

# 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)

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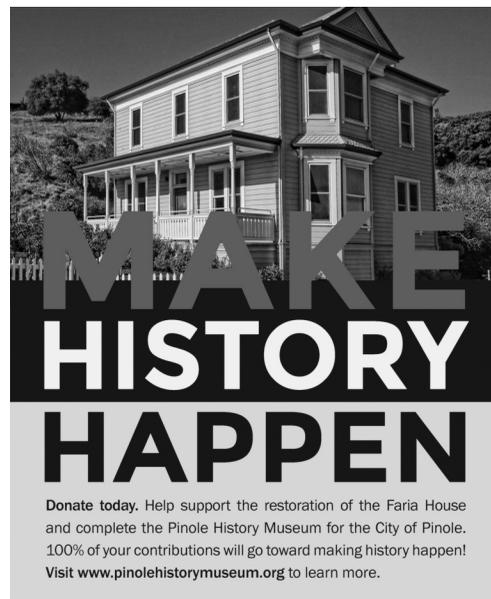
## PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM

SEPTEMBER 7 PHS MEETING

## MAKE HISTORY HAPPEN

**M**et the Pinole History Museum board of directors and some of the team members who are working to make the museum a reality at the society's September 7 meeting from 6:30-8 PM in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road. Refreshments will be served

Learn about our plans for the museum, the progress we are making, and how you can help **MAKE HISTORY HAPPEN.**



**MUSEUM DONOR FORM ON PAGE 4**

MUSEUM LOGO AND MAKE HISTORY HAPPEN POSTER  
DESIGNED BY MELISSA LAWTON

Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

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It's also posted on the PHS website (click on NEWSLETTER in the menu bar).

**FOR ADVERTISERS:** 2,000 printed copies of *PHS Newsbriefs* are distributed every quarter, generating readership among thousands of Pinole and West County residents. Hundreds more receive the newsletter directly from the PHS via its database and website.

**If you're interested in advertising, contact Jeff Rubin at [info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org) or (510) 724-9507.**

## PHS CALENDAR

### ONGOING

#### **September 7 program: "Make History Happen."**

The public is invited to this FREE event from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road. Refreshments will be served.

**August 8, September 12, October 10: Monthly Board of Directors meeting.** The public is invited to attend and speak on any of the items discussed at these meetings. Pinole Senior Center, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**PHS booth at Pinole Farmers' Market.** We're at the Pinole Farmers' Market on alternate Saturdays through December: August 4, 18; September 1, 15, 29; October 13, 27; November 10, 24; December 8, 22.

## PinoleHistoricalSociety

**Board of Directors:** Jeff Rubin, President; Mary McMains, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Norma Martínez-Rubin, Carol White.

**Directors Emeritus:** Marcia Kalapus, Jack Meehan, George Vincent. **Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Rubin.

## 2018 PHS MEETING DATES

**September 7: Make History Happen.** See front page for program information.

**November 2:** Former Contra Costa Times columnist **Tom Barnidge** will be our speaker.

All meetings are held from 6:30-8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road.

For more information, call (510) 724-9507, e-mail [info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org), or visit our website at [www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org).



**Deloris Johannessen**

## In memoriam

**Deloris June (Moellman) Johannessen**

**November 25, 1932 – May 3, 2018**

**Age 85**

The daughter of John and Bernadette Moellman, Deloris was a longtime resident of Pinole.

She attended the "Old School," graduated from Richmond High School, and was a volunteer at Collins Elementary School, where she was affectionately known as "Grandma Dee."

Donations in her name may be made to Collins Elementary School, the Pinole Historical Society, or the donor's choice.

# President's Message

Jeff Rubin, President, Pinole Historical Society

## GEORGE VINCENT, MR. HISTORY

**O**n July 9, I had an opportunity to promote the Pinole Historical Society and the Pinole History Museum on the Marc Guzman Experience podcast.

Marc's company, BG Asset Management, specializes in property and asset management in Northern California ([www.marcguzman.com](http://www.marcguzman.com)). Marc is the host of the Marc Guzman Podcast Experience, where he interviews a variety of individuals looking to make a better world.

In an episode entitled "The People Who Preserve Pinole," Marc and I talked about the activities of the Pinole Historical Society, some notable people who contributed to the city's history, and progress on the establishment of the Pinole History Museum.

We also drank some really good Portuguese wine, an homage to Pinole's significant Portuguese immigrant history.

I'll be back on the Marc Guzman Podcast Experience on August 28 for another interview focusing on Pinole's history and the museum.

View the podcast here:

- <https://marcguzman.podbean.com/e/ep-133-the-people-who-preserve-pinole/>
- <https://youtu.be/JX6dxtPbGA8>

Speaking of people who have preserved Pinole, no one has done more to preserve and promote the history of our city than Mr. History, George Vincent.

*Continued on page 4*



Jeff Rubin



George Vincent (in white hat) leading a walking tour



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# PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM

**YES,** I want to **MAKE HISTORY HAPPEN** by donating to the establishment of the **Pinole History Museum.**

My donation will help the museum enhance the preservation and collections of artifacts that represent Pinole's history and culture.

Enclosed is my gift of:

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\*With a gift of \$1,000 or more your name will be placed on the museum's Wall of Honor.

Please make checks payable to **PINOLE HISTORY MUSEUM** or provide credit card information below. To donate online, please visit [www.PinoleHistoryMuseum.org](http://www.PinoleHistoryMuseum.org).

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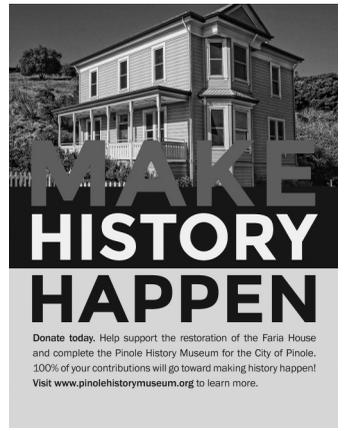
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The Pinole History Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.



**LEFT: George and Christie Vincent on Veterans Day.**

**TOP RIGHT: George teaching at Ellerhorst School.**

**BOTTOM RIGHT: George presenting a history program to St. Joseph School fourth-graders.**



## GEORGE VINCENT, MR. HISTORY

*Continued from page 3*

Whether leading a walking tour, presenting a quarterly program for the society, authoring books, teaching a group of young children in local schools about the history of Pinole — or writing lyrical, thought-provoking articles about events and characters who gave the city a flair that few other cities its size can match in our quarterly newsletter for the last decade — George Vincent carries

the soul of Pinole within him.

George is a co-founder of the Pinole Historical Society and has been a resource for me and countless others. He has been a tireless promoter of the society's activities, not only with his words, but also with his contributions to virtually every activity we undertake.

George is taking some time off to work on his family's history, so we might not see his articles in the newsletter for a



while. I am grateful for all he's given to Pinole and

to the society, and for his friendship.



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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.**

## PHS VIDEOS ON CITY OF PINOLE WEBSITE

**M**iss one of our history programs on Pinole Community TV? Don't despair. The city's website has a dedicated section devoted to PINOLE HISTORY on its "Videos Online" page.

You can view the numerous PHS programs right on your computer. Go to the city's website [www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html](http://www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html) and scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY.

You'll find our interviews, Veterans Day programs, George Vincent's two walking tours of historic downtown Pinole, and the very fine PCTV-produced, 12-part series based on the Historic Walking Tour brochure. It's great TV!

The historical society has recorded interviews with several prominent Pinole citizens. Among the videos on the city's website are interviews with Ed LeFebvre, Charlotte (Fernandez) Shea, former fire chief Alex Clark, and former mayors Jack Meehan and Tom Cutino.

PHS program videos include:

- School Bell dedication.
- Japanese-American internment.
- Bars, Barbers, and Characters.
- A Flood of Memories.
- School Bells and Ink Wells.



We thank Bob Kopp, who recorded most of these events for the society.

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# Back in the day

**George R. Vincent**

## THE IMMIGRANT CHINESE INFLUENCE ON THE BAY AREA AND PINOLE

**T**he history of the Chinese in North America did not begin with the building of the transcontinental railroads; it began 100 years earlier.

Many sea captains in the late 1700s had Chinese servants, and they remained as house servants when their bosses settled ashore.

The largest influx of Chinese to this country was during the California Gold Rush.

Chinese miners traveled usually as indentured servants to San Francisco and then to the gold fields. Their objective was to make their

fortunes and return home.

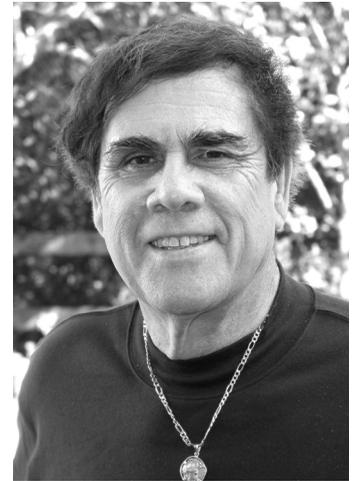
However, many also came to stay, farming and fishing as they had in China. Large numbers were employed in low-paying manual labor work such as building railroads and Delta levies. As the railroad progressed, Chinese settlements grew along its route and remained there.

Although the Irish were the largest minority in California, the Chinese were more visible in numbers and dress and became the targets of discrimination and more restrictive laws and taxes. For example, the Foreign

Miners' Tax was enacted to supposedly end unfair job competition from the Chinese. Yet, the truth was the Anglo population would not work for lower wages, as did the Chinese. The racial component surfaced as the source of bigotry and conflict.

In 1882, the Federal Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, forbidding Chinese immigration into the United States.

This and subsequent acts remained in effect until 1943, when they were repealed as a goodwill gesture to China, our ally in World War II.



**George Vincent**

By the time Pinole was incorporated in June 1903, its 695 residents were accustomed to door-to-door merchants. The Chinese, in particular, were a familiar sight among merchants of diverse ethnic backgrounds selling their wares from house to house.

One of the earliest peddlers was called Riley (photo next page). He would come from San Francisco by train with

*Continued on page 9*



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# THE IMMIGRANT CHINESE INFLUENCE

Continued from page 8  
fruits and vegetables in two baskets supported by a pole. Keeping his records on customer fence posts, Riley vended his wares between Pinole and Rodeo.

By the early 1920s, the Pinole waterfront had a small, but industrious, Chinese encampment. They leased the beach land from the Fernandez family.

Living in small houses on stilts above the bay, they dug clams from the shallow tidelands. The fresh clams were put into buckets hanging from poles, shouldered, and sold in the early morning to the local townsfolk.

There was also a Chinese bunkhouse on the Fernandez wharf. An itinerant Chinese mer-

chant by the name of Sing Lee owned and operated a large boat from Pinole and the clam beds between Atlas (Giant) Powder and the Pinole waterfront. He gathered the clams in big fruit boxes to sell in the markets of Oakland and San Francisco.

Sing Lee would also sail to Red Rock in nearby Richmond, where he fished and sold his catch from doorstep to doorstep in Pinole in competition with the Italians who sold herring from the bay.

Many Chinese workers were also employed in dangerous jobs in Hercules at the California Powder Works. Accidental explosions took many lives.

By providing clams and



Riley

fish to Pinole's citizens, the Chinese played a small, but important role in community life. Today, grocery shopping means the chore of a long, but

necessary trip to the local supermarket. However, there was a time in Pinole when a knock on the front door meant the store had come to you.



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# In memoriam

## PETE WARD

June 13, 1944 – July 4, 2018

Age 74

Pete was a member of the Operating Engineers Union and this fall he would have received his 50-year award. He was a building-materials inspector and inspected hundreds of high-profile buildings in the Bay Area. He last worked for Test Engineers.

He served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War on the USS Hornet.

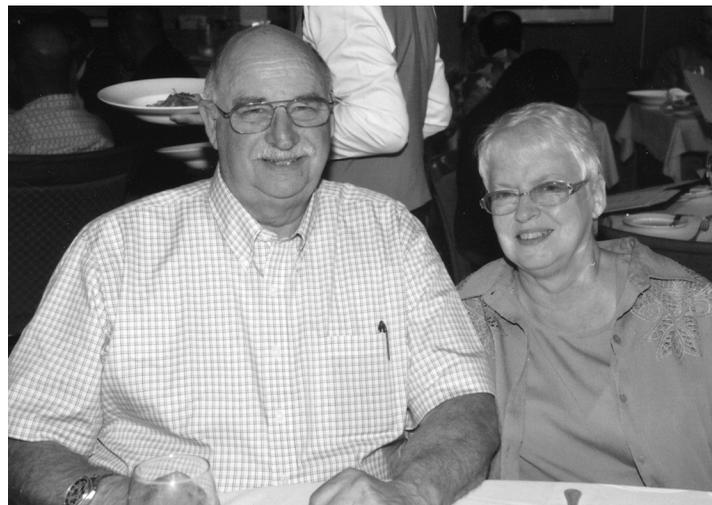
Pete was Vice President of the Carquinez Model Railroad Society in Crockett, whose mission statement is to (1) educate the public, particularly children, about railroad history, safety, and the art of modeling; and (2) create a working, state-of-the-art HO scale model of the Southern Pacific/Union Pacific main line between Oakland and Sparks, NV.

Pete had a jovial disposition and was passionate about old trains of all sizes," says Pete's longtime friend, George Vincent. "He was willing to travel to the ends of the Earth to see and ride in scarce vintage locomotives still in use.

"Pete was fascinated by and excelled in mechanics things. He enjoyed an old slot machine that held a prominent place in his home.

"Pete was a full-time nautical cruiser on luxury ships to all parts and ports of the world. He loved travel and the outdoors, a tribute to his U.S. Navy sailing days.

"Pete was not shy about expressing his views on life and the world. He had a kind of gruffness that hid his soft spots for making friends easily with his



**Pete Ward and Sally Johnson**

infectious laugh and kindness for folks and animals.

"Pete loved Pinole's history, especially its railroad past, as well as Mel's Diner's chicken fried steak."

Another friend, former Mayor Jack Meehan, offered this homage to Pete:

"End of Track. the simple but ominous sign every railroader — serious modeler or career RR employee — knows well. Beyond that point there is no more rail, so there are no more trains.

"Pete, a devoted modeler and RR historian was always ready to show off his latest acquisition — book, detailed (and expensive) model, or trip report — whether at a Pinole Historical Society meeting, or at his model club in Crockett.

"We'll meet again at the next station; check your watch, Pete!"

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# Guest columnist

**Stella Faria**

## MY CHILDHOOD ON QUINAN STREET

**A**fter the death of my father in a February 1929 explosion in the nitroglycerine plant at the Hercules Powder Company, my mother was forced to move from the company-owned house in the village, which had been our home for about two-and-a-half years.

We moved to a rental house at 621 Quinan Street, in Pinole. It had only two bedrooms, but one was large enough to hold two double beds, which accommodated four young girls under the age of ten. We had discussions about who slept with whom and whose turn it was to make the bed or tidy up the room. Otherwise, we settled into our new home quickly.

At a Pinole Historical Society meeting on May 4, 2018, I finally found out where the Quinan name originated. Mr. Quinan was a superinten-

dent at the Hercules Powder Company and a close friend of the very influential Edward M. Downer.

Mr. Downer served on the Pinole City Council from 1903 until his death in 1938. Mr. Downer founded the Bank of Pinole and later purchased controlling interest in Mechanics Bank. It may have been Mr. Downer who submitted Quinan as a street name.

Quinan Street is parallel to Tennent Avenue and is only one block long from Tennent Avenue to Park Street. It was just a little street in downtown Pinole, but it is now one of the highlights of Old Town Pinole. Many of the original houses have been restored and some are now small businesses.

In the early 1930s when I was a child, everyone was beginning to suffer from what became the Great Depression. There were

at least 20 children from modest families living on that short block. I would like you to know something about the families to which they belonged.

On a corner of San Pablo Avenue and Quinan Street lived Sterling and Mary Kelley and their son, Sterling Jr. Mr. Kelley had a job with Remington Rand; Sterling was an only child so he always seemed to have all the latest and best toys on the block.

The Sassone family lived next door. They were Sterling's grandparents, since Mary Kelley was a Sassone. They had a son, Arthur, who was a quiet, studious person, so we did not see him very often.

John and Antonia Bispo and their son, Joseph, lived next to the Sassone house. Mrs. Bispo was a very protective mother, so Joe was usually the first one to be called in from our



**Stella Faria**

evening street games.

Louis and Maria Marieiro and their son, Armando, were one of the three Portuguese families on the block. Mr. Bispo and Mr. Marieiro were always trying to outdo each other when it came to who had the best, most-productive vegetable garden. Armando had a movie projector and a few silent black & white films, so he provided some occasional entertainment for us in his basement; the price of admission was a safety pin or a penny, if we happened to have one at the time. We left feeling like we had been to a movie in a real theater.

The Manning family, with son, Melvin, and daughter, Leslie, lived in the next house. They had a garage behind their house with a second-story loft, where we held shows and carnivals with games and prizes. We would all dress up in costumes to make the events more colorful.

The Biffords, William and Florence, were the last family with children on that side of the street. Mr. Bifford worked as an

*Continued on page 12*



**Downtown Pinole with Quinan Street in right foreground, ca. 1908.**

# QUINAN STREET

Continued from page 11

accountant for Union Oil Company.

Their children, William (Billy) and Ruth, seemed to have everything a child could wish for. They did not have a car, so Mr. Bifford converted their garage into a completely furnished playhouse, the envy of every girl on the block.

Ruth had a collection of dolls and a fancy buggy in which to show them off. She had everything we needed to go into our make-believe world. We would dress up in hand-me-down ladies' clothes, high-heeled shoes, gloves, hats and purses, and pretend we were very rich ladies going out of town. I remember our purses had play money and makeup, and we even had those little candy cigarettes, which we felt were a necessity, as very rich ladies surely smoked.

Across the street was the home of William and Josie Hansen, who had three sons: Melvin, Jack, and William (Bee). They were a bit older and spent most of their time building cars. We all looked forward to the

**Armand  
Marieiro's  
12th  
birthday.  
Armand is  
holding  
the cake**



completion of their latest car project so we could watch them race it down the stretch of Tennent Avenue to the bay. More often than not there was a crash, which meant going back to the drawing board.

We lived next door to the Hansens. The Freitas girls were Arlette, Celeste, Stella (me), and Beatrice, who lived with our widowed mother, Anna. We all attended the old school on the hill, and usually hurried home for lunch so that we could catch the next episode of "Stella Dallas" on the radio.

We took a bag lunch during the rainy season and sat on the basement concrete floor to eat our lunch and play Jacks or

other board games. We all looked forward to playing with our neighbors in the evening after dinner.

The Flores family lived next door to us on the other side. They had a daughter, Katherine, and a son, Louis. Katherine and Celeste became best friends. Mrs. Flores taught them the lyrics and dance steps to "La Cucaracha" and outfitted them in authentic Mexican his-and-hers costumes. They performed at several events in the area and once in Oakland, for which they were highly praised.

On another corner of San Pablo and Tennent lived a single mother with a daughter, Betty Hayes. Arlette and Betty were

the same age, so they enjoyed playing together. They lived in an upstairs apartment that was probably connected to the Wilkes' Garage property on San Pablo Avenue.

We all have fond memories of living on Quinan Street. Fortunately for my mother, she married a very nice man who became a wonderful step-father who raised me and my sisters as his own. He was always proud of his four girls.

We moved across town to a home on a corner of Peach and Willow streets, where we all lived until we married. It would be nice if every child could have special memories of growing up in a happy, loving place like Quinan Street.

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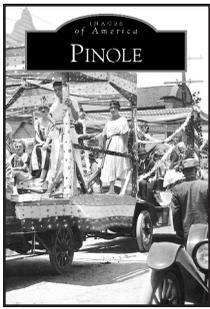


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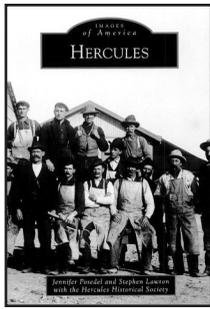
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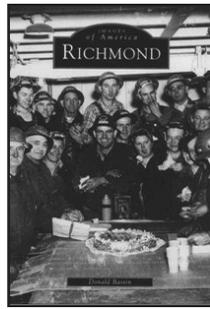
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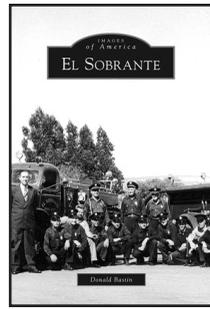
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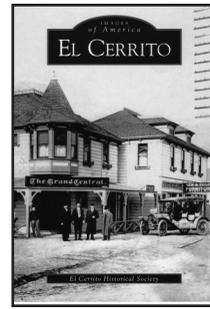
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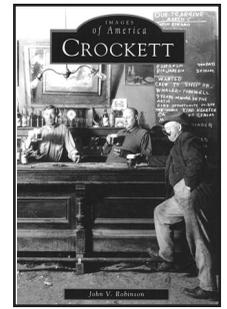
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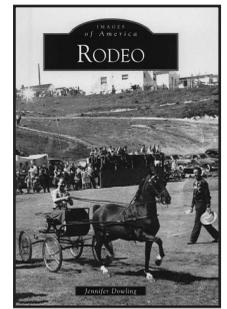
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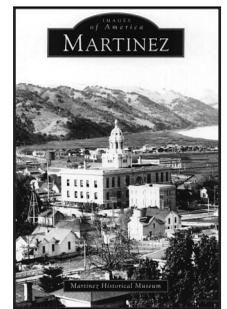
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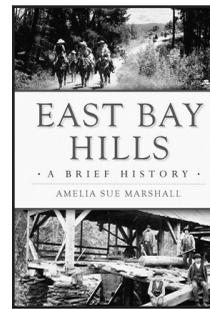
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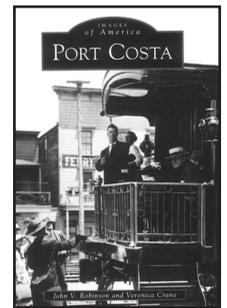
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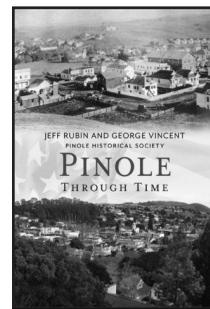
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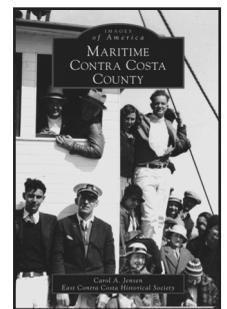
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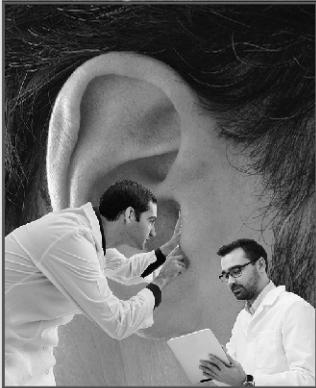
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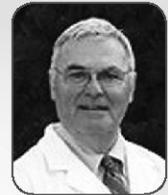
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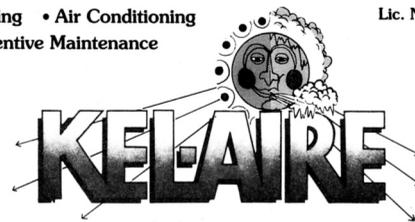
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