

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

Museum Board meets on the first Monday of the month at the Museum at 7 PM

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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.

JOHN H. PETERSON FARM

By Myrla Raymundo

Whenever we drive by Alvarado-Niles Road enroute to Mission Blvd, I always wonder about the solo house located on the right side of Alvarado Niles by the lone road going to Quarry Lake. Is it part of Union City or is it part of Fremont?

My curiosity ended when a lady by the name of Beth Armstrong gave me a material about the John H. Peterson farm, which she thinks, might strike my interest.

I was very interested and so Ray and I strolled down Alvarado Niles and into the Quarry Lake Road. We were not so sure whether that was the farm. But, lo and behold, it was the John H. Peterson farm with an address of 35261 Alvarado-Niles Road, Union City.

A nice young couple met us and invited us inside the house. I was mesmerized.

It was like being in a century old house. The furniture was old. The kitchen was sparse. There were three huge bedrooms and two baths. This was just the addition to the adjacent two-story house.

Reading from the material dated February 2, 1992, by Mr. Ward Hill of San Francisco, and given to me by Beth Armstrong, this farm complex is composed of four buildings – a farmhouse, a tank house, a carport and a barn. They are set in a grove of mature trees, which contrast with the surrounding 30 acres of flat, open land, seasonally planted with flowers by a local grower.

The T-plan house is divided into two sections: a gabled, rectangular plan, 2-story wing on the east, and perpendicular to the two-story section, a single story, gabled wing extending to the west.

John H. Peterson built this house and related farm buildings after purchasing a 50-acre parcel from the Jonas Clark Estate in 1883. Peterson built his house in 1884 and cultivated 18 acres of apricots, peaches, plums, cherries, sugar beets and grains. The Peterson farm and other Alameda Creek land, originally known as the Niles fruit district, was the earliest area cultivated for commercial orchards in Washington Township.

Born in 1845, Peterson emigrated to the United States from Denmark in 1866. Originally landing in New York, Peterson came to San Francisco by way of Nicaragua in June, 1866. He lived in the Hayward area first for a few years, then he moved to Humboldt County where he lived before moving to this property near Alameda Creek. In 1872, Peterson married California native, Clara

T. Bradford, with whom he had five (5) children.

In the 1930's, one of Peterson's daughters and her husband, whose surname was Trask, lived in the house and maintained the farm.

The State of California, which bought the property in 1958 for the Route 84 Realignment Project, rents the property to a local flower grower who has a couple of their workers and their families living in the house.

The house overall retains much of its original exterior ornament and form. The Peterson house appears to be significant under Criterion A as one of the few surviving farm houses dating from the early years (the 1880s) of the fruit growing industry in Washington Township. Commercial fruit growing became an important industry that dominated the local agricultural economy until the mid-20th century. The Peterson house is also one of the few extant farm houses to survive in the Niles district, the house is an outstanding example of an 1880s Queen Anne style farm house in Washington Township.

In the context of what was originally Washington Township, the Peterson house is a rare, surviving example of a large 19th century farmhouse that retains integrity of materials, design and setting.

(Ed's Note: Washington Township was comprised of Fremont, Union City and Hayward.)

History Detectives

By Timothy Swenson

Last year, PBS started airing a new hour-long program called the History Detectives, a show where experts take a history related mystery, sent in by a viewer, and research it. You might recognize some of the experts from watching the Antique Roadshow. The first season is composed of 10 episodes where they handle from 3 to 4 mysteries per episode.

This past July, PBS started airing the second season. The show perfectly demonstrates the techniques and tools used by researchers doing historical research. It also shows how local historical societies or museums are utilized for doing local research. Sometimes doing research you have

On doing research on a letter supposedly written by Robert E. Lee, they analyzed both the handwriting and the paper to see if the letter was authentic. When researching an individual, census, land, birth, and death records can all be used. Sometimes the researchers discover that the supposed history is correct, other times they find that it is very incorrect, other times the research can not prove or disprove a history. The fun is the search and trying to discover the truth. The types of mysteries they handle are: Did President Grant visit our Firehouse? Was this sword given to my ancestor by Napoleon? Is this building the first railroad station in Dallas? Was this home in New Orleans owned by a black businessman in the early 1800?

As much as the history that the experts discover is interesting, I find the tools

and techniques equally interesting. I wish I had the budget and time that these experts have when doing research for our Museum. If you like history and detective stories, then History Detectives is just the show for you.

ODE TO UNION CITY

By Miles Price

There is a city where beauty resides
Setting between the hills and Bay
A joy to reside in Union City each day
Under bright blue skies
Rich in history you see
It is home for you and me
Indians resided here at first
Then white men, adventurers in boats
Across the sea they float
Men from Spain to settle came
Padres in robe with belts of ropes
Gold seeker also came
Hunting gold they found no fame
Farming soon became their lot
Laying claim to land
Cities they began to plot
Shops keepers, bars, and homes
Families and men no longer roamed
Boats to haul goods on the bay
Union Landing built to stay.
Railroads from the east
Gave rise to towns.
Today one city instead of many
To the future Union City stands proud
and ready.

CHIEF RANDY ULIBARRI
Union City Police Chief

By Myrla Raymundo

program at San Jose State University leading to a Masters in Sociology.

They're grown and they're all professionals, but the Chief feels that they still need his full attention and guidance.

Chief Ulibarri is a very educated person. He has an AA degree in Social Science from Ohlone College and a BA degree in Sociology in Cal State University. He graduated from the FBI National Academy in 1998.

His first job was in the very famous (PSSC) Pacific State Steel Corporation. He worked there as a Labor Foreman from 1971 thorough 1976. He said the work situation was very hot and sometimes dirty; but at a very young age, he said he learned good work ethics. He was able to deal with all kinds of people there.

He started as a Police Officer in Union City on September 20, 1976. Later, because of his diligence and love of work, he was promoted to Sergeant, and went up to being a Lieutenant, and then a Captain. He became the Chief of Police in July 2000 when Chief Al Guzman retired.

Even with a lot of work and responsibilities heading the Police Department, Chief Ulibarri can still find time to work for the community. He has a lot of community involvement. He was Chairperson of the New Years Eve celebration for two years, in 2001 and 2002. He was frequently called as Emcee for events such as the Union City Chamber of Commerce, the Community Spirit Award and was very good in doing auctioning during Winter Fest. He

Chief Randy Ulibarri, Union City Police Chief, was instrumental in the very first funding of the Union City Historical Museum. He and the former Police Chief Al Guzman were staff to the Human Relations Commission when they were dishing out financial support to non-profits in 2001. Randy helped this writer put together the justification for the request. The Human Relations Commission approved it. That started the initial work in the Museum.

Chief Ulibarri plans to retire in December 2005 "to have more time for my family. This job takes away the opportunity to spend time with them. I want to make up for lost time," he said.

Randy, 53, and wife Kathy now have grown sons, Michael, 26 and twins David and Andrew, both 23.

Michael graduated from San Francisco State University and is teaching English in Korea. Randy plans to go there next month. David graduated from Cal Polys, San Luis Obispo and majored in Social Science. Andrew attended school in UC Santa Barbara and is pursuing a graduate

is on the Board of Trustees for Washington Township Hospital.

The City is proud to have Chief Ulibarri in its force.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

by Myrla Raymundo

The settlement patterns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are still visible within Union City today. The small communities of Decoto and Alvarado respectively comprise the east and west sides of Union City.

Town of Alvarado

Alvarado developed around agricultural and grazing practices, as well as salt and beet sugar manufacturing established along Alameda Creek. Most of this portion of Alameda County remained primarily agricultural, with a rural character, into the 1950s. However, the City shows a drastic change in the region's landscape since the end of World War II. Union City was incorporated in 1959 with the merging of Alvarado, Decoto, and New Haven. What remains of Old Alvarado are a few commercial buildings and a number of residential properties dating to late 1880s through the early 1930s.

The Old Alvarado District is composed primarily of single-family residences dating from the late 1880s through 1930 with several commercial and religious properties found within the boundaries. Alvarado is significant under Criterion A: resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.

Town of Decoto

The development of Decoto was the result of its close proximity to the Central Pacific Railroad line. Most of this portion of Alameda County remained primarily agricultural, with a rural character, into the 1950s.

Most of the resources are residential properties including Craftman, Queen Anne, Mission Revival and Vernacular houses, as well as a number of commercial properties. The surrounding area has been heavily developed in the last twenty years with residential and commercial buildings. The old Decoto Historic District is composed primarily of single-family residences dating from the late 1880s through 1930 with several commercial and religious properties. The district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of sites, buildings, and structures united by past events.

AUGUSTUS M. CHURCH

In the spring of 1852, Augustus M. Church located a trading point, in partnership with Henry C. Smith, at New Haven (now Alvarado), from where he was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 1852-53, when Washington Township was a portion of Santa Clara County, He was elected as the first County Clerk and Recorder of Alameda.

A GLIMPSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE FILIPINOS IN UNION CITY

BIENVENIDO CIPRIANO
Old Alvarado Resident
by Myrla Raymundo

relatives of families who had been here for quite a while. Some of them were U. S. Navy men and some of them were those who worked for the U. S. Navy in the Philippines. Some of them settled in Union City, Fremont, Hayward, Newark and the outlying areas.

In the 1920's the population in Union City was already diverse. Aside from the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Hawaiians, there were also Filipinos in the area.

Bienvenido Cipriano

In 1920, the first generation Filipinos came to the United States, where they worked in the sugar plantations in Hawaii. These pioneering Filipinos had little education when they left the Philippines and so they found menial jobs such as apple pickers and agricultural workers in vegetable farms, house cleaners, helpers, dishwashers, bellboys and domestic helpers. The camps provided by the owners of the plantations were their homes. They rarely went out to have fun.

Also in 1920, the first generation Filipinos came to the United States as Merchant Marines, U. S. Navy Men and relatives of these Filipinos. Some of these Filipinos became businessmen.

The second wave of Filipinos immigrants came in 1946 under the Exchange Students Programs and most of them settled on the East Coast and became doctors, engineers, and nurses.

The third and latest influx of the Filipino immigrants came to the United States in the early 70's and late 80's. Most of them were professionals and some were

Bienvenido Cipriano belongs to the first generation Filipinos. He was a Merchant Marine who settled in Union City in 1926. His cousin Dominica Diangson, one of the original founders of the Alvarado Filipino Community, operated a restaurant, the Luneta Café, a gambling house casino, a poolroom and bar. He remembers that the population in Alvarado was only 400 during that time.

Bienvenido Cipriano came to the Union City Historical Museum with his son **Arthur Cipriano** and daughter in law **Lyn Matela Cipriano**. Bienvenido is 97 years old, walks with a cane, but has a very vivid memory of the old town Alvarado.

Interestingly, the building at 3850 Smith Street, across from the Post Office was where Bienvenido's family resided at that time.

This two-story building was constructed between 1896 and 1901. The building appears on the Sanborn map as a store with a water tower in the rear of the property. In 1924, the building is listed as a barber shop and pool hall. The building is one of the commercial buildings remaining in Old Alvarado.

The building has been well maintained over the years and is presently used for business.

Bienvenido's son, **Arthur Cipriano** was born in that house 55 years ago. Although Arthur was born in the United States in 1949, he does not belong to the third and latest influx of the Filipino immigrants. He is one of the second generation Filipinos in the United States.

Arthur's son Jonathan is 24 and studied at San Jose State University with a BA degree and daughter Janelle, 19, is pursuing a course at De Anza College.

Arthur Cipriano worked for the Newark Unified School District as a teacher and Director of Technology for 28 years. In 2001 he transferred to San Lorenzo Unified School District and is the Director of Information Technology.

Bienvenido Cipriano has seen it all. From 1926 to present, he is amazed at the big changes in Union City; although he will never forget that once upon a time, he was part of the business world of the Old Alvarado.

NEW ITEMS IN THE MUSEUM

Here's a first-day commemorative cover from **Mary B. George**, Postmaster,

Union City Post Office. Erma Andrade, a Museum member, donated it.

A card accompanying them reads:
"This first-day cancellation cover of Union City, California is presented to you with the very best wishes of the Postal Personnel of this office. November 1, 1959."

25th Anniversary of the City of Union City
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Dave Lencione of Union City visited the museum first of all to get in touch with Director Miles Price, who was his partner in chairing the 25th Anniversary of the City of Union City. Second of all, he donated lots of artifacts and materials from that memorable event. Dave was the Chairperson of the 25th anniversary of the City. He is also a one time Little League President.

INTERESTING MUSEUM VISITORS

Mr. Josh Gatlin of Livermore came to visit the museum. He is a fireman in Livermore and is the owner of the 1948 White Fire engine that used to belong to Union City.

Ms. Mary Nielsen of Berkeley, California visited the Museum doing a research on the Decoto family. She got lots of information from our files. Mary is a descendant of Union City Pioneer Ezra Decoto.

GOT LETTERS TOO!

Dear Myrla.

Read your story (Canning Factory). It was just wonderful. You have no idea how much I appreciated the article, truly, not because he was my dad, but it was a special person, loved his cannery, and loved the people who worked for him. He loved Decoto. And people love him.

Hope someday soon we can stop by again and visit with you. God Bless.

Sincerely,

Dorothy and Bill Pearce Hubbard

THE MCKEON RANCH

Going down south along Union City Boulevard and turning left on Lowry was the McKeon Ranch, owned by the McKeons. They lived in this house in the 1890's. At present, it is the residence of Karen Smith, former City Manager. She bought the property when it almost got the wrecking ball for future development, spruced it up and now she lives comfortably in a historical house.

**INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF
ODD FELLOWS HALL**

Alice Robie, a Museum member, gave this photo of the International Order of Odd Fellows Hall.

Odd Fellows Hall, built in 1864 as the Armory for the Alvarado Guards, was located on Smith Street across from F. C. Harvey & Co. On September 23, 1864, the guards held a grand opening ball known as the "greatest social event of the year." The building became the home of the Alvarado Eagles. It was used as a dance hall and a theater. It was torn down on January 4, 1967.

THE ALVARADO POST OFFICE

The Alvarado Post Office opened in 1877. The first postmaster was Edwin A. Richmond. Mrs. Genevieve Dutra served as Postmistress from 1936 through 1950.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

When I unfolded my strategic plans for the term, the Board Members were quick

in supporting me in working on each plan towards the completion of the tasks. I am proud to announce the Board Members who will undertake their respective Strategic Plan.

- Membership Committee will be chaired by **Hugh McNamara** with **Myrla Raymundo** and **Tessie Gatan** as members. They will conduct a membership drive to increase membership and follow up on renewals from old members
- **Timothy Swenson** and **Myrla Raymundo** will chair the History Presentation. They will coordinate with the school district on the ongoing presentation of history to schoolchildren at the Museum and in schools. **Al Rose** will assist in the history presentation to children at the Museum.
- **Rallie Cruz** will chair the Museum Artifacts with **Lupe St. Dennis** as member. This entails rearrangement of the displays and artifacts.
- Grants Writing - **Myrla Raymundo** will start writing grants to augment the finances of the Museum. **Tessie Gatan** will assist in the grants writing.
- **Ben Sims** of the Boy Scout Chapter in Union City will produce the Video presentation of the history of Union City, the Oral History, the Historical Homes and Buildings and the Museum Artifacts. **Myrla Raymundo** will oversee the project.
- Editor **Myrla Raymundo** will continue the publication of the Museum Newsletter and will

undertake the Museum Press Releases.

- Historic Preservation Program will be taken over by **Mani Patel** and development of the Mills Act for Union City will be tackled by **Al Minard**.
- **Barbara Friedrich** will continuously recruit and train docents. **Margaret Shepard** will be her assistant.
- **Timothy Swenson** will continue with the Museum Website. He and **Bruce Hevelin** will manage the computer functions of the Museum.
- **All Board Members** will have full participation in housekeeping (general upkeep). The purchasing of cleaning materials, office supplies, and printing supplies will be taken care of by **Hugh McNamara** and **Ray Raymundo**
- **Miles Price** is the Fundraising Coordinator. **All Board Members** will be his committee members.

The Chairpersons during the monthly meetings will give continuous reports.

FOUNDER'S NOTES

Alameda County was born on March 25, 1853. It was made up of parts of Contra Costa and Santa Clara counties and was

named after a creek that runs through the southern half of the county

In the Legislature Act itself, Section 11 states. "The said Commissioners (of the Court of Sessions) shall meet in the town of Alvarado on the first Monday of July, A.D., One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Three, which shall be known as the seat of Justice, Alameda County."

Two paragraphs later, Section 13 states, "The County Seat of Alameda County shall be known as the town of New Haven." At this early time the two competing towns at the elbow of Alameda Creek were beginning to compromise and use Alvarado as the name of their combined communities."

We are proud to say that Union City, California, incorporated in 1959 by a group of enthusiastic residents, is part of Alameda County. We boast of being the First County Seat of Alameda County.

There is a monument that designates the site of this First County Seat of Government of Alameda County. It is located at Union City Boulevard and Smith Street. However, no one will notice the monument. It looks like a discarded piece of stone. The inscriptions are no longer readable. It looks like it has been forgotten for many, many years. Now, the forgotten and old artifact sits very lonely in a dusty road. People don't even know what it is.

This monument designates the site of the First County Seat of Government of Alameda County as State of California Registered Landmark No. 503. It is very historical for Alameda County and for the State of California.

This monument was meant to be a sparkling piece of artifact and be an art deco centerpiece in the historic Alvarado District. It is supposed to be surrounded by beautiful flowers and greens and a nice fence. It is supposed to be tended periodically. It is supposed to be shown to the community as one of the State of California Landmarks.

It hasn't exactly worked out that way. Even those who have researched its history and love the monument admit that.

The monument should be restored to its original grandeur. It has to be cleaned and restored into a historic monument and be shown to, not only the Union City residents, but to people around the county.

I am therefore calling all kind-hearted people to help the Union City Historical Museum restore the monument into its former grandeur. It is a most important part of Union City history, the First County Seat of Alameda County.

CAN YOU HELP? Please give me your ideas (e-mail RAYMYR@aol.com or telephone #489-0133).

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Norman M.Silveira
Arthur Cipriano

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.

The California Historian

The online edition of this magazine gives a lot of information about current events, future events and past events. There are also book reviews, and a lot of interesting stories most of which have never before been published. Visit www.californiahistorian.com.

EDITORIAL BOARD

FY 2004-2006

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