

UNION CITY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Founded by Myrla Garduque 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. 5 NO. 5

March 2004

Myrla Garduque 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.

**CHIEF CHRIS MAXWELL
UNION CITY FIRE CHIEF**

By Myrla Raymundo

The Union City Council has chosen Chief Chris Maxwell to serve as Union City's fire chief. He was highly recommended by former Chief Brian Kelly, who moved on to become fire chief of San Mateo.

Chief Maxwell, who is very young looking, is really very young. He was born on July 27, 1960 in Napa,

California, a beautiful wine producing community. He came to Union City in April 2000; but actually started his job as division chief of operations on July 1, 2000.

He played a major role in re-establishing the Union City Fire Department after the department's six-year absence in Union City, when we were served by the City of Fremont. During that time, lots of firefighters had to be hired, equipment had to be purchased and new fire station built. The residents were very happy to have the department back.

He oversees four (4) fire stations with 47 uniformed "Line" personnel and a \$ 7.9 million annual operation budget.

The Fire Stations are #1, located on Central Ave., Fire Station #2, on Alvarado Blvd., and Fire Station #3, on 10th Street.

**NORMAN SILVEIRA
FORMER PLANNING
COMMISSIONER**

By Barbara Friedrich

The newest fire station that Chief Maxwell oversees is Fire Station No. 4, located west of Union City Boulevard near Lowry Road. It is a state of the art beautiful building. From the front it looks like one of the beautiful new homes in Ponderosa Cove in Union City. It has a beautiful Spanish design. The large 4 above the entryway makes it recognizable as a fire station. With the new fire station in service, there is now a significant improvement in the response time to the southwestern portion of the city.

This is one of the many tasks that Chief Maxwell accomplished when he moved to work in the Fire Department in the city.

Chief Maxwell commutes from Half Moon Bay to Union City. He lives there with his wife Ellen and his 16-year-old son Brian.

Since his first job in June 1978, he has 24 years of fire department experiences. He spent 5 years in the City of Davis, 10 years in the City of Manteca and 5 years in Half Moon Bay.

The Fire Department helps maintain the quality of life that make Union City a safe place to live, work and raise a family.

Chief Maxwell is a very smart guy who has done a lot for the Union City Fire Department and for Union City. More power to you, Chief.

As a member of Union City's first Planning Commission, Norman will be remembered along with the other city founders. He has spent almost all of his life in Union City, including 29 years of service with New Haven School District.

Norman's history goes back much further. His mother, Mary Goularte came from the Azores at the age of 2 in about 1906. She later married Frank Silveira, also a native of the Azores and they settled in Alvarado on Granger Street where Norman was born in 1923. At that time, the Holly Sugar Company leased an area on their property to a cattle company that fed the cattle the raw sugar pulp. Frank worked in the stockyard.

(Norman has donated to the museum a copy of a picture of his father at work in 1916.)

Norman has many memories of growing up in Alvarado. There were several stores on Smith Street-Sam Dinsmore's, Tony Lee's, and Diaz Meat Market as well as Prego Grocery and Meat Market. The Helwig family owned the Alvarado Meat Market. The Silveira's house backed onto Alvarado school. At that time, the schoolyards were locked when school was not in session. He remembers sneaking under the fence. He talked about the homemade toys and games played in the field: kick the can, hide and seek, flying kites made from newspaper and sticks put together with flour and water glue, baseballs with worn covers replaced with black tape. Boys used pocketknives to play mumblety-peg.

Norman shot pigeons with his shotgun. These provided his mother with material for a delicious dinner. The supervisor at Holly Sugar gave him permission to hunt on the cattle yard property.

After Alvarado School, Norman attended Washington High School. His mother and his daughters also went to both schools. However, Alvarado school was in a different building for each of the three generations.

Following Washington High, Norman went to work at Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond as a welder until he went into the service. He served in the 11th Airborne Division of the Army in the Pacific Theater.

Norman married a Fremont native, Bernice Homen on September 12, 1948, following his three years in the service. They lived in Alvarado for many years. During that time he worked at Monodnock Mills and Singer Business

Machines in San Leandro and for Joe Jason making wall casings. He also owned a shoe repair shop on Union City Blvd. from 1947-1953. He joined the New Haven School District as a bus driver and custodian, later becoming a maintenance supervisor. He retired as the manager of maintenance and operations in 1982 after twenty-nine years with the district. At the same time, his wife Bernice was working for the Holly Sugar laboratory for 19 years. She retired when the plant moved to Tracy.

They raised two daughters, Norma Jean Armstrong who now lives in Turlock and Deborah Marie Kanufer of Union City, a secretary at Alvarado Middle School. Norman said that since he was raised with three sisters he was very happy to have daughters. He and Bernice are proud grandparents of four.

Norman's public service began as a volunteer fireman in Alvarado for ten or twelve years before Union City was incorporated and implemented a professional fire department. He also served on the Alvarado Sanitary District. He was very interested in the unification of Alvarado and Decoto into Union City. After unification he was asked to be a member of the first planning commission. He retired after one term.

Norman and Bernice moved to their home on DeWitt Court when the homes were built 35 years ago and have lived there ever since. He continues to take an interest in community affairs and has graciously donated many pictures and artifacts about Holly Sugar to the Union City Historical Museum.

HAROLD STICKLAND
Former Planning Commissioner

By Myrla Raymundo

The following flyer was sent out in 1971:

Vote For and elect
HAROLD STRICKLAND

- A businessman
- Resident of District 9 years
- Active in community affairs
- Chairman, Planning Commission
- Leader of Youth and Church Programs
- Married 38 years – 5 children
- 15 years as trustee in another school district.

Strickland got the votes. He was an earthy, outspoken jack of all trades with a conservative bend and a humanitarian streak. He had a straight shooting style, but was seen as rigorously honest and indiscreet. Considered “less than a diplomat” by some, Strickland was widely praised for his willingness to dismiss protocol and cut to the heart of issues.

Strickland was sympathetic to programs for minorities and others that needed help. Mrs. Margaret Stone, a colleague on the Board of Education, said that Strickland was one of the warmest people she had ever known. He took

particular interest in the young by creating odd jobs at his lumber mill so youngsters could earn a few bucks and learn about the world of work.

Harold Strickland ran a lumber mill, sat on the City’s Planning Commission and served seven years on the school board. Strickland was a native of Colorado. His wife Veneta recently passed away. He and Veneta have a son, Sterling Strickland of Fremont, four daughters, Dorothy Sowell of Stockton, Sherry Pigeon (deceased), Nancy Lockwood of Modesto and Jean Robertson of Fremont.

At 17, too broke to remain in college, Strickland jumped freight cars through the South and East. Returning home a few years later, he took a job handling cauliflower until the Depression left him without work.

He signed on following the crops through the Southwest and Southern California. To earn a few extra dollars, he doubled as an archeologist of sorts by digging up Indian relics for museums.

From Porterville to Exeter to Dunlap, California, he led a diverse life as cook service station dealer, prospector and finally mill operator. He brought his mill from Dunlap to Union City in 1961, where he settled.

No stranger to public life, he sat 15 years on a Fresno County School Board. He served as chairman of Union City’s Planning Commission and was swept to victory in 1971 on a conservative slate of school board candidates.

Until his resignation in 1978, Strickland held forth the values of discipline, hard

work and the need for youngsters to master basic academic skills.

He was the delight of local children every Christmas for about 40 years. As the Yuletide approached, he would cheerfully don a red flannel suit and beard, dispensing holiday cheer among Scout troops, elementary schools and church groups. The Santa role was but one of many unlikely or unusual facts to the always irascible, sometimes lovable man.

Harold Strickland passed away on April 21, 1980. He was 70 years old.

When the Union City Historical Museum opened in 2001, his wife Veneta, in her walker, was present. She visited the Museum a couple of times and really enjoyed seeing the artifacts. She said that she used to ride the Union City bus and transfer to the AC Transit to Fremont Senior Center where she volunteers. She gave the Museum some articles about her husband.

Veneta Strickland, a 41-year Union City resident, died on March 10, 2003. She was 88. She was born on July 1, 1914 in Bellingham, Washington and also worked at the Strickland Mill on Railroad Avenue in Union City during the 1960s and 1970s. She was a Sunday school teacher at Hillview Baptist Church where her husband served as deacon. She volunteered at the Fremont Senior Center, where she was known as the "hat lady" for almost 15 years.

We stand in awe of these Union City pillars, who worked hard to make a difference. They served their community and they will be remembered in the many years to come.

THE OLD DECOTO BARBER SHOP

By Myrla Raymundo

This picture of the Decoto Barber shop was taken in 1975.

This picture of the Decoto Barber Shop was taken on September 2000.

In 2000, as the Project Manager of the Historical Homes Inventory in Union City, I and my group took a lot of pictures of the historical homes in Decoto and Alvarado District. Our task was to submit these homes to the Planning Commission for approval of their designation as historical. The

above photo was one of the 400 structures that we included in the inventory.

I always wondered about this structure. Peering through the vacant shop, I was very curious of what happened there in past years and how many heads had been served by the operator of that barber shop.

Then I came across an article in the Brightside newspaper dated August 10, 1975. Here's the story:

The shop is called Rinaldo Caminada's Barber Shop and it is located on 10th Street.

The barbering chairs, bought from a defunct Oakland shop when the Decoto shop opened, are covered with ornate scroll brightwork. Though there are two chairs, it's really a one man shop. The second chair is especially for small children; narrower and taller, it eliminates the need for the board seat across the handles that goes along with youngsters haircuts in most shops.

When you enter the barbershop it is a little like stepping back a year or 20 in old Decoto. There's a brown metal freestanding stove for heat, and if you should have to wait your turn, the green painted cane chairs are more comfortable than they appear.

There is a bathing suit cutie on the wall and the two calendars minus date pages that serve as art (Edgren Motors – Fremont – Opposite Washington High School) along with the printed sampler (God Bless America). You can browse through some of the 1964 and 1968 Geographics, the Ace Hardware

Christmas 1973 Catalog and assorted issues of Better Homes, Women's Day and Merchants Illustrated magazines.

That time haircuts cost \$2 (under 12, \$1.75), shaves are \$1.50 and a plain massage costs \$2.

When Caminada opened the shop in 1939, haircuts cost 25 cents, shaves were 25 cents.

The broken pendulum clock on the wall adds to the impression that time stands still in this barbershop. The furnishings, though utilitarian are comfortable and the place is clean. If you're really concerned about the time you spend waiting, there's a white plastic electric clock hanging over the mirror and it works.

But when you happen to doze off while waiting your turn, you might be surprised on waking to find the cars going by outside were 1970s models, not 1939 to 1945 Fords.

Now that I satisfied my curiosity, I am still wondering. Where is Rinaldo Caminada now a days? I read that he worked with the New Haven Unified School district as a custodian at the same time that he operated the barbershop. And where are the customers that he faithfully served during those times?

The old Decoto Barber shop is now part of history. I would think that some people from Decoto still remembers the time when they were waiting for their turn while dozing off in the comfortable barbering chairs, covered with ornate scroll brightwork.

**MAE F. SANTOS, LIFELONG
RESIDENT OF UNION CITY**

By Myrla Raymundo

Mae E. Santos, a lifelong resident of Union City, died on February 6, 2003. Born October 20, 1903, in Alvarado, she had lived in Union City her entire life.

Mrs. Santos was an active parishioner of St. Anne's Catholic Church in Union City. She served as chairperson of the White Elephant Budget Shop, which benefited the church. She was also an Oakland A's fan. Friends described her as giving and loving. She loved to tell stories about how much the Alvarado neighborhood where she grew up has changed.

Antone (Tony) and Mae E. Santos' children are Alvina Brune of Union City and Winifred Harper of Tonasket, Washington. Her sister is Genevieve Dutra of Union City. Alvina Brune was a post office station supervisor. She took over duties from Aunt Genevieve Dutra.

Mrs. Santos has a house that used to be the first grade school in Alvarado.

REMEMBERING PETER PINTO

Peter Pinto, a Leslie Salt engineer, lived in Union City all his life. His family came from Germany. His father set up a shoe repair shop. Farmers gathered around a pot-bellied stove to talk and play cards while their boots and harnesses were mended. August May was president of a bank. The fire station next door to the bank had a two wheel hose reel. Alvarado was known as the town with a saloon on every corner.

New in Union City:

**LARRY CHEEVES, CITY
MANAGER**

The City Council recently appointed Public Works Director Larry Cheeves to serve as city manager. He fills the vacancy created by the recent departure of former City Manager David Berger.

Mr. Cheeves has more than 27 years experience in local government. He joined Union City in 1989 after having worked for several municipalities in Southern California. He will oversee the day to day operation of the city and manage a staff of about 250 city employees.

**TEEN CENTER IN KENNEDY
PARK**

A bigger and better Teen Center is now located at 1200 "J" Street in Kennedy Park. The teens enjoy games, sports, arts and crafts, movies, Ping-Pong and pool tournaments, community service opportunities or just "hang out with other kids. The Teen Center has a lounge and study area, as well as a Snack Bar. There are video and board games, reading, and playing on the computer or just relaxing. Most of this is FREE. There is a no cost for daily activities and only minimal charges for special projects and field trips. All teen activities are conducted and supervised by trained recreation leaders. It is open Monday-Thursday, 2:00 - 5:30 PM Friday, 2:00-8:00 PM. For more information, call 489-1462.

OLD ALVARADO BUSINESSES & HOMES

By Myrla Raymundo

Let me walk you through the old Alvarado District during the olden times. We will go street by street and try to remember and reminisce the days gone by. Some of the buildings are no longer existing.

Smith Street

Old Alvarado Fire Station (now Union City Historical Museum)
Pine Garden Chinese Restaurant
Church (was Manuel Silva blacksmith shop)
Liquor Store
Matt Machado (now Video store)
Bill Machado home (School Board Member)
Bill Avila Farmers home (now Union City Councilmember Carol Dutra Tax business)
Elvin & Jean Rose' home (First Volunteer Fire Chief)
Dan Rose (Retired Union City Fire Chief)
Manuel Goulart (School Board Member)
Tony Mello home (first Union City Fireman hired)
Old Lumber Yard
Ray's General Store
1st and 2nd Alvarado School
Alvarado Train Depot
Alvarado Hotel
Laundry
Japanese School
Matsumoto Store (now Smith Convenience Store)
Tony Mellows Bar and Barber Shop
Jacinto General Store
St. Anne's church and property
Loyola building
Home of Mr. Granger
Bronco Billy's Pizza

Watkins Street

SDES Hall built in 1926
Peter & Antoinette Pinto Home
(was first central telephone for Alvarado Area)
Tony Lee's general store
Lee's house
Harvey House later Holly House (now Filipino Community Center)
Odd Fellow Hall last user Movie House (started with silent movies)
Norte family

Vallejo Street

Baird Home
August May home, Bank President
Joyce Home, Fire Dept Commissioner
George Hellwig home, Hellwigs sausage
John Ralph, owner Ralph, general store, fire dept commissioner
Robey
Joseph Avila, 1st house
Thrift Store
First Post Office
Bank of Alameda (moved from across the street, Union City Blvd.)
Diaz Family Meat & Groceries

Union City Blvd.

Hellwig's Meat Market
Shoe Repair Shop, Pinto Family
Manual August Bar and Barber Shop
First Alvarado Bank (Moved across Street) Bank of Alameda Co., August May, President
Historical landmark (First Court of Alameda County)
Frank George Petroleum Property
Navarro Shoe Maker
Loyola Repair Garage
Garage Car Repair
George Oak Pioneer Paper
Andrade's Garage Grocery & Gas

FOUNDER'S NOTES

Museum Continues to Serve the Residents of Union City

As you all know, the Union City Historical Museum has three components – the Museum & Artifacts, the Oral History and the Preservation of Historical Homes.

Museum & Artifacts-

Our residents and former residents now residing in other cities continue to donate things to the Museum hoping that this is a safe place to keep and display their treasured artifacts. Their donations are being placed in the hands of the museum volunteer in charge of preservation. Some objects are placed and displayed in glass cases and some documents are placed between sheets of plastics and preserved. These objects and documents are now enshrined in the Museum's permanent collection and are displayed to the delight of visitors. They are now part of Union City history.

The Museum has a historical library. Since 1971, I started clipping news about Union City and filing them by subject matters. We are continuing to collect all the news and filing them. This is very

helpful to residents, especially the students, in their research work.

Visitors to the Museum are now increasing in numbers. We continue presentation of history to schoolchildren and to visitors coming to the Museum.

Oral History –

Long time residents are being interviewed and published in the bi-monthly Museum newsletter. Past city leaders and people who saw the big changes in Union City are gladly giving their stories to us. This is the continuation of our history.

Preservation of historical homes -

There are 400 homes that we collected to be submitted to the city council as historically designated homes. Time is of the essence and we are scurrying to preserve the historic districts in Union City.

The January 26, 2004 Argus story about the Sa property at Alvarado Niles Road and the sign, "Free home available for relocation," is not favorable news to the Museum. The city hired a consultant to inventory the historical homes in Union City. The Union City Historical Museum helped gather the information.

The Sa house is one of those with the historical designation. We hope that the developer will help in footing the bill to transfer to a location and we hope that the city will provide a location.

We should all help to preserve our heritage. Otherwise, pretty soon, there will not be a trace of our history.

Myrla Garduque Raymundo

**MESSAGE FROM THE
PRESIDENT**

On February 24, 2004, the Union City Historical Museum will have been open for three years. In that time, we have gone from having nothing to display to having almost too much to display. This is all due to Museum members and community members donating older items for display. More than 95% of the items on display were donated to the Museum. Besides donations, community members have loaned picture collections to the Museum for us to scan into a computer and archive. I can happily say that in those three years the number of residents that know that Union City has a museum has increased greatly.

The most interesting part is the far reach of the Museum. In that last few months, the Museum has been contacted by family members of two victims of the 1951 DC-6 plane crash-one from Chico, the other from Pennsylvania. A sugar beet enthusiast from New York is always interested in any new material we receive on the Holly Sugar Factory. Thanks.

Timothy Swenson

MUSEUM DOCENTS

We're calling on the Museum members to help us. If you're available on any of the days that we are open, please call Barbara Friedrich at the Museum.

HISTORY PRESENTATION

The history of Union City is being presented at the Union City Historical Museum on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Please come to the Museum and learn more about our city.

**MUSEUM ELECTION OF
OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

The Museum Election of Officers and Directors will be held on **May 3, 2004**, at the Annual Membership Meeting at the Museum starting at 7:00PM. All members are urged to attend and vote. The Nominating Committee members will be calling members to ask if you are interested in being on the Board of Directors. If you are interested in being officer/director of the Board, please fill in the election form on page 11. A slate of officers and directors will be presented, but nominations will also be taken from the floor.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**Al Minard
Dave Bhatia
Tessie Gatan
Ernest Machado
Barbara Perez Raymundo**

EDITORIAL BOARD

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

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

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

