paper had been acquired by the company that published the Cupertino Courier and the acquisition of the Saratoga News completed the buyout of all the small, community papers in the Santa Clara Valley.

Some of the writing and advertising people retained their jobs when the paper was published in Cupertino. However, those of us working in the production room lost our jobs. I had a lot of fun working for 13 years at the Saratoga News.

The writing and advertising preparations took place in a building on Big Basin Way near Third Street where the Bella Saratoga restaurant stands today.



The actual production of the paper—printing, collating, addressing and bundling went on in the basement of the building known as Sam Cloud's barn. The barn was restored in 2008 and won a "green award" for the restoration. The Saratoga Barn, as it is known today, kept the look and spirit of the original barn.

The Saratoga News was created by a partnership of two individuals who were well-qualified to give the community a great publication.

The majority owner was Sherman Miller. Miller lived in Los Altos and had previously been a writer for the San Francisco Examiner of long standing. He handled the writing and photography for the paper. Miller was a quiet man who was very well-liked in the community.

The minority owner was Helen McLeod. McLeod had a business background in the newspaper business. She hailed from the Pacific Northwest, attending the University of Washington in Seattle, majoring in business administration. After college she was employed at the Seattle Post-

Intelligence newspaper or PI as it is popularly known. McLeod subsequently moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, working at the local paper in Burlingame in San Mateo county. She took care of the business end of the Saratoga News, making it profitable.

After the sale of the Saratoga News, McLeod retired to Santa Cruz county where she became an accomplished artist while studying at Cabrillo college.

McLeod was one of the first women publishers in Santa Clara county. She was also proud of the airplane pilot's license which she held for many years.

There were two other members of the staff that I think deserve mention. AJ "Tiny" Westphal and Margaret Reed.

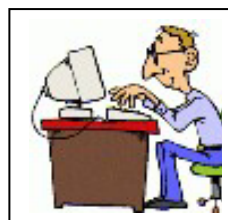


Tiny, shown above, was the printer of the Saratoga News. He was talented enough that the newspaper was always printed on time...or close to it. He had the ability to adjust or repair the complicated, large Swedish press, an offset press manufactured by Solna. Tiny was very inventive and resourceful. As an example, he owned a ranch in the Santa Cruz mountains. His ranch house had nineteenth century appliances. What got my attention is that he lined the outside walls of the ranch house with used aluminum printing plates from the Saratoga News. One could read all the back issues while standing next to the home's exterior.

Margaret Reed worked full time for the Saratoga News. This was unusual because most worked part time. She worked both upstairs, laying out the ads and articles and downstairs with us guys. Downstairs she ran the semi-dependable collating machine while talking a mile a minute. Reed knew everything that went on in this small town and breathed Saratoga. After the merge, she moved to Windsor, California.

The Saratoga News is a very different publication today but one that still holds my interest.

**Written by long time resident Michael Whalen**



### Correspondence Secretary Wanted

If you can donate 1-2 hours per month writing thank you notes and handling other light correspondence-- SHF needs your help. Stamps and stationary will be provided.

# Summer Retreat to Hostel— 100 Years and Still Standing

March marked an end to an era with the closing of the Sanborn Park Hostel, a two-story historic lodge once known as the Welch-Hurst lodge. The Sanborn Hostel provided one of the least expensive lodgings in the area in a beautiful forest setting in Sanborn Park.

The building had been leased by the County of Santa Clara to the Santa Clara Valley Club of American Youth Hostels, a nonprofit organization that maintained and operated the hostel.



Art and Sylvia Carroll had run the hostel from its inception and worked on the original renovation to make the building livable in the 1970's. Without their efforts, the building would have been condemned.

According to Carroll, the hostel closed officially January 31. A group of Forest Conservation volunteers stayed until the end of March. The last monthly potluck took place in March with a slide show covering the hostel's history.

The Santa Clara County Parks Department is determining what will happen to the historic building, said Carroll.

During the last 30 years, almost 158,000 people have stayed at the hostel—representing 99 foreign countries, all the states and territories of the US.

Both Art and Sylvia continue to do volunteer work with Art volunteering at the Monterey Hostel. Both volunteer at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles and Sylvia volunteers at the Portuguese Historical Museum at Kelly Park in San Jose.

## Remembering Judge James R. Welch

Lasting symbols of the life of James R. Welch include the summer lodge he built on Sanborn Road in 1908 as well as for his campaign for Skyline Boulevard to become one of the most scenic highways in California.

Welch, an Illinois native, came to San Jose in 1882 to further his education at the University of the Pacific (later moved to Stockton in 1924). He acquired 700 acres upon which he built a redwood lodge as a summer retreat off Sanborn road in 1908. His main residence was in San Jose.

## Welch's career

Welch was admitted to the bar in 1888 and from 1894 to 1897 served as city attorney of San Jose. He became a judge of the Superior Court in 1903 and served for 27 years. He was the county's first superior court judge.

Perhaps one of his greatest achievements was ensuring that Skyline Boulevard which starts in San Francisco and ends when it merges with Summit Road in Santa Cruz County was completed. The road opened in 1929.

## Pick Place

Vernon J. Pick, a reclusive millionaire from a uranium discovery, purchased the property in 1955 and owned it until 1969. Known as "Pick Place" he built an electronics research facility and installed a bomb shelter on the property. The bomb shelter was somewhat ironic since he made his millions mining uranium.

HP Dyer bought some of the land and built a house with sandstone and redwood. The Dyer property was later purchased by George P. Peterson and was used by his family until the county purchased it in 1974. The Dyer home is now the Youth Science Institute, a nonprofit organization focused on science for young children.

The Pick/Welch land was bought in 1976 by the county and converted to a 1600 acre park, Sanborn-Skyline Park, third largest in Santa Clara County.

## Summer lodge

The Welch-Hurst lodge has been designated as a county point of historical interest since the 1970's. It is hoped the pristine beauty of the 100 year old lodge will be saved.

Welch used the lodge as a summer retreat and called the lodge "Welch," after himself and "Hurst" after the grove of trees surrounding it.

The charming lodge is built of halved redwood logs and blends seamlessly with the landscaping. An artificial pond (Walden West) with an island completes the idyllic setting.

The house interior features redwood paneling with a hexagonal great room. A centerpiece of the inside is a staircase with steps made of logs and a bannister made from Manzanita branches. Windows in the all-redwood lodge reach the floor enabling those inside to enjoy the natural beauty of the surrounding redwoods. A huge fireplace of local rock dominates the room.

## Italianate Garden at Montalvo

The Italianate Garden and Succulent garden at Montalvo is now under the direction of a garden curator. The two-acre



romantic garden site, reflected the Italian gardens visited by Senator James Phelan during his lifetime. The renovation is expected to be complete in time for celebrating the centennial of the estate in 2012 and will match George Doeltz's, Phelan's gardener's, original design. Naval orange trees, cypress trees and hedges line the garden path in the Italianate style.

Approximately 300 Weeks roses from the Pillow Fight variation have been secured and will also define paths. The roses have a honey scent.

## A New Willys Peck Book

**Willys Peck's Saratoga**, a new book will be rolling off the presses in May thanks to the efforts of the Cupertino History Center.



The new book is a compilation of interesting columns on Saratoga written by Peck when he worked for the Saratoga News. The content is different from the book entitled, **Stereoptican**.

The book includes a biography written by good friend and former reporter Jackie Welch, a description of a perfect husband by Betty Peck, a tribute by Carl Heintze

covering Peck's career at the Mercury News and a tribute by Saratoga News Dale Bryant covering Peck's career at the Saratoga News. The book was edited by April Halberstadt with some assistance provided by Katie Alexander and Annette Stransky. Award winning Mercury News photographer Jim Gensheimer provided the bulk of the photographs.

The much published Peck has enriched Saratoga's with his columns on Saratoga for many years. He has also added to our vocabulary many creative acronyms: LIP, living in the past; NTAA, never throw anything away; SAM, subliminal argumentative mouthing; and SDP, slavish devotion to the past. His gentle humor is a hallmark of those columns.

Those interested can contact the California History Center open Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 to 12 and then 1-4 PM. The center is housed in the 1895 Petit Trianon, designed by noted architect Willis Polk, on the DeAnza college campus.

The center is also the location of the exhibit "*Roots and Wings: Saratoga's Community Garden*"—covering the history of the Saratoga community garden originated by Betty Peck and an oral history by Betty Peck and Jackie Welch. The exhibit runs until the end of June.

Copies of the book will also be distributed by the Saratoga History Museum gift shop most likely in the June time period.

## Congrats to the Skillet Lickers

Les Landin, long-time SHF member, and founder of the Skillet Licker's band was awarded a commendation for his



leadership and their community work by the city council in

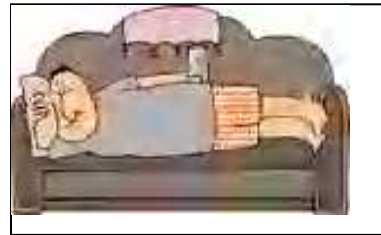
April. Landin is shown playing the guitar in the middle of the photo.

The Skillet Licker's, founded over 40 years ago, have performed pro bono at many events including the Saratoga Historical Foundation, city events, local organizations, and retirement homes. The group would usually ask that in lieu of monetary payment, "the band be allowed to eat, or 'lick the skillet' if food was served."

Landin, a Renaissance man, has been a local teacher, principal, author, and musician for many years. He always combined music; a talent for drawing; boundless enthusiasm and good humor in his professional and community work. Some of the songs sung by the Skillet Lickers reflect Landin's sense of humor.

The Skillet Lickers, a self-described cowboy band, practice each month at the Garrod ranch in Saratoga and play guitar, banjo, harmonica or fiddle. The talented group includes Tina Liddie, Ron and Linda Hagelin, Ed Scherf, Vince Garrod, Bob Cancellieri, Sandra Whalen, Harry Shaver, Barbara Bauer, Elsie Riddle and Lee Anne Welch.

## MOVE-IT Saratoga—Couch Potatoes Watch Out!



Couch potato alert—it's time to get fit—walk 26 miles or bike 100 miles in Saratoga between May 31 and September 1 as part of the MOVE-IT program initiated by the Parks and Recreation

Commission. Everyone who completes their miles will be honored at the September 15, 2010 City Council meeting. Included in the suggested ways of reaching those goals are the walking tour provided by SHF and the historic house biking tour. Register for MOVE-IT Saratoga at the city website and get fit!! Copies of the walking tour and the historic house bike tour are located on the city website; chamber of commerce website and the Saratoga History Museum website.

Docent-led walking tours can be scheduled by calling 408-867-4311. One Saratogan after taking the docent-led tour said, "I've lived here since 1966 and didn't realize Saratoga had so much history."

## Second Historic House Bike Tour Planned



A second historic house bike tour is planned taking a different route from the first. The bike tour will be self-guided and available in June. The 1925 Carter

House, a charming home in the Spanish eclectic style is located on Glen Una and is one of the homes on the route.

## How Does Your Garden Grow?— An Update

The planting of the Saratoga Historical Park will take place during the month of May, according to Kevin Meeks, public works manager.

The Saratoga Historical Park encompasses the History Museum, historic McWilliams House, and the BookGoRound and has been in excavation mode since 2009.

Other changes for the park include a high tech irrigation controller linked to the weather station that will adjust watering times according to temperature—



eliminating the need for any hand or additional watering.

The handicap ramp providing access to

the Museum and McWilliams House is presently under construction and should be completed by the time this newsletter is received.

Weatherproofing of the BookGoRound, a historic cinderblock design, will take place during the next two weeks. The process, according to Meeks, needs a week of warm, dry weather to ensure the walls are sealed.

Once the weatherproofing of the BookGoRound has been completed, the grounds can be planted. The plans drawn up by Design Focus using drought-tolerant plants once developed from California native plants by the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation, will be stunning.

Landscape Committee Member Katie Alexander reports that in the summer, the plants will be blooming in colors of bright red, icy white and vibrant blue. In the fall, the colors of the leaves and flowers will be a rich, warm palette of reds, oranges and yellows.

Many of the plants will carry the names of Saratoga's including Ray Hartman, Howard McMinn, Keith Davey and more.

Other plants include Zauchinera, ground cover; Arctostaphylos, from the Manzanita family; Rosachinensis mutabile or China Rose; Ginkgo Bilboa Saratoga, a unique form of Japanese maple featuring a fan-shaped leaf; carpet rose white, one of the best white garden flowers and more. The new plants are expected to attract humming birds, butterflies, and garden lovers around the valley.

Signs in the landscaping will identify the plant names and will comprise a mini exhibit of Saratoga history through horticulture.

The landscaping will include a paved area where events can be held and Education Program Director Linda Hagelin will be able to use the area for demonstrating life in the 1800's.

Landscape Committee Chair, Ernie Kraule says the wait will be worth it!

## Argonaut Celebrates 50 Years

Argonaut Elementary School (Shadowbrook Lane) recently celebrated it's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday with an old fashioned carnival and attendance by alumni, parents and students.



The Saratoga Educational Program docents provided old fashioned games and had a table with museum membership information along with walking and bicycling historic house tour maps for creating awareness for the Museum.

Games of the 1800's were taught by costumed docents Jenni Taylor, Connie Brooding, and Myrna Thompson.

Rolling hoop, one of the games demonstrated—where a hoop is moved along with a stick surprised



children with its difficulty. It is thought the game dates back to the ancient Egyptians.

The Game of Graces also known as Flying Circle has hoops sent twirling and caught on the tips of slender wooden wands between two people was also very popular. This game was considered both proper and as beneficial exercise for girls in



the early 1800's and proper for boys to play as well.

Jacob's Ladder, six wood segments attached with ribbon, forming a walking ladder when tilted, fascinated both young and old.

Jump rope, another game dating to the



Egyptians, was also enjoyed. No takers, however, on jumping "double Dutch" which is thought to have originated when the Dutch came to the US.



shirts; polo shirts; bookmarks; postcards; landmark-shaped jewelry; DVDs; and local history books. Cash or check, please.



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## Give a Gift of Saratoga—From the Museum Gift Shop

If you are looking for a special gift for any occasion, stop by the Saratoga History Museum. Two new additions to the gift shop include cards and water color prints.

Felicia Pollock, long time Saratoga resident and SHF member, has provided a wonderful collection of Saratoga-oriented cards for sale featuring her photography.

Well-known local artist Kay Duffy has donated lovely matted water color prints of many Saratoga sights that are also for sale. These prints—many are of the orchards in bloom -- are just waiting to be framed and hung on someone's wall.

The gift shop also has nicely screened Saratoga themed t-



## Fablinger Oak Tree--History

Many of you have driven down Fruitvale Avenue noticing



the stately old oak tree growing near the Warner Hutton House. Once, voted as one of the 30 most beautiful heritage trees in Saratoga by the Heritage Tree Society of Saratoga, it was recently chopped down due to old age and concern over falling limbs.

The 100 year-old oak tree was the last symbol of where the Fablinger ranch once stood. James

Fablinger was the son-in-law of Mary and Abolitionist John Brown. James Fablinger married Ellen Brown in Rohnerville, California in 1869. The family moved to Saratoga in 1881 and lived on Bohlman Road for a short time before moving to the Fruitvale Avenue area. James Fablinger taught at the Oak Street grammar school.

Many of the Brown and Fablinger family members are buried in Madronia cemetery on Oak Street.



