

# Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

[www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)    [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org)

## PHS PLANS ACTIVITIES

# MAY IS PRESERVATION MONTH IN PINOLE

**T**he Pinole Historical Society will join thousands of individuals across the country to celebrate Preservation Month in May with a series of activities that highlight how important preservation is to the character of a community.

The month-long celebration is sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and endorsed by the Pinole City Council, which has proclaimed May as Preservation Month in the city.

The PHS will celebrate Preservation Month with a series of free events, including:

### **MAY 1-31: PINOLE LIBRARY EXHIBIT**

An exhibit with a "preservation" theme at the Pinole Library, 2935 Pinole Valley Road.

### **MAY 5: PRESERVATION MONTH PROGRAM**

A special Preservation Month program, 6:30 to 8 p.m., at the Pinole Library, 2935 Pinole Valley Road.

### **MAY 15: WALKING TOUR OF HISTORIC DOWNTOWN PINOLE**

George Vincent, PHS Vice President and Historian, will lead a one-hour tour of downtown Pinole's historic buildings at 2 p.m. Meet in front of the Faria house, 2100 San Pablo Avenue.



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Since the National Trust for Historic Preservation created "Preservation Week" in 1971 to spotlight grassroots preservation efforts in America, it has grown into an annual celebration observed by small towns and big cities with events ranging from architectural and historic tours, award ceremonies,

fundraising events, and educational programs.

In 2005, the National Trust for Historic Preservation extended the celebration to the entire month of May and declared it "Preservation Month." This provides a longer opportunity to celebrate the diverse and unique heritage of our country's cities and states, and enables more Americans to become involved in the growing preservation movement.

Learn more about the National Trust for Historic Preservation at [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org), and about Preservation Month at [www.PreservationNation.org/PreservationMonth](http://www.PreservationNation.org/PreservationMonth).



*Pinole Councilman Tim Banuelos has written an article on Community Character and how it relates to the city's General and Specific plans. It's on page 8 of this newsletter.*

**Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society**

## WHERE TO FIND NEWSBRIEFS

**P**ick up your copy of Pinole Historical Society *Newsbriefs* at these locations:

AccuTech Auto Care, Adela's Studio, The Alley Cafe, Antlers Tavern, Bank of the West, The Bear Claw, Big O Tires, Blue Sky Sports, Bronze Buns, Cafe Soleil, China House, Coldwell Banker (Allen Faria), Crocketts Premier Auto Body, Dolan's Lumber, Embers, Farmers Insurance (Madeline Crandall), Farmers Insurance (Carol White), The Flower Cart, Garden of Gems, Douglas Gordon, D.D.S., Hairitage Bead and Boutique, Happy Sashimi, Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, Kendall Financial Services, Ladies Workout Express, Lakeridge Athletic Club, Mechanics Bank (Pinole Valley and Pinole Vista), Old Time Realtors, Park Pharmacy, Attorney Donald E. Patterson, Peet's Coffee, Pinole Art Center, Pinole City Hall, Pinole Creek Cafe, Pinole Library, Pinole Paws, Pinole Police Department, Pinole Senior Center, Pinole Valley Community Church, Realty World (Viktor Manrique), The Red Onion, Ricky's Corner, Ristorante Due Rose, Sashays Salon, Sam's Dog House, Sign-A-Rama, Taqueria Sanchez, Tenax Law Group, Top Floor Salon, and Waffle Stop.

It's also posted on the PHS website.

**FOR ADVERTISERS:** *PHS Newsbriefs* prints 2,000 copies every quarter, generating readership among thousands of Pinole residents. Hundreds more receive the newsletter directly from the PHS via its database and website. If you're interested in advertising, please contact Jeff Rubin at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org) or call (510) 724-9507.

## UPCOMING PHS MEETINGS

**May 20:** The program will feature the reading of a 1952 letter written by Kathryn Burns Plummer, granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Tennent and Rafaela Martinez Tennent.

The letter chronicles personal memories, stories, and historical anecdotes of Pinole's earliest settlers, as told to her by family members. The reading will be accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

**June 17:** Program to be announced

**July 15:** Program to be announced

## PHS MEETING SCHEDULE

**P**lease join us on the third Thursday every month at 6:30 p.m. in the Alex Clark Room of the Public Safety Facility, 880 Tennent Avenue. We have presentations, guest speakers, discussions, and other activities. There is something interesting for attendees at every meeting.

All PHS members and the general public are invited to attend our meetings.

|                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>May 20</b>              | <b>September 16</b> |
| <b>June 17</b>             | <b>October 21</b>   |
| <b>July 15</b>             | <b>November 18</b>  |
| <b>August (no meeting)</b> | <b>December 16</b>  |

## PINOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# President's Message

Marcia Kalapus, President, Pinole Historical Society

## PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHT CITY'S HISTORY

Since last August we have been very busy, not only at our board meetings, but also planning interesting programs for our monthly membership meetings, as well as planning for the society's future.

The community responded with their purchases of *Images of America: Pinole*, and we are grateful for their generosity. We have been able to generate enough revenue to invest in some CDs for our future museum, as well as provide new products.

We have produced greeting cards, postcards, and handsome acrylic refrigerator magnets for your historical collections—all featuring images of the history of Pinole—that can be purchased at our booth at the farmers' market.

If you have interesting stories about your early Pinole families, tell us about them; we are all ears for "olden days" stories.

In September 2009 we set new goals. One was to have more educational programs at our monthly membership meetings. PHS Education Coordinator George Vincent has provided interesting and informative programs for us.

I am hoping this article will entice all of you to come to our monthly meetings and be witness to history of the past—and also of the present.

### RECENT PROGRAMS

Last December, George spoke about the lives of Emma and Ramona Martinez, the descendants of Ygnacio Martinez, their family's poverty, their social decline, and Ramona's early death. It was a heartbreaking story and reminded all of us how hard life was for those who once enjoyed wealth from living on the Spanish land grants.

In January, Jack Meehan, George Vincent, and Jeff Rubin regaled us with a presentation about



Marcia Kalapus

Jessie Howe Clark. She was Pinole's historian, librarian, and poet laureate for many years. George enlightened us with stories about her from his childhood.

### EARLY JOURNALIST

Jessie began documenting Pinole history as soon as she set foot on the pier at the end of Tennent Avenue in the early 1900s. She archived the earliest newspaper, the *Pinole Weekly Times*. Jack

talked about the first highway signal installed in 1949 on San Pablo Avenue, which was known at that time as U.S. Highway 40 and Main Street. Jeff showed numerous slides about the early days of Pinole.

### INFAMOUS ROBBERY

Our most unusual presentation was by Detective Sergeant Matt Messier of the Pinole Police Department.

He talked about the 1929 shooting death of Constable Arthur (Jerry) McDonald during the robbery of the Rodeo branch of the Bank of Pinole.

Sgt. Messier's research of the infamous Fleagle Gang, which robbed the bank, included all of the gang's activities across the country in the 1920s and 1930s.

Sgt. Messier had many exhibits to show us, including the actual Colt .45 caliber submachine gun that killed Constable McDonald. We all got to hold it. The audio portion of the program is on our website.

*Continued on page 4*

Geoff Torretta

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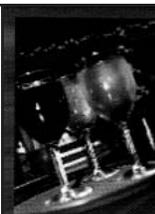


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# PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHT CITY'S HISTORY

Continued from page 3

Pinole architect Timothy Banuelos gave us an overview of residential architectural designs unique to this area from 1850 to the 1970s at our March meeting. Now when we drive through Pinole we can recognize the designs.

## ALL ABOARD!

In April, Jack Meehan, Chuck Zeiss, and Pete Ward presented a very informative history of the railroads that played such a big part of Pinole's history. Their stories and recollections made for a fun evening.

George is busy planning more programs for the rest of the year.

Another one of our goals is to interview many of our senior citizens who have stories about old Pinole.

Jeff Rubin and George Vincent have been doing



**The eastbound Santa Fe Chief rumbles past the Pinole depot, around 1950.**

interviews, and those with Charlotte Shea and Alex Clark have been on Channel 28. Watch your TV listings for soon-to-be-televised interviews with other local celebrities!

Most folks think that history is only in the "olden days." Not so fast. History from the 1940s to 2000 is now the "olden days." There are stories yet to be told about how we lived in the World War II years,

the 50s and 60s ways of life, and more.

I encourage grandparents, parents, and family members to sit with young children and talk about, or read history to them.

One of the things I do with my granddaughter when we are reading history is to interject family stories so she can relate to that time frame with her own family.

She asks questions

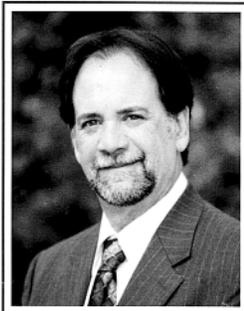
and wants to know what the family did. Her favorite is when I tell her stories about my grandparents migrating across the country in wagon trains and shopping in trading posts, living life in a log cabin. That and all the daily chores they did. The "Little House on the Prairie" TV series is how we started.

We need to do as much as we can to enhance our youngsters' knowledge about the past by interjecting some family history into the stories.

Our library has many wonderful books for all age groups, and I know there are a lot of stories out there to be told.

Another way to share history with your children is to write a family history for them.

Have a great spring.



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# It happened back then

**I**n 1898, the *Pinole Weekly Times* sold for \$1.50 per year. The following are excerpts from the microfilm of the newspaper, available at the Pinole Library.

**October 8, 1898:** "Notice is hereby given that any person found throwing dead animals or debris of any nature in the creek running through the town of Pinole will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

**October 8, 1898:** "Two young rogues about 18 or 20 years of age entered Ah Hong, the Chinese clamdigger's cabin on the wharf, last Sunday afternoon about 5 p.m., and stole \$3.05 from his bed."

**May 20, 1905:** "The Board of Trustees appoints Poundmaster O. Sass with orders to impound livestock running loose on Pinole's roads."

**August 23, 1905:** "A reduction of 25 cents on each \$100 assessed valuation has been made by the supervisors in the county tax rate. The rate this year being \$1.55, as compared to \$1.80 last year."

**September 16, 1905:** "The public will please take notice that Saturday, September 16, 1905, the doors of the fine structure which I named and will



conduct as a first-class department store will be thrown open to the public."

— A. Greenfield.

**September 16, 1905:** "The Hercules team played two games in Salinas last week, the first being played on Saturday and lost by a score of 4 to 5. Sunday's game was won by a score of 6 to 4."

**January 11, 1908:** "A.T. Silva has opened up the Pinole Tamale Parlors on Tennent Avenue, one block from Greenfield's store. Chicken tamales 15 cents or two for 25 cents. Chili con carne and enchiladas on special order."

**May 30, 1908:** "Cow on Ellerhorst Ranch gives birth to triplets."

**February 1909:** "Boxing match in new Opera House. Jack Duarte of Pinole Athletic and Outing Club knocks out Eddie Thompson in 1 1/2 rounds."

**January 25, 1921:** "Officer A. McDonald issues proclamation: No more craps. No more blackjack. No more gentleman horse poker."

**October 5, 1922:** "Chicken thieves busy in west Pinole. Heavy losses of poultry. Two dozen taken in one night."



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# Back in the day

## HOT TIMES IN TURN-OF-THE-LAST-CENTURY PINOLE

By George Vincent

**E**arly Pinole was a combustible town. Homes, barns, and businesses were built of wood and many were close together.

One of the earliest fires of note occurred in 1892. Flames destroyed Bernardo Fernandez's elegant Spanish-style residence near the waterfront. Wet sacks and water buckets were no match for the blaze.

However, it was the large Ellerhorst barn fire of 1903 that gave rise to a serious effort to address the new city's fire danger. A long bucket brigade drawing water from Pinole Creek 75 feet away could not save the structure.

In 1904, the Hercules Powder Company put in a well and pumping station. Pinole then installed six hydrants, with a 500-foot hose cart hauled by volunteers.

The town's alarm system consisted of fire bells on selected streets.



**A fire in June 1908, destroyed Forester's Hall and nearly burnd down the entire downtown. Photo from the George Vincent collection.**

Most fires were caused by carelessness.

Outbreaks were common from red-hot, wood-burning stoves left unattended, or overheating electric globes placed under blankets during the day to warm cold feet at night.

### DOWNTOWN FIRES

In December 1905, Mrs. Joe Francisco's Nob Hill home burned to the ground. She had left

three sleeping tots and a red-hot stove unattended while going on an errand. A boarder broke down the locked door and rescued the children before firefighters arrived.

The most dangerous fires happened in the old downtown along Main Street and Tennent Avenue.

A 1906 fire almost took out the entire downtown. On June 5, 1908, the town's social center,

Forester's Hall on Tennent Avenue, burned down. Only the efforts of firefighters kept the fast-burning fire from consuming the whole town.

The grand, two-story Pinole Opera House replaced Forester's Hall, and after two bouts with fires, also succumbed to flames in 1931.

Fires in downtown hotels and saloons were also destructive.



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# HOT TIMES IN TURN-OF-THE-LAST-CENTURY PINOLE

In September 1909, the Pinole Hotel, run by Mrs. Starkey, was renovated as a first-class rooming house. A year later it burned down at 2 a.m., before firemen arrived; the fire also destroyed adjoining buildings. Boarders barely escaped and lost everything.

## HOTEL BURNS

The fire department, along with excellent water pressure, was credited with preventing the fire from spreading to the center of town. The city council commended Fire Chief A.M. McDonald and Assistant Chief Henry Planz. In November 1929, the American Hotel, next to the Pinole Opera House, suspiciously went up in flames; its caretaker, Tim McCartney, was killed.

Early on a cold Janu-

ary morning in 1924, John Vincent's First and Last Chance Saloon caught fire from a cigar left in a cuspidor on the sawdust floor. Miss Alice Costa vigorously rang the alarm bell on Tennent Avenue.

Prompt and splendid work by the volunteer fire department saved Pinole from one of the most costly fires in its history. The fire was hard to fight because water was frozen in the pipes. The whole west end of Tennent Avenue would have gone up if there had been a north wind.

Sadly, fires also claimed the lives of residents.

## EXPLOSION

In July 1916, E.L. Branstedler died of frightful burns when a gasoline stove exploded in his Pacific Restaurant on

Tennent Avenue. In 1929, a favorite town character named Tommy lost his shanty cabin and blind dog, Matt, in the flames; Tommy was critically burned. Pinole's worst fire occurred in 1945. Chief Joe Rogers and 18 firemen fought the huge fire at the Pinole Auto Camp in west Pinole.

## NEW MATERIALS

Flammable chicken houses had been converted to wartime housing. Four children burned to death and many others suffered severe burns in one fire, so large that the fire truck had to return to Pinole over and over to get more water.

Before World War I, brick and stone buildings were introduced, thus reducing the fire menace along Main Street (San Pablo Avenue). The Ruff

Building, at the intersection of Main Street and Fernandez Avenue, was the first, built in 1914.

In later years, a fire siren was installed atop the building to summon volunteers.

## NEW CONSTRUCTION

The Bank of Pinole came in 1915, and the Downer Building next to it was erected in 1916. Across the street, the two-story Manuel Borba building was also brick-built in 1916. It housed the Pinole Motion Picture Theater downstairs.

In the 1920s and 1930s stucco, which was more fire-resistant, became a popular building material.

Both the Antlers Tavern and nearby Collins home on Tennent Avenue were remodeled with stucco exteriors in the 1930s.

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# COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC PLANS

By **Tim Banuelos, Pinole City Councilman**

*First of two parts*

**P**inole has been working for the last three years on an update to its General Plan. This plan, the framework for the city's physical development, consists of several elements.

Among these is Community Character, which was not an element in previous General Plans.

In the beginning stages of the General Plan Update, community members at the early workshops identified that the small-town identity created through the built environment, married with the surrounding natural setting, was important to consider when addressing physical development in Pinole. As the General Plan Update has evolved, the Community Character element has grown in importance, and may be the primary defining element that defines both the General Plan and the Specific Plan.

What comes to mind when one thinks of Pinole?

For some it could be a place to live because it is close to work. For others, it is a place to stop to eat on the way to somewhere else. For some of us it is a piece of history, a place to preserve and maintain.

This last description is the essence of the Community Character element, the personality of the city from the built and un-built perspective. It is also a study in opposites—how do we maintain the environmentally sensitive shoreline amongst adjacent industrial development such as the waste treatment plant? How do we balance the ebb and flow of traffic through town to preserve that small-town feel?

How do we balance the many building styles that make up the built environment with each other, not just the obvious historical styles, but also the “new” styles, built since the 1950s, that are gradually becoming a part of our history.

In what direction do we lead future development in Pinole? How do we respond to contemporary land-use needs without losing our sense of place? What cultural characteristics also define Pinole's identity?

Because of the physical characteristics in and around Pinole and the limited build-able area left, Pinole is essentially built out. Pinole's identity includes rolling hills, open space areas between neighborhoods and business areas, and the shoreline, with views of the bay that are not that different from 150-160 years ago when Pinole was beginning. This yin and yang between the built and un-built sets the stage for the Community Character discussion.

The remaining areas of future development occur primarily along the major transportation corridors—San Pablo Avenue, Appian Way, and Pinole Valley Road. Directing development along them to maintain the identity of Pinole generated the Specific Plans.

In order to preserve the existing density of established neighborhoods, increased density regarding mixed-use development combining residential and commercial areas were designated along these corridors. It is hoped that in the future, as development occurs, these areas will become vibrant destination areas for living and working, as well as circulation routes connecting the various neighborhoods.

**Next issue:** *The tone for future development.*

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## PHS FLAG DAY ESSAY CONTEST IN SCHOOLS



**T**he second annual Pinole Historical Society Flag Day Essay Contest is being held in schools throughout the city, with awards to be presented to the winners the week of June 7.

Students in Pinole schools are writing short essays answering the question, "What does the American flag mean to you?"

The contest includes Collins, Ellerhorst, Shannon, and Stewart elementary schools; St. Joseph School; Pinole Middle School; and Pinole Valley High School.

Students whose essays are judged to be the most outstanding will receive certificates of merit and U.S. flags from the PHS, and U.S. Savings Bonds from our sponsor, Mechanics Bank. The PHS is grateful to Mechanics Bank for its generosity in sponsoring this contest.

Terrific photos, a complete list of all the grade winners at each school, and all of the winning essays from the 2009 Flag Day Essay Contest are on the PHS website. Check the home page at [www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org).

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# YOU'VE GOT A QUESTION? WE'VE GOT AN ANSWER

**P**inole has a long and interesting history. Is there something you'd like to know about the city or its people?

Send the Pinole Historical Society a question and we'll not only answer it, but we'll print it in the next issue of *Newsbriefs* so everyone will be informed.

And, if we don't know, we'll find out.

For example, perhaps you ran across a photo at a garage sale and want to have the people or buildings in it identified. Or, maybe you're wondering why the cross streets off Tennent Avenue are named after fruits. Let the PHS help you.

Send your photos and questions to us at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org).



**Check the Pinole Historical Society website for information on PHS activities and events – and, of course, the history of the sweetest city in the East Bay.**  
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**The Pinole Historical Society promotes awareness and appreciation of history through preservation and education, and chronicles the city's heritage for current and future generations.**

## NICE TIME FOR A WALK

All of the April rain should make for a beautiful May. Time to get out and explore historic downtown Pinole.

Download the City of Pinole Historic Walking Tour brochure on our website—[www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org/walkingtour.htm](http://www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org/walkingtour.htm)—and stroll by yourself.

Or, join PHS Vice President and Historian George Vincent on Saturday, May 15, at 2 p.m. (meet at the Faria house) for a guided walking tour.



## NEW PRODUCTS FOR SALE

We have a supply of postcards, greeting cards, and refrigerator magnets—featuring photos from our book, *Images of America: Pinole*. They are gorgeous!

They're for sale at the PHS booth at the Pinole Farmers' Market; we're there every other Saturday, next to The Flower Cart booth.

We have an order form for our products on our website: [www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org). Because of the cost of credit-card processing services, we accept only checks via mail order. To order on-line, print the order form and mail it with your check to the Pinole Historical Society, P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564.

Also, we'll have a booth at the **Summer Sounds in the Park** concert series beginning July 8, and continuing every Thursday through August 26, from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

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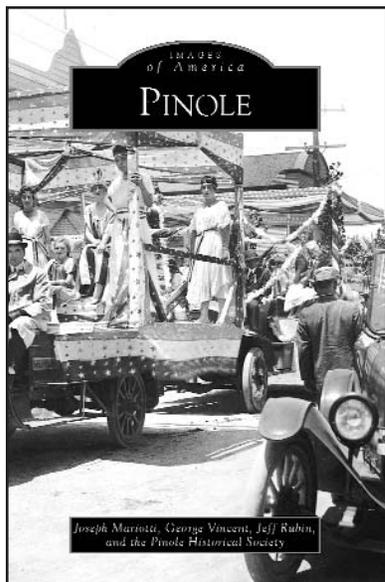
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