

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

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Visit us at www.geocities.com/ucmuseum/

Myrla Raymundo, Founding 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.

The Union City Drive-In **by Myrla Raymundo**

For 32 years, the Union City Drive-In was a familiar sight. It was located near Whipple Boulevard and Interstate 880. To most residents, it was a landmark.

The Union City Drive-In was a source of pride for our city when the curtain first rose in 1966. Its six screens were more than any other nearby theater had, and its huge, red and white marquee served as a massive welcome sign to the city

People remember when they were kids, when they were teen-agers and when they were bringing their family here off and on since the 1970s. Teenagers stayed at the drive-in for hours partying through dusk to dawn and watching horror movies and triple features.

Loren Pinto, a Union City native, worked at the drive-in during his high school and college years. Almost all the members of the Pinto family worked in this drive-in over the past three decades. The tradition began with Lee Pinto directing traffic on the theater's opening day, and it ended when Lee's nephew

Adam Bebee worked the snack bar on its closing day. Loren Pinto, now a music teacher at Newark Memorial High School, was a minor celebrity while working at the drive-in. Karen Bebee, (Loren's sister), Dave Pinto, and Bob Martin also worked at the drive-in doing everything from staffing the snack bar to turning away kids who tried to hide in car trunks.

The tradition then carried on to the next Pinto generation. Between 1981 and 1995, Martin's children, Chris, Bob Jr. and Janine worked at the drive-in as did Janine's husband Herb, and Karen's son Adam Bebee.

There are lots of memories. Residents and other people from neighboring cities, who went to the drive in at least every other weekend, loved the family atmosphere about the drive-in. Kids played on the swings and went to the snack bar and bought candies and other snacks. This was the place to be during those days. People came to the drive-in and let their kids go crazy and it was great, especially in the summertime.

In March 1998, after 32 years, the Drive-In closed. The event was marked by a farewell gala billed as "The Last Picture Show"; showing classics including the 1957 movie "I was a Teenage Frankenstein."

Closing the Union City Drive-In was like destroying the American dream. Watching a movie in a car under the stars in Union City is now history.

A mix of high land prices and commercialization drove the Union City Drive-in out.

Now if you travel by 880 to Alvarado Niles Road, you could see a huge and magnificent building, the Century Theatre that replaced the Union City Drive-in. It is the largest theater complex in Northern California, boasting 25 movie screens, stadium seating and digital sound. The new theater is the centerpiece of Union Landing, a 104-acre shopping center that includes Albertson's supermarket, plush restaurants and boutiques.

The Union City Drive-In is now just a memory, a very beautiful memory.

The Pintos (from left) Loren Pinto, Janine Pascua, Bob Martin Sr., Karen and Adam Bebee, Lee Pinto, Herb Pascua and Dave Pinto.

Century Theater in Union Landing

``Mrs. Primitiva T. Ranoa Gador

By Myrla Raymundo

Mrs. Primitiva Taclindo Ranoa Gador owned a place in the old Alvarado District called Ranoa Enterprises and worked in that building for many years. The building, now drastically changed, is on Smith Street across from Caesar Chavez Park. She saw the changes that happened in the old district.

At present, she is still very connected with the Alvarado District in her role as the President of the Filipino Community of Alvarado and Vicinity Inc. of Union City and as a teacher to the senior adults in Union City, under the Fremont and New Haven School Districts. She has held the positions for twenty years now.

Prim, as she is fondly called, arrived in Hawaii at the early age of five. Her parents, Mrs. Fortunata and Crispin Taclindo, first set foot in Paia, Maui, in 1924, as part of the "Sacadas" people from the Philippines under contract with the Hawaiian Sugar Planter's Association, to work in the sugar cane fields. Her father, who was a teacher for 22 years prior to coming to the plantation, was hired as a clerk in the plantation store.

Prim attended Maui High School and graduated from the Hawaiian Mission Academy in Oahu. When World War II broke out, she worked in Pearl Harbor selling US War bonds.

Prim came to the mainland and worked at various professions. She completed a course in real estate, attended travel school for opening an agency, and was a licensed life insurance salesperson. She worked as a nurse's aide for many years at the Washington Hospital in Fremont. She left the hospital to become an agent for the Greyhound and Peerless Bus Systems on Bonde Way in Fremont. She is also a Filipino Court Interpreter; member of the Bohol Circle Inc. of Alameda for 50 years.

In 1960, Prim was awarded a lifetime membership in the Filipino Circle Club Inc. of Fremont, organized to help the Filipinos in Alvarado, Newark, Centerville, Nilas, Irvington, Mission San Jose, and Warm Springs, for serving eight consecutive terms as President. The Club assisted the "old timers" who did not have families to help them during sicknesses, who needed assistance in filing governmental forms for citizenship, and for social activities. She was re-elected as President for 2002-2003. She was also the First President of the Pilipino American Seniors, Inc. (PASI), organized in 1987, at the Senior Center in Fremont. She served for seven years.

It was a cold morning in November 2, 1951, when Prim landed with her seven children aboard the SS Lurline, greeted by Victor, her husband, and a few relatives at the San Francisco Harbor. One of the children joined them later, due to illness, taking a flight by airplane.

The family lived in Richmond, California, for about eight months while Victor worked at Hunter's Point as a sheetmetal man. Due to his physical disabilities, the family moved to the beautiful country area of Alvarado, Newark, Centerville, Niles, Irvington, Mission San Jose, and Warm Springs. The last five towns were later incorporated as Fremont. They met some Filipino families who helped them make their transition a pleasant one in this new area.

They sharecropped in farming strawberries (fulfilling their dreams of eating lots of strawberries), with Mr. Allan Hirsch, a prominent pioneer family and farmer in Irvington. After staying at the camphouse for over a year, the family was able to buy a large home at 39392 Blacow Road, Fremont. The Ranoa's raised their 11 children, (four more added to the brood), in the home over 27 years. Five of the children served in different branches of the United States Armed Forces.

In 1983, her husband, Mr. Victor Ranoa passed away. She then fell in love again and on December 29, 1990 at the Santa Paula Catholic Church in Fremont, Prim married Francisco Patis Gador Sr. They lived happily until the time of Mr. Francisco Gador, Sr.'s death in 1999.

Primitiva Ranoa Gador will continue to be in Union City to share her expertise with the many Filipino seniors in the area.

Yolanda Cervantes Higareda

By Myrla Raymundo

Here's a little article from the Union City Leader published in May 5, 1960.

Yolanda Cervantes, featured in the article, is now 53 years old. She visited me at the Museum and told me a lot of stories about the Decoto area.

Pogo sticks were in style at the time. Yolanda and Ryland Roger were demonstrating the use of the sticks.

Yolanda Cervantes Higareda, who was born at Highland Hospital in Oakland on June 7, 1949, lives at 34005 11th Street in the Decoto area. Her family moved to Decoto in 1941 and lived at 33534 - 4th Street.

Yolanda, who retired in March 2002, worked as a Court Clerk and later as a Court Manager for 34 years. Her mother used to work at the Masonic Home up in the hills. She has a lot of stories to tell: the movie theater where Flora, the movie star from Mexico, used to perform; Mel Bolivia Liquor Store, where Archie and Superman comics sold for only 10 cents and lots of other stories about Decoto.

Yolanda is a very energetic retiree who goes shopping, has her nails done and manages her home well.

THE UNION CITY WOMEN'S CLUB

By Myrla Raymundo

Do you ever wonder how the women in Union City participated in our community in the early years of our city's formation and how they contributed to the progress of our city?

Continuing to record Union City history, I would like to include the women of the early 1970's as part of our community build up and development.

In the previous issue of this newsletter, I was lucky to come across the old files of Leontine Costa, donated by granddaughter Sherrie Costa. There were community activities during those early days starting in 1938. The women, who formed the Decoto Discussion Group, were already contributing to the formation of our city during those times.

For our next story on the early activities of women in our city, I got the old files of the Union City Women's Club from our very own Museum director, Margaret Shepard, who was one of the officers of the club. Here goes...

A Welcome Wagon Club, a non-profit organization, was established in Union City on May 27, 1971. The idea was originated by Mary Lucido and Cleis Jordon. There were 14 original members.

The club was open to all newcomers with a residency requirement of no more than three years in the area. Welcome Wagon International sponsored it.

The Founders felt that there was a need for such a club to help newcomers to

Union City acquaint themselves with others in their community – to promote friendships to bridge the gap of loneliness new residents often encounter after settling in a new area. The club wants to help newcomers familiarize themselves with Union City and its facilities and to promote community pride through work on civic and community projects.

Hobby, craft and sport groups were formed, based on the individual member's interests and skills. A bowling league, gourmet cooking group, interior decorating, sewing, and tours were on their agenda.

The first women's club officers were installed on July 13, 1971, at Lyon's Restaurant in the Fremont Hub Shopping Center in Fremont. Mrs. James F. Gallagher was the President, Mrs. Robert N. Garautte, Jr. was first vice president, and Mrs. George G. A. Olmedo was second vice president. Mrs. Robert F. Cordano was recording secretary, Mrs. Paul G. Lucido, corresponding secretary, Mrs. John I. Petersen, treasurer, and Mrs. Frank Chie, historian.

Their guest speaker was Mr. Bill May, superintendent of the Union City Department of Recreation, who instructed the club members on the operation and the facilities of his department.

The club operated from 1971 through 1992. Perusing the old files of the club, I found familiar names – others who are also members of the Museum. Rita Price, who became president, Margaret Shepard, Elvamae Borghi and Ruth Orozco were officers of the club.

I would like to mention some of the activities that these women held.

Winter Bowling League of 1971-72 – The Untouchables won first place at Lido Lanes in Newark.

December 1971 – Christmas Party Toys for Tots given to Union City's Community Center.

In 1973 - card night, day at the races, bowling party, Oakland Museum visit and lunch, cake sale, family picnic, rummage sale, and membership tea.

In May 1973 - a Swedish Auction, the proceeds of that auction went towards a scholarship fund at James Logan. Mrs. Hennessey presented the award to Darcy Babbitt at the commencement exercises at James Logan.

In 1974 - bingo, white elephant sale, and couples card night.

In 1976 – the club sponsored a Little League Team.

In 1977 – two \$200 scholarships were presented to Sherry Berbel and Elvira Espinoza of James Logan High School.

They published monthly newsletters about their activities.

The same activities were repeated until 1992.

Truly, the women of the early years were very busy serving the community in their wholesome ways. There are four or five members who are still with us, but I wonder where the other women are now.

<p style="text-align: center;">First Presbyterian Church of Alvarado</p>

Compiled by Tim Swenson

Just down from Union City Blvd on West Horner St. is an old church. The major part of the church is the second church for the Presbyterian Church of Alvarado, built in 1902. The first church building was built in 1860.

In the late 1850's, there were no churches in Alvarado. Church services were held on the second story of Mr. Horner's store. Mrs. Charlotte Cornell and Mrs. Julia Thompson organized a Sunday School in the public school house. Soon, both decided that a church was needed in Alvarado. As Mrs. Cornell was Presbyterian and Mrs. Thompson was a Methodist, they both struck off to build their separate churches.

Mrs. Cornell contacted the Pastor of the Centerville Presbyterian Church, Reverend William Wallace Brier. The Centerville Presbyterian Church was the first Presbyterian Church in Washington Township, and of which, Mrs. Cornell was a member.

Rev. Brier promised to help build the Alvarado church, and promised to commit \$500 from the Church Erection Fund to the project. It was up to them to find the land and the rest of the funds. A Mr. Jones was visiting Mr. Cornell's General Store, when Mr. Cornell asked if he would be willing to donate part of his land for the church. Mr. Jones agreed, but only if the landowner, Mr. Murphy, would release him of his mortgage. Mrs. Cornell traveled to San Jose to see Mr. Murphy to secure the land. Mr. Murphy agreed and the deed

was written up so that the land belonged to the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of San Jose.

To generate the rest of the funds needed to build the building, Mrs. Cornell organized a festival. Since the festival was to have as many people attend as possible, Mrs. Cornell had to sell the new church as benefiting all of Alvarado by bringing respectability to the town and increasing property values.

The festival was held in a large brick warehouse, decorated with bunting and evergreens, and lighted by chandeliers. Everyone pitched in by contributing various cooked items, including pies, cakes, biscuits, pickles, preserves, and so on. They also sold books, which they had purchased in San Francisco, for a small commission. Admission was only 50 cents. After the final tally, the festival generated \$600 for building the church.

A day after the festival, a schooner landed in Alvarado with a load of lumber and other building material. Mrs. Cornell and her group thought that a benefactor from San Francisco was making a large donation to their cause. Much to their disappointment, the load was for building the Methodist church. Soon the church was built and was ready for furnishing. Mrs. Cornell traveled to San Francisco to purchase carpet, a sofa, 2 chairs, and other furnishings. A friend from San Francisco donated lamps. The bell came from a foundry in Brooklyn (Oakland). Mr. Cornell sent the foundry \$50 for the bell. The foundry operator, with the help of some of his friends, contributed \$100 toward the bell, and sent the church a bell costing \$150. Mr. Buel, the agent of the Bible Society,

furnished a pulpit bible. Nathaniel Gray donated a number of hymnbooks. Other friends donated various books for the Sunday School.

The church was dedicated in May, 1861, by the Rev. Dr. Hamilton of Oakland, with him preaching the sermon and Rev. Brier and others assisting in other duties.

In 1902 the present building was built, just to the west of the original church. The original church was soon torn down.

Prominent families from Alvarado have been associated with the Presbyterian Church of Alvarado, such as the names McKeown, Logan, Granger, Farley, and Jung.

Union City City Halls

Compiled by Tim Swenson

When Union City incorporated in 1959, there was no City Hall. The City Council was meeting at Barnard Elementary School, but someplace was needed for the City Administrator to work. It was decided that the first City Hall would be the Alvarado Firehouse, located at 3841 Smith St. The City Administrator and two other City employees performed the daily business of the City from the Firehouse. Given the small size of the Firehouse, it did not take long for the City staff to grow too big for the Firehouse. The City Hall was moved to 309 H. St (at the corner of 4th St.) in Decoto.

Until 1966, Police services for Union City was contracted to the Alameda County Sheriff Department. In 1966, the Police Department was formed. With the new Police Department, plus

continued growth, the City needed more space than the current City Hall had.

In February of 1966, the City leased a building at the corner of Whipple and Central, with an address of 1154 Whipple Ave. In January of 1967, the building was expanded an additional 4,200 square feet, to create a final size of 10,000 square feet. The new expansion made room for larger City Council chambers and for expansion of the City Police Department.

Before the expansion, City Hall was a rectangular building running along Whipple Ave. The expansion was added on the west end of the building, running along Central Ave, making the building L shaped. The City Council chambers were located in the corner of the L. The Police Department took up the rest of the expansion, with the entrance to the Police Department on Central Ave. Since the City did not own the building, it was limited in what it could do, esp. in building the Police Department. The holding cell had bars, but it had the same drop-down ceiling as the rest of the building. Occasionally, an eager prisoner would try to escape by climbing up into the drop-down ceiling.

On August 6, 1976, City Hall was dedicated to Police Chief William Cann, who was shot on June 11, 1974 and died a short time later of his wounds.

As the City continued to grow, so did the need for a larger City Hall. Planning for a City Center Complex, that included City Hall, a Police Station, and Library, was started in 1971. The soon-to-be finalized City General Plan proposed a 10 acre site near the future BART station, but another group proposed a 24

acre site along Alvarado-Niles Road between Dowe and Central. Later the plan shifted to a lot land owned by the New Haven School District, across Alvarado-Niles Rd. from Logan High School. In 1974, the New Haven School District approved the sale of the land to the City for \$256,000.

A special election was called for May 27, 1975, for two tax measures, one for the City Center Complex and one for continued local Bus Service. The measure for Bus Service was approved by the voters, but the measure for the City Center Complex was not.

In February 1977 the City received a federal grant of \$5 million for the City Center Complex. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on April 15, 1977. The groundbreaking was for both the City of Union City and the New Haven School District, as the NHUSD was building their new Educational Services building. Congressman Don Edwards was the guest speaker.

On March 8, 1979, the new City Hall was ready and the first city workers moved in. The opening ceremony was held on April 21, 1979. Guest of Honor was U.S. Sen. S. I. Hayakawa. Like the previous City Hall, the City Center Complex was named for Police Chief William Cann.

TOM KITAYAMA
Former Mayor of Union City

“Congratulations! Thank you for your dedication and service through the years in supporting the fair industry and Western Fairs Association activities and programs.” The Western Fairs Association Board of Directors presented this to former Mayor Tom Kitayama in January 2003

Tom had served the Alameda County Fair for 40 years. His dedicated service as a contributing member of Western Fairs Association.

The Certificate further reads, “We thank you for your years of service to the fair industry and this Association, which aims to preserve, protect and ensure the successful future of fairs throughout North America and Canada.”

Former Mayor Tom Kitayama lives in a quiet place in his favorite city, Union City. He donated some artifacts to the Museum. Wife Heidi goes with Tom whenever they are invited to city events.

Membership Committee

A Membership Committee, composed of Jo Ann Lew, Margaret Shepard, Mike Christ and Myrla Raymundo, was established by the Museum Board to assist the Museum Treasurer with managing the Museum membership. Revenue from membership dues average \$1,057 per year.

The committee sent out letters in January 2003 letting some members know their membership with the Museum is expiring. We received several responses. A second letter was sent to those who did not respond.

At the February 2003 meeting, the Board voted to change the membership year from fiscal year (July1-June 30) to a revolving year based on the month the dues were paid.

The Membership Committee will assist the Treasurer in following up with those whose memberships are expiring. Reminders will be sent out before memberships expire. This will ensure the membership list remains current.

We on the Membership Committee want to express our appreciation to all of you who continue to support the Museum either through a lifetime membership or by extending your membership each year.

FOUNDER'S NOTES

A new year means a fresh start, a clean slate, and a chance to begin again.

There is no better time than now to think about improvements in the operation of the Museum and to take action on our plans for the year.

As we begin the New Year, the Museum is facing many challenges. How can we better present our residents with more exciting Museum displays? How can we attract more people to visit the Museum? How can we invite the school district to participate in our Presentation of History program? How can we get more funding for the Museum?

These are the big challenges facing us in the Museum in 2003.

Let's work on the following tasks to meet these challenges:

- Apply for grants.
- Increase membership.
- Hire more volunteers
- Learn ways to conserve our artifacts and materials.

Preserve Union City's history by collecting news articles, maintaining and adding to the Museum's library.

Continue writing the residents story for our oral history.

Continue working on the conservation of historical designated buildings.

Continue working on the preservation of historical homes and buildings.

Our Museum officers, members and volunteers will be busy working for a long time to preserve and share Union City history. In this way, we can present a well-established Museum to our residents.

The challenges will never stop coming; we look forward not only to the next five years, but also to the next 100 years.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL ABOUT UNION CITY?
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I am in constant search of history and stories about the past and stories about people. I'm sure that residents who have been here for a while have stories to tell.

Visit our website and you will read stories of not only our pioneers, but also about our residents, who are still living in Union City.

E-mail me at RAYMYR@aol.com, write me at 3107 San Ramon CT., Union City, CA 94587, or call me at (510) 489-0133.

LET ME WRITE YOUR
STORY...Myrla Raymundo

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MUSEUM REGULAR MEETINGS



Regular meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Museum. Members and guests are welcome to attend. The Museum is located at 3941 Smith Street, old Alvarado area.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Thank you all for coming to the Museum Open House held last February 15th.

MUSEUM LIFETIME MEMBERS

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

