

UNION CITY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Founded by Myrla Raymundo, MBA

3841 Smith Street, Union City, California 94587, Tel. (510) 324-3298

Three Components

(1) Museum & Artifacts, (2) Oral History (3) Preservation of Historical Homes

VOL. 4 NO. 4

January 2003

Visit us at www.geocities.com/ucmuseum/

Myrla Raymundo, Managing Editor/Writer

MISSION STATEMENT

The Union City Historical Museum is a non-profit organization committed to the preservation, maintenance and protection of, and the education of the public about the architectural, cultural, natural and historical heritage resources of the City of Union City.

ANTONE L. COSTA
Union City Firefighter
Decoto Fire Department

A plaque hangs proudly on the wall of one of the granddaughters of the late **Antone L. Costa**. It reads:

TO ANTONE L. COSTA
IN RECOGNITION
FOR SERVICES RENDERED
AS A VOLUNTEER
FIREMEN FOR A PERIOD
OF 27 YEARS
1939-1966

FROM
DECOTO
FIRE DEPARTMENT
ASSOCIATION

A business card is also proudly displayed that reads:

A. L. COSTA
BUILDER AND CONTRACTOR
CABINET WORK A SPECIALTY
On Niles Highway Decoto, Calif.

The plaque and the business card already tell the whole life story of Antone L. Costa.

The plaque and the business card are an indication that Antone (Tony), as everybody called him, loved to create art in his specialty, which were beautiful cabinets and shelves. He is also instrumental in building many of the homes in the Decoto District. He loved to give something to the community when he worked as a volunteer firefighter in Decoto for so many years as he diligently supported his family, which multiplied into many beautiful children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Some of them are still living in the Decoto area.

Antone L. Costa was born in May 1899 and raised in Newark, California. He moved to Decoto in 1925 when he married Leontine (Tina), who was from Niles. She was 16 at the time. They

lived at 508 H. Street until his death in 1979. Both of them were of Portuguese descent. A long line of offspring came from the fruitful union. Their children are Frederick, Rosaline and James.

Sheri Costa, James' daughter, was the one who e-mailed the editor in regards to her grandfather. Browsing the website, she saw that her grandfather was not listed as a fireman on the Museum website. That was the time we decided to do a story.

The story goes like this....Antone did not drink liquor, drank his coffee black and smoked cigarettes. While working at Logan High School part-time in the Maintenance Department, he was hit in the cheek by an arrow from kids who were practicing archery. When a fire broke out at the old Holy Rosary Church, he remembered that the chalice was still inside the church, so he went back without thinking of the danger and got it out successfully. During the plane crash in the Decoto hills, he drove up there to help and was involved in the plane crash recovery. He helped build the original Dumbarton Bridge.

Wife Leontine helped with the publication of the Washington Township book. Her granddaughter Sheri remembers her sewing and selling Barbie Doll clothes to all the girls in town. They were more affordable than those sold at stores. Leontine attended Niles Grammar school and then went to Washington Union High School. She assisted in caring for a Cactus Garden, which was a collection of different species of cacti on Mission Blvd. in Decoto. Leontine's mom was Charlie Chaplin's maid when Chaplin lived in

Niles referred to "Old Hollywood" at the time. She did Chaplin's laundry.

Antone L. Costa was a very special and well-respected resident of Decoto. He died in 1979 at a ripe age of 80. Manuel (Shorty) Garcia was his best friend. Shorty bought Leontine a Christmas tree every year after Anton died and visited her frequently until his death. Leontine died at age 85.

Antone L. Costa will be remembered not only in the Decoto area, but also in the whole Union City, as a leader who dedicated his time to the care of his family and to the care of the City of Union City.

**A TRIBUTE TO LEONTINE COSTA,
WIFE OF ANTONE L. COSTA**

**REPRINTED FROM THE LEADER-Friday,
October 7, 1960**

**DECOTO DISCUSSION GROUP
NOW IN 22ND YEAR**

By Leontine Costa

Mrs. Leontine (Tina) Costa was a long time member of the Decoto Discussion Group. This group, organized for Library study on September 16, 1938, met monthly for many, many years. The group's objective was to bring the women of the community closer together in the bonds of broadening their lives intellectually and socially.

During the war years, 1942-1944, Leontine Costa was involved with the USO. She was named chairman of the scrapbook program sponsored by USO headquarters under the direction of Mrs. Walter Kalosa. More than 100 scrapbooks were made and sent to USO headquarters. She found out the names of all the men that were from Decoto who were at war. They were sent scrapbooks containing comics and newspaper articles from the neighborhood. She made sure they received holiday packages as well. She was very involved in her community and assisted whenever she could.

Sheri Costa, the granddaughter, donated the old files and pictures of the Decoto Discussion Group to the Union City Historical Museum. They will be on display at the Museum. One of the old files is reprinted here.

The Decoto Discussion Group was organized for Library study September 16, 1938 at the Decoto Branch of the Alameda County Library and has met monthly for 22 years. It was organized by Mrs. Elsa Walker, librarian and Miss Mary Barnby who at that time was Librarian for Alameda County. Mrs. Walker was chairman of the group until her retirement in 1946 when she left the community to make her home in Lincoln. Miss Ellen Cornish is the present chairman and Mrs. Gail David the secretary-treasurer. The club will meet this Wednesday at the home of Mrs. Thomas Bunting in Mission San Jose. The book for discussion is Parkinson's law, humorous fiction and will be led by Mrs. Leonard McVicar.

There were six charter members and at the 10th anniversary had doubled and now after 22 years there are 18 members.

Shortly after the group was organized a year's program was drawn up and that is still done by the club today. The program covers all sorts of subjects from music to history. A different leader is chosen for each month and also a different hostess. At first the meetings were held at the Library but as the membership increased it went to the different homes of members. Things done by the club were studying the different operas and then going to San Francisco to attend them. Being close to a great metropolitan center the group took advantage of its opportunities to have as guests; authors, actresses,

representatives of the main library and civic leaders. Some of these guests became so enthused with the group that they took their turn in entertaining and taking part in the program.

One year the group sponsored a flower arrangement class and also one in leathercraft. They were such great programs they went on for four years.

In June of 1948 Mrs. Dorothy Roberts, present Librarian of Alameda County was interviewed on radio K G O by Jane Lee with the discussion group as her subject.

Members at present are, Mrs. George Harckleroad of Hillview Crest, Mrs. Florence Wallace, Mrs. A. L. Costa, Mrs. Gail David, Mrs. Edward Goulart and Mrs. Frank Garcia of Union City, Mrs. C. F. Giles, Mrs. John R. Sutton, Mrs. Leonard McVicar of Irvington, Mrs. Mary Mattox, Mrs. Roland Bendel, Miss Ellen Cornish and Mrs. Hallenbeck of Niles, Mrs. George Azeveda and Mrs. Stewart McCormack of Fremont, Mrs. Howard Reese, Mrs. Thomas Bunting and Mrs. S. F. Kauffman of Mission San Jose.

A REMINISCENCE OF MIDGE THORNTON: (An old Decoto native)

(Midge Thornton, a UCHM member, gave a letter containing the following information to Myrla Raymundo on August 16, 1999.)

I have lived in the Decoto area since May of 1953. My address is 33848 8th Street, Union City. I am interested in

Union City and all that has taken place over the years.

Decoto and Alvarado

- *Post Office was located on E Street before being moved to Mission Blvd. where now the Red Cross is in that building.*
- *Note – No mail was delivered. People had to walk to the Post Office on E Street and pick up their mail.*
- *Movie Theatre was on E Street near the Post Office.*
- *Liquor Store was located on E Street.*
- *Barber Shop was located on E. Street.*
- *Drug store was located on corner of E Street and Mission Blvd – (Mission Blvd was a two lane road) that store now is selling carpets.*
- *Variety Store was located at 6th and H St. near Decoto School.*
- *Carrot Packing Plant was located on H St. near Depot Rd.*
- *Steel Mill was located off of Decoto Road.*
- *Regan Nursery was located on Decoto Rd between 7th and 9th St.*
- *Shoe repair shop was located on 6th St. between Decoto Rd and H. St.*
- *Grocery Store was located on 9th St opposite side of street where Fire Station is now.*
- *Peerless Busses stopped at corner of Decoto Rd and Mission Blvd. to pick up passengers.*
- *Holly Sugar (Alvarado area) was on Dyer St.*
- *St. Anne’s Catholic Church was located on corner of Smith Street and Alvarado.*

- *Franciscan Priests were at Our Lady of the Rosary Church and also St. Anne's Church in Alvarado.*
- *Franciscan Sisters lived in a convent on B St. between 6th and 8th Street. They were in charge of the school. The convent is now an office for our Lady of the Rosary Church.*
- *A store called the White Elephant was in Alvarado. The things that people donated were sold and the money was then donated to St. Anne's Church on Smith St.*
- *People in the Decoto area had a lot of problems with the water. A water softener had to be purchased and connected up to the water heater. It got to the point that the water could not be used to drink or even wash clothes.*
- *A group of people formed a HomeOwners Association and worked for eight years to get rid of the Company that they got water from-Citizen Utilities Water Co.*
- *As a result, we have Alameda County Water District.*
- *Masonic Home – supervisors and their families lived in a house on the same property. People in the Masonic Home are given excellent care.*
- *No sidewalks were in; no stop signs either*
- *Clay pipes were put in where houses were built and the clay pipes broke.*
- *No streets were paved.*

Recently, Judy Week of New Braunfels, Texas, Midge's daughter, sent Myrla a letter stating that her mother has moved from Union City to live with her family in Texas. She said that her mom would still be interested in receiving newsletters. We wish you Midge good life there and we will continue to send

you news about Union City, the city that you love so much.

Union City – 1900 - 1950

(Compiled by Myrla Raymundo from old Museum files)

By 1902 Alvarado had its first finance firm, the Alvarado Bank. It became a busy village and in the 20s became known as a rendezvous for "colorful parties." Then in 1926, after a raid, District Attorney Earl Warren closed "Little Tia Juana" and the town forged ahead rapidly.

The Decoto area grew more slowly, Begun by John Cleveland Whipple, Andrew Jackson Hare, Ezra Decoto and other settlers; it prospered as a busy produce area. Orchards and poultry and dairy farms were its mainstay. The village was in the Whipple Road area at Old Mission Road, which later became Mission /Boulevard.

Industry began to move into the Decoto area after World War I and soon it was outbidding Alvarado. Enterprises included a cannery, lumber mill and Pacific States Steel Corporation.

Because of the marshy lands around the Alvarado area, floods were frequent. One of the worst was during the Christmas holidays in 1955. Youngsters had no chance to get presents from Santa Claus. So after the water subsided, the Alvarado Fire Department came to the rescue with toys they fixed up themselves and distributed in the community.

The 50s brought growth and a narrowing of opportunities as Newark and Fremont

became cities and Hayward extended its boundaries south to Whipple Road.

Residents of the Alvarado and Decoto communities realized that they would soon lose their identities through annexation.

A citizens' committee that include Tom Kitayama, John A. Ratekin, Oscar Dowe, Kenneth Garcia, Joseph Lewis, Elvin Rose and others petitioned for incorporation. The two towns became Union City on January 13, 1959. Kitayama was the first mayor.

The city got its first official postmark November 1, 1959.

Decoto Fire District

Mr. Stuart Pratt, a commissioner of the Decoto Fire District, gave the Museum tons of materials regarding the Decoto Fire District.

Sorting out the old and yellowing documents, I found something of interest to the residents of Union City. A letter addressed to Commissioner Stuart Pratt of 33208 Basswood Drive, Union City dated December 19, 1977 from Associate Planner David J. Bischoff of the City of Union City, 1154 Whipple Road, Union City, gave me the whole history of the Decoto Fire District and its annexation to Union City. There was an attachment, the General Plan study for the annexation. It recommended expansion of the city's General Plan diagram to include those lands within the Fire District and recommended land use designations for the same.

The Decoto Fire District was formed in 1925 as a special district with the purpose of providing fire service to a major portion of the land, which is now part of Union City and approximately 2,700 acres of hill land east of Mission Boulevard. Since that time, incorporation of the City and various annexations by both Union City and Hayward has reduced the area of the District to 1,766 acres.

At that time, the Decoto Fire District was located in the unincorporated area of Alameda County. It was approximately 12 miles south of Oakland and 17 miles north of San Jose just east of and contiguous to Mission Boulevard. Land use to the southwest is urban consisting primarily of residential development. To the east and south of the District, properties were undeveloped and utilized for grazing and limited row crop farming. To the north, East Bay Regional Parks District was being developed as part of Garin Regional Park own property.

It was somewhere in 1977 or 1978 that the Decoto Fire District was transferred to Union City.

Union City Transportation



We are so lucky to live in Union City because of the public transportation and the good roads. We can go to work anywhere in the Bay Area by using the BART and the local transports. Let me tell you about our mode of transportation in our city.

Located in the southeastern San Francisco Bay Area, Union City is within easy driving distance of three major airports. The San Francisco International and Oakland International are only 30 minutes away, while the San Jose airport is 35 minutes away. An alternative to driving is offered by the fun Connexion, a regularly scheduled bus service that provides transportation between Union City and the San Francisco International Airport.

Union City residents also have access to the Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART) passenger service linking Union City with San Francisco, Oakland, the entire East Bay and other major cities. The BART station is located on Alvarado Niles road next to the El Mercado Shopping Center and is accessed by Union City (UC) Transit.

Union City is served by three bus transit systems, Union City Transit (UC Transit), AC Transit, and the Dumbarton Express. UC Transit is closely tied to the Union City BART station.

Rail lines run through Union City (the Mulford line west of I-880, the Union Pacific and former Southern Pacific line east of I-880) and provide service to industrial customers. The Capitol corridor passenger rail travels through Union City on the former Southern Pacific line but does not stop. AC Transit, Peerless Lines, and Greyhound provide other modes of public transportation, which service Alameda and Contra Costa counties, as well as the rest of the state and nation.

Directly accessing Union City is Intrastate 880. Two bridges, the San Mateo and the Dumbarton offer direct

access to Silicon Valley, and the Peninsula.

The road system in Union City is well designed to keep traffic moving smoothly at all times, and parking is free in the city.

The city is taking the lead in developing a regional intermodal facility centered at the existing BART station. It will provide amenities such as phones, public restrooms and information kiosks. There will also be additional parking.

Well, isn't it nice to live in Union City? You don't have to drive when you go to work, go shopping or visit friends. We are so lucky to live in this great city.

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

On October 19, 2002, Ellen M. Corbett, a member of the California State Assembly presented **Myrla Raymundo**, Founder of the Union City Historical Museum, a Certificate of Recognition for her outstanding community service and dedication to serving Union City.

On November 7, 2002, Museum Director **Jo Ann Lew** was sworn in as a Planning Commissioner of Union City. She will be doing important jobs for the city; to name a few, the Pacific States Steel Corporation, the intermodal transportation and the Mission Blvd. Gateway. Congratulations, Jo Ann.

On November 15, 2002, **Hugh McNamara** was appointed by the Museum Board as the Museum Treasurer. He will be filling in the position left by **Bruce Hevelin**, who resigned as Treasurer effective November 15, 2002.

THE UNION CITY LEADERS

These are the Union City residents who helped in shaping the history of Union City and who are still helping the city with their expertise and wisdom.
.....(compiled by Myrla Raymundo)

City Council

Oscar Dowe
Mick Ratekin
Tom Kitayama
Joseph Seoane
Joseph Lewis
Will Davis
Irv Williams
Bernie Morales
Leo Alvelais
Shorty Garcia
Henry Franco
Don Miller
Dick Oliver
Delain Eastin
Jean Westgard
Sue Boyle
Mark Green
Manuel Fernandez
Alice Arce
Robert Garfinkle
Carol Dutra-Vernaci
Benjamin Elias
Richard Valle

Planning Commission

Henry Franco
Norman Silivera
Aurio Nieves
Charles Maraman
John Monahan
Tom Kitayama
Harold Strickland
Marshall Stone
Robert Eichler
Gail DeLalla
Anthony Najera
Jean Westgard
Caspar Ritter
Acey Worthy
Peter Pinto
Delaine Eastin
John Chambers
Dennis Greenberg
Mark Green
Manuel Fernandez
Frances (Mattie) Rousseau
Lynne Mattos
Maureen Hart
Maria-Ester DeAnda
Cathi Sweeney
Myrla Raymundo
Carol Dutra-Vernaci
Elizabeth Ames
Sunjay Nair
Balbir Singh
Rosemary Savage
Lamont Allen
Tikisa Anderson
Bob Kelley
Jo Ann Lew

Park and Recreation Commission

Fred Castro
Bill Ferreira
Patricia Laramie
Michael Nemecek
Graham Hornel
Anna Riotoc
Walt Fyar
Julian Hinojoza
Gina Lewis
Bruce Stanley
John Tester
Daniel Rivera
David Acosta
William S. Boylan
Adam Lopez III

Senior Commission

Miles Price
Rosie Larsen
Ralph Ruggieri
Clemente Golaw
Hermenegildo Baylon
Gordon Messegee
Cap Ritter
Irene Wolfe
Hugh McNamara
Anthony Vierra
Eva Kamakea
Josephine Pando

Human Relations Commission

Cornelius Hall
Pat Gacoscos
John Hernandez
Fouad Modjarrad
Georgia Megue Santa Maria
Mary Lou Hipolito
Sheila Somosierra
Dev Bhatia
Sandra Holder
Rev. Jerome Brown
Hardev Grewal
Phil Verzola
Yolanda Triana

Dianne Gates-Anderson

Sister City Commission

Myrla Raymundo
Kenny Garcia
Cyndy Hardwick
Mary Olsen
Georgia Megue Santa Maria
Santosh Wadhwa
Cherlyn Spencer
Shiekh Iqbal
Richard Arthur
Ramon Tendencia
Yolanda Triana

Arts Council

Kathy Borgogno
Myrla Raymundo
Ollie Smith
Jolinda Locquiao
Bill Wentworth
Eva Kamakea
Diane La Mountaine
Jo Ann Lew
Belinda Maloney

City Managers

M. Deane Seeger
John Geoghegan
Bill Newton
William Zaner
Karen Smith
Mark Lewis
Dave Berger

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Museum Open House

The Union City Historical Museum will be holding an Open House on Saturday, 15 February 2003 from 10 am to 4 PM. The Open House is aimed at bringing members and others down to the Museum to gather and talk about local history. There will be refreshments served. The Museum will be organizing a walking tour of Old Alvarado, detailing the history of the local area and buildings.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FY2002-2003:

Myrla Raymundo,
Founder/Past President
Timothy Swenson, *President*
Mike Christ, *Vice-President*
Secretary, Vacant
Hugh Mcnamara, *Treasurer*

Directors- (2-years) FY2002-2004

Miles Price
Ligfinio Ray Raymundo
Al Rose
Barbara Friedrich

Directors -(1-year) FY2002-2003

Jo Ann Lew
Lupe St. Denis
Margaret Shepard
Melvin Flores
Bruce Hevelin

MUSEUM LIFETIME MEMBERS

Phil & Leila Verzola
John & Cathy Tester
Timothy & Catherine Swenson
Eva Kamakea
Georgia Megue Santa Maria
Ligfinio (Ray) & Myrla Raymundo
Gina Lewis
Reiner & Sheryl Glausch
Al & Marsha Badella
Barbara Schiefler
William & Dorothy Hubbard
Bob & Leslie Swartz
Steve Miller & Diane LaMountaine

EDITORIAL BOARD

Myrla Raymundo
Barbara Friedrich
Mike Christ
Jo Ann Lew
Bruce Hevelin
Ray Raymundo (Layout
Artist/Production)

NEW YEARS EVE GALA 2002

December 31, 2002
6:30 PM – 1:00 AM

Radisson Hotel, Union City
32083 Alvarado- Niles Blvd.

Buffet Dinner, Live Music, Midnight
Champagne Toast
Sponsored by Union City Friends
For tickets, call (510) 489-1414
\$75.00 Dinner Dance

FOUNDER'S NOTES:

Myrla Raymundo

The very popular program Good Morning America features IN SEARCH OF AMERICA and goes to different cities in the country to showcase each city to the early viewers on Channel 7.

On November 14, 2002, Charles Gibson and Diane Sawyer aired their program in Georgia. It is one of the 50 states and cities that they are featuring.

Some of the important things to remember in that city are the following: One of Georgia's popular products is peanuts. President Carter, who hailed from Georgia, popularized the lowly peanuts. Girl Scouts was founded there in 1912. The once popular Cabbage Patch Dolls originated from this city. Celebrities Kim Bessinger and Julia Roberts were born here. Most importantly, the Center for Disease Control is located in Georgia.

The following day, Charles Gibson and Diane Sawyer will go to another state and city. If they choose California and we're lucky to be featured, we can probably tell them the following:

Union City received an ALL AMERICA CITY award in 1999.

Union City was the first county seat of government of Alameda County.

The first successful sugar beet mill in the United States was in Alvarado.

St Anne Church was one of the first missions in this area

Pacific States Steel was one of the biggest industries in the county.

Tom Kitayama was the first Japanese American to be a mayor in the bay area.

We will give them a tour of our state of the art City Hall with a Japanese garden inside.

We will also give them a tour of our two distinctive historical districts, Old Alvarado and Decoto.

We will contrast the old and the new by taking them to the prestigious Union Landing and show off our many great restaurants and give them a taste of bay area cuisine.

We will show them the upscale housing developments that were recently constructed.

We will boast of our prestigious James Logan High School.

The last trip will be the Union City Historical Museum, where they can have a tour and learn everything they want to know about our little town.

Wouldn't that be a nice segment of the Channel 7 program "In Search of America?" People all over the country

will want to come and see what Union
City is all about.

Union City Historical Museum
3841 Smith Street
Union City, CA 94587

