



# Saratoga Historical Foundation

PO Box 172, Saratoga CA 95071

September 2020

## What's Happening at the Museum?

*Come gather 'round people, wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters around you have grown  
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone*

*If your time to you is worth saving  
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone*

*For the times, they are a-changin'*

The times are a-changin' in just about every aspect of life-- including your favorite museum. With Covid-19 we have had to change the way we are doing things. The museum has been closed since mid-March but we have a quick overview of suffrage on the porch of the museum. Stop and take a look. It will be taken down when the rainy season comes!

Or you can go up to our website at



[www.saratogahistory.com](http://www.saratogahistory.com)  
and click on a link that says "Bella Blaney" and follow along a presentation of the life and times of Saratoga's own Suffragist.

We'll be adding additional online presentations to our website. One that promises to be very interesting is on "Saratoga in the 1950's." Do you remember what Saratoga

was like at that time?

We don't know how long Covid-19 is going to be around so we are planning some Zoom meetings on various topics that you will find interesting and

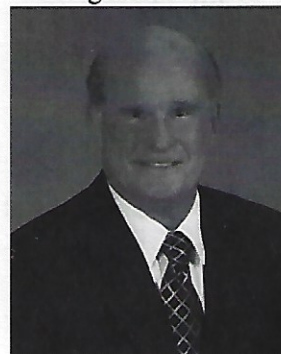
enjoyable. Watch for announcements about these new programs.



Normally by this time we have an annual get together thanking our volunteers. This year we donated the money that would have gone towards that event and gave it to West Valley Community Services. The photo of Swanee dress shop (now the Saratoga History Museum) was the photo used on the card sent to volunteers:

We recently hosted City Council candidates at the Historical Park to tell them about Saratoga's rich history. The one-on-one presentations (masks and social distancing!) was enjoyed by the candidates. Thank you Ray Cosyn, Linda Hagelin, and Annette Stransky for meeting with the candidates.

Congratulations to Ernie Kraule, new Vice President



of Saratoga Historical Foundation. Ernie has been instrumental in completing many projects for the Foundation-- including the schoolhouse, patio, mobile storage-- and soon, the blacksmith exhibit. Bob Himel, former vice president retired and is thanked for his

service.



## Titus: A Halloween Star

by Bill Peck

When people would ask me if the family had any skeletons in the closet, I would say we did have one, but he wasn't in the closet. He was right out there in the living room. In fact, he was the star of my family's annual Halloween haunted house. My mother and I found him hanging in an antique store window in Los Gatos; we knew at once it was the perfect birthday gift for Dad, a gift we knew Dad would love; and love it he did, naming it after Titus, his ancestor, a lieutenant of George Washington's who had died of camp fever in New Jersey, a rather inglorious place to die. I mean, why couldn't Titus have waited and died at Valley Forge? I mean, really! New Jersey!

But that didn't matter; I have to say that Titus



was not a dime store skeleton made out of plastic. Not on your life; he was the real deal! Titus was a real skeleton of some unknown person, a former Florida prisoner, perhaps, who died in the electric chair, the one they called "Old Sparky," a prisoner who willingly or unwillingly had donated his body to science and the edification of all medical students who gazed upon his bones. Little did he know that one day he would be hanging from the ceiling of an antique store in downtown Los Gatos and bought by a little boy and his mother as a birthday gift for Dad! Little did he know he would become the star of their annual Halloween haunted house.

Work on the haunted house began as soon as October rolled around every year without fail.

Dad would start constructing the technical support systems. He'd rig the wires for the ghost, build the coffin for the tormented spirit, hook the microphones up to speakers in the coffin, put the lights in the Great Hall on dimmers, and rig the invisible wires so Titus could shake the hands of terrified trick-or-treaters. Dad also carefully constructed a gauze ghost that ran on an



invisible wire across the great hall, a large room in back of the house. The ghost had a dim light inside it that really made it look menacing; this was not a friendly ghost like Caspar, this was the kind described in the books written about real ghosts by professional English ghost hunters. Dad also constructed a very realistic coffin for the tortured spirit played by myself. I had experience as an actor playing tortured spirits both alive and dead. Dad had made many types of coffins for his Shakespeare productions in the backyard theatre, but he really outdid himself on this one; just looking at it gave me chills. As the tormented soul in the coffin, I had a



microphone hidden in the back of the hall; the speaker was inside the coffin. A family friend

cont. on page 3



cont. from page 2

played the ghost, providing assorted screams, moans and dialogue as needed in support of the tormented spirit in the coffin. We could see the trick- or- treaters but they couldn't see us or my dad also at the microphone. He was in charge of the wires and voice of our star, Titus.

As trick- or- treaters would come down the dark driveway to the Great Hall entrance in the back, my sister would meet them and casually gather information on who they were and what they liked, where they went to school etc. Then she would go in the back room where we were with the microphone; my sister would relay this information to us which we would then use in our prophetic utterings both by the tormented spirit in the coffin and the ghost floating about the room. By the time the trick- or- treaters



found the door to the Great Hall at the end of the driveway, not an easy task in the dark, we were all ready. Then, they knocked and the door would open very slowly.

They were greeted at the door by a witch played by my mother. Now, this was not a Disney witch she played by any means. No way! Definitely not! This was a witch straight out of the Brothers Grimm or Slavic mythology. She was very gracious and generous as only those witches can be. She made everyone feel at home in the darkened room with the flickering lights.

Mom would then point to a witch's cauldron on the floor and offer the trick- or- treaters haunted walnuts, a treat that they probably had not encountered elsewhere; then, while they were nibbling at the haunted walnuts, the tortured spirits would arise, both the one tormented spirit



in the coffin and the one floating about the room moaning, screaming and sometimes

laughing like a maniac. The final touch was when my dad also at the microphone in the back would invite the kids to shake the hand of Titus. Now, by this time many kids were reluctant to do this, some were very reluctant and would move away quickly, very quickly. But they would come back year after year and even now I understand from my sister that many of them remember that unique Halloween experience with fondness, that one at the haunted house at 14275 Saratoga Ave. the one with the tormented spirits, the coffin, the haunted walnuts, the ghost, the witch, and, of course, the star of the show, Titus. I should add one very important detail in case you wanted to try this endeavor yourself this Halloween. At the time of the haunted house described above, it was legal to have a real skeleton on your property. Now it is not legal. It's a crime. It's too bad really! I had always thought of Titus as part of the family not as someone who could get you indicted.





## S & H Green Stamps

How many people remember S & H green stamps? I can remember getting my first tennis racket by redeeming stamps. Redeeming the stamps always felt like a special "free" gift.



The stamps originated in 1896 and were used by retailers to build customer loyalty. Shoppers received the

stamps based on the dollar amount of their purchase. They could then paste the stamps in a book that had 24 pages with each page requiring 50 points. The stamps were issued in denominations of one, ten, and fifty points. People could exchange the books for goods such as housewares and other items from either a Green Stamp store or a catalog.

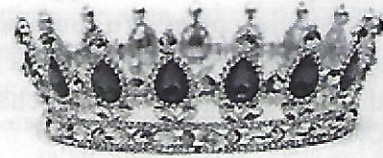


The stamps were popular through the 1950's- up until the 1970's when the value of the rewards began to decline. As more and more stamps were required for an item that was barely discounted fewer people saw saving the stamps as worthwhile.

Competitor Blue Chip Stamps cut some inroads into the popularity of S & H. It was a similar program of exchanging books of stamps for consumer goods.

Today you can find books of S & H stamps on sale on eBay as part of collectible memorabilia.

## Prunes--A Royal Topic



Diane Daley-Eaton said, "When I was crowned "Miss Saratoga" in 1966 I was given a tour of prune orchards and a quick education about our glorious prune economy. Eventually I became "Miss Santa Clara County" and basically an ambassador for PRUNES. This was challenging as I had to answer many questions about prunes. The very word brought a smile (not pruned lips) and stifled giggle with my answer. As I moved on to the "Miss California" pageant my main conversation with sponsors and reporters was, of course, prunes! What a glorious time it was to have flowering orchards all over Saratoga and the valley! I miss the days of open space, orchard-covered hills and prune and apricot trees in every Argonaut yard!"

*Originally printed in Saratoga--A Small Town--Many Memories*

## Telling Time in the Village

This charming clock sans the orange cones was recently installed along Big Basin Way, thanks to donations by citizens and courtesy of the Saratoga Village Development Council.





## Remember Collecting Betty Crocker Coupons?



It all started with a free teaspoon. Back in 1931, General Mills began tucking an offer for a free teaspoon — Friendship pattern by William Rogers & Son — into bags of Gold Medal flour and boxes of Wheaties, thinking it would be a good way to boost sales. By the next year, General Mills was offering an entire set of flatware that could be purchased with coupons plus a few cents.

Just about every household in America was clipping coupons to buy "gifts." Grandmothers, mothers, and their children eagerly began saving coupons. Many a "hope chest" was filled with flatware, knives, and other kitchen products thanks to the program.



The marketing campaign using coupons on General Mills products lasted until 2006! It was one of the longest-running loyalty programs in the country. At one time coupons could be found on more than 200 General

Mills food products.

The coupon program expanded into a 76 page catalog with a wide array of flatware, dishes, cookware, gadgets, decorating products, furniture and toys.

Prices range from \$5.25 plus 30 coupon points (\$8.95 without points) for a silverplate fork or spoon to \$229.95 plus 350 points (\$385.95 without points) for a 16-piece set of Denby Harlequin dinnerware.



They even offered a cash-only plan. Few people, however, used the cash-only plan.



The red spoon logo was easily recognizable and attracted consumers.

Betty Crocker was created in 1921 by Washburn-Crosby and advertiser Bruce Barton. Under Marjorie Husted's supervision, the image of Betty Crocker became the image of General Mills. The image has been updated over the years.

More merchandising rolled out including cookbooks in multiple languages. In 1945, Betty Crocker was the second most popular woman in America; Eleanor Roosevelt was named first.

## Board Positions Open!

The Saratoga Historical Foundation board of directors has two positions open: Treasurer and Fund Development Director. Join an enthusiastic board and help grow the organization. If you are high energy, skilled in finance, and enjoy history, give us a call at 408-867-4311 or email [info@saratogahistory.com](mailto:info@saratogahistory.com) to learn more.

---

In Memoriam  
Sheila Heid, lifetime member

---



## Shopping in Saratoga

Fat Robin, located on Big Basin Way is one of the oldest, continuous operating stores in the Village



since 1975. Owned by Connie Hillblom, the store offers luxury linens, chic table settings, antique glassware and unique home décor.

"We have enjoyed longevity in Saratoga due to our loyal customer base," says Connie. "And we appreciate the support."

Connie came from the Midwest 60 years ago and settled in San Jose where she met and married Walter Hillblom. After a few years they moved to Saratoga, attracted by the good schools and friendly community.

"I have always enjoyed putting together unique place settings-- combining lovely antique dishes with new", says Connie. "I like to put together different linen textures using a broad palette."



Table setting is a way to set a table with tableware such as utensils for eating and for serving. And, according to Connie, "Set a table properly with lovely table settings can even make the food taste better!"

Fat Robin has tables and tables properly set to spark the imagination. An assortment of tablecloths, place mats, runners, chargers, napkin rings, napkins...in all colors and textures are available for you to create your own table setting. You can even bring in your own special napkins and Connie can help you select just the right tablecloth or whatever you need to match.

Connie notes that today it doesn't have to be expensive because there are so many interesting place mats in paper or you can mix handcrafted tablecloths to create a special ambience. Dining, according to Connie, should be an event!

In addition to linens, the store has centerpieces, wall hangings, salt and pepper shakers and more. Choose from a selection of unique cards for all occasions and candles for ambience--both are some of the store's best sellers.

Holiday season is when the store brings in an assortment of decorations. Right now there is a wide selection of Halloween decorations with spiders, bats, black cats, pumpkins and holiday dishes!



"I do something different each year at home for the holidays. I don't like the decorations to look the same each year," says Connie. "Besides, it is fun to put new things together with the old."

continued on page 7



cont. from page 6



And where did she get the store's name? "I thought the name Fat Robin sounded whimsical-- and I liked it!," says Connie.

The Fat Robin was closed for Covid-19 but is now open at 14429 Big Basin Way. Discover new and interesting ways to showcase dining!

Connie and Walter have 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

### **Pioneer Names Live on After the Orchard is Gone**

Azule Crossing was once owned by BT Galeb who came to the US in 1916. Galeb worked hard until 1937 when he could afford to buy 75 acres of prunes and apricots on the land on which



Azule Crossing once stood. In the early days, "Galeb Camp" included the family home, a dried fruit plant, grocery store and housing for farm workers.

Galeb had four children—Desanka, Slobodan, Ted and Zorka. The street Zorka is named after his daughter and is located behind Blue Hills Crossing.

DeSanka Avenue was named after Desanka Galeb. Ted Court and Drive is named after Ted Galeb. Galeb in Serbian translates to seagull aka Seagull Way-- another street in Saratoga. The Galeb family also built Azule Crossing (renamed Blue Hills Crossing) on Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd.

Wes and Dewey Kosich formed Kosich Construction Company and built many homes and commercial properties in the Santa Clara County. Streets named after the Kosich family include: Lolly Ct named after an uncle. Radoyka Drive is named after a cousin. Obrad Dr. was named after a great uncle. Kosich Drive, Court and Place was named after Dewey and Wes Kosich. The original orchard was located on Saratoga Avenue across from Radio Shack and was the family homestead.

### **Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut!**

If you see a golden acorn sitting on a bench along Big Basin Way, you're not going nuts. Just a charming piece of art from nearby Aegis Art Gallery.







## Saratoga Historical Foundation

PO Box 172  
Saratoga, CA 95071

Be sure to visit: [www.saratogahistory.com](http://www.saratogahistory.com) or  
[www.facebook.com/saratogahistory](http://www.facebook.com/saratogahistory)

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
SARATOGA CA  
PERMIT NO 8099

Return Service Requested

### Memories of Halloween in the '50's

"The kids who had really creative moms who could sew well usually got fancier costumes. The one Halloween I really remember was when I was older and went to a costume party in an old wedding dress that someone loaned me - long dress, very full with a long train, etc. And then everyone wanted to go bowling in their costumes. Bowling in a long wedding dress - having to hold up the dress and the train is a feat for the very well coordinated - not me at the time. After sending most of my bowling balls off into the gutter and repeatedly tripping on the train and almost winding up in the gutter myself, I gave up and sat out the rest of the game. Not a big fan of Halloween in my dotage, but love decorating for fall".-- Gail

"Living in the middle of an orchard with no neighbors around did not lend itself to many trick-or-treaters but nonetheless my brother and I always left our porch light on in hopes of having someone come visit. We always did a pumpkin and made it as frightening as possible. Our Mom always made us



cupcakes to take to our classmates to have after the Halloween parade. Guess the parade was the highlight of our day."-- Jane

"When I was young, we left at dusk and probably walked miles

by the time we were done. We ventured to all the neighboring streets where we knew each house and who lived there. We also knew who gave out the best candy every year. There was, and still is, a small cottage nearby, where the owners would give us whole large candy bars - what a treat! -- Jo