

# **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  
Museum Board meets quarterly at the Museum at 7 PM**

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**[www.geocities.com/ucmuseum/](http://www.geocities.com/ucmuseum/)**

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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.

## **ABOUT OUR MEMBERS**

**By Myrla Raymundo**

**Clarence and Betty Tom** celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at Cattlemen's Restaurant in Newark.

Clarence "Babe" Tom and the former Betty Cheng were married June 1, 1957, at First Presbyterian Church in Newark.

Clarence was born in Colusa and later moved to Oakland. He graduated from Oakland Technical High School. Betty was raised in Niles and graduated from Washington Union High School.

After their marriage, they lived in Oakland until December 1983, when they moved to Union City.

The Tom's daughter Terri Tom, also lives in Union City. There are no grandchildren.

Clarence retired from the Naval Air Station in Alameda after 25 years working for the Federal Government as an airline mechanic and later as a quality assurance inspector.

Before her retirement, Betty was a medical secretary at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Oakland.

They enjoy spending time on the computer, line dancing, gardening and researching family history.

Betty Tom gave the Union City Historical Museum the display of the Cheng Family History. Her father was one of the early Chinese farmers in Union City.

Betty also enjoys being a member of the Union City Historical Museum.

**Helen Cabiles and hubby Fernando Cabiles** are Lifetime members of the Union City Historical Museum.



Helen (right) with Myrla Raymundo at a recent Philippine Consulate event.

Helen Cabiles is the Treasurer of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union City, which we will be celebrating in 2009. She is the Chairperson of the two Gala Events, which will be held on December 31, 2008 and January 1, 2009.

Helen is a very busy person both in civic and in church activities. She is a Human Relations Commissioner and is the Head of the Finance Council of St. Anne Catholic Church in Union City.

People say, "Give it to a busy person and it will be done." This saying applies to Helen.

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**Dom Filardo, Ray Raymundo and Al Rose**

**Dom Filardo** is a Commissioner on the Union City Senior Commission. He was the Chairperson last year. He is also one of the directors of the Union City Historical Museum. He occupies several high-ranking positions in the Knights of Columbus. He is tall, handsome and articulate.

He is shown above with Ray Raymundo and Al Rose, directors of the Union City Historical Museum, attending the Meet the Union City Officials event recently.



**Al Rose.** First volunteer Fire Chief of the Alvarado Fire Department and director of the Union City Historical Museum celebrated his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday last June 29, 2007, by a party given by Museum members Dana Hernandez, Myrla and Ray Raymundo.

**IN MEMORIAM**

By Myrla Raymundo

**Tom Kitayama**

Tom Kitayama, former Mayor of Union City, was a long time member of the Union City Historical Museum.

He passed away in June 2007 at the age of 83.

He occupied the positions of mayor, planning commissioner, councilman and mayor of Union City for 32 years and has made the greatest contributions in the history of Union City. He is the biggest force behind the formation of a new East Bay City - now Union City, California.

When Union City was incorporated in 1959, Tom Kitayama became its first mayor. He was the first Japanese-American to hold public office in California, just 14 years after the end of World War II.

Tom Kitayama will go down in the annals of history for the City of Union City as the mayor who has the longest political career in Union City. He was also successful as a businessman with 43 years as the head of a multimillion-dollar empire growing and wholesaling fresh-cut flowers.

Tom Kitayama moved his family to California in 1947. He and wife Heidi and three brothers bought land in Alvarado in 1950. They raised six children and they have fourteen grandchildren. His son Tom Kitayama Jr. died in 1983 in a hang gliding accident and a daughter, Susan, died in infancy in 1953 due to cirrhosis of liver

(the tubules in her bile duct were not developed and she had a cerebral hemorrhage.)

He retired in 1991 and enjoyed fishing and stamp collecting. He attended the Lion's Club events, and kept active as a member of the county fair board and committees at Washington Hospital in Fremont and other county activities.

Tom Kitayama, once dubbed the King of Carnations, was instrumental in the growth of Union City, has an elementary school named after him and had seen his nursery transformed into a beautiful residential community. He will be missed.

**IN MEMORIAM**

By Myrla Raymundo

**Fred Castro**

Fred Castro was 88 when he passed away in Las Vegas on June 24, 2007. Fred was born March 20, 1919 in Modesto, California. Fred and his wife Lorraine relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada in 1996 from Union City where he left a legacy of volunteerism, which carried over to Las Vegas where he became a Park Ambassador. During his 32 years as Member of the Union City Parks and Recreation Commission, 17 parks and 2 community centers were established. Among the many awards and honors he received, he was most proud when the City dedicated and named a neighborhood park as the FRED CASTRO PARK. Fred served with pride in the U. S. Navy and at completion of service, he continued work as a Federal Inspector until he retired. He will be missed.

**ORIGIN OF STREET NAMES**

**By Myrla Raymundo**

**Smith St.** – Henry C. Smith, Founder of New Haven.

When incorporated, Union City brought together the communities of Alvarado, Decoto, and New Haven. Before 1959, their only relationship to each other was location. Because of their close proximity to the Bay, Alvarado and New Haven started out as port towns where local farmers could ship produce all over the world.

Founded in 1852, Alvarado is credited with growing the Alvarado potato—a popular produce described as a thick skinned, mild white potato that may have been developed by Luther Burbank and the Sweet Alameda Corn Company.

Founded by Henry Smith, the New Haven community eventually became part of Alvarado. Henry Smith, storekeeper and American Alcalde in Mission San Jose, sold his store and moved to Union City near John Horner. Smith built two warehouses at the wharf in Union City. He started a settlement called New Haven, named for his hometown in Connecticut. It was north and east of the great elbow of the creek. Hotels and eating-places sprang up along with saloons and gaming rooms.

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**Horner St.** – John Horner, Founder of “Union City.”

In 1850, John Horner, with his brother William, shipped crops netting almost \$100,000 and laid out a town eight blocks square in 1851. He located the

streets on the south side of the Creek, purchased a small Sacramento River steamer called The Union and named his settlement Union City.

**Whipple Rd.** – John C. & Edwin Whipple, founding Family

John C. Whipple was lured to California in search of gold in the spring of 1854. He invested in acres and acres of land in Alameda County. He bought 200 acres near the Decoto Brothers Ranch on what is now Whipple Road. He added 300 acres more to his domain on the hills east of the Hayward-Niles Road. He planted fruit trees and used the land for cattle and raising of grains and vegetables

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**Decoto Rd.** – Ezra Decoto, Founding Family

Landlocked, Decoto became a railroad town whose growth was spurred by the arrival of the Western Pacific Railroad through Niles Canyon in 1869. The town was formed out of land owned by the family of Ezra Decoto, whose name, street and area memorialize names around town. Its location made it an ideal spot for a railroad station. 1870 brought the incorporation of Decoto and by the turn of the century 580 people lived in Decoto alone.

Ezra Decoto was born in 1833 near Montreal. He was the first of three brothers to move to Alameda County. After buying, farming, and selling different parcels, he and his two brothers bought 334 acres of land near the right of way of the Western Pacific Railroad. The Decoto Land Company bought 284

acres to develop a railroad town. Decoto was originally spelled “de Coteau.”

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**Dyer St. – E. H. Dyer - Founding Family**

In 1870, Ebenezer H. Dyer, along with his brother Ephraim Dyer bought a beet sugar factory, which was built on his property, and turned it into the first successful one in the area.

Ebenezer came to California at his brother Ephraim’s urging to help manage his farm business. He was manager of the farms and Ephraim was responsible for preparing leases of acreage. Ebenezer was elected surveyor of Alameda County. The County Surveyor’s job was to establish township maps and check out boundaries for title claims.

The Holly Sugar Company was started by Ebenezer and his brother Ephraim in 1879. It operated until 1969. Ebenezer retired in 1890 and lived until 1906.

**Vallejo St. – Jose Jesus Vallejo, landowner of Mission San Jose.**

**Bulmer St. – Capt. Bulmer, operated first store.**

**Barron’s Way – Capt. Richard Barron. owned Barron’s Landing**

**Brooklyn St.– ship that brought first settlers in 1846.**

**Veasy St. – A. M. Veasy, built first hotel in Alvarado.**

**First County Seat of Alameda County**

There is a plaque in old Alvarado in Union City that states, FIRST COUNTY COURT HOUSE in Alameda County from 1853 – 1856. - Site of first courthouse where Alameda County Government began, June 6, 1853. Officials met in two-story wooden building erected by Henry C. Smith and A. M. Church as a merchandise store.

It is a State Registered Landmark No. 503. Tablet was provided by California State Park Commission and base was furnished by Alameda County

The plaque is located on Union City Blvd. across Smith Street by the housing and commercial development.

Please visit it sometime. It is a very important part of Union City history.

**Union City’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

The City of Union City will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> year in 2009.

The Faith-Based Festival Committee composed of Union City’s churches, temples, and other congregations will start the festivities. It is hosting a Dinner Concert on September 15, 2007 Saturday at the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church in Union City. It will feature presentations from the different congregations, a buffet dinner and music.

Tickets are available at the Union City Historical Museum. Please call Myrla Raymundo at 324-3298 for reservations.

## **Sarabjit Kaur Cheema**

By Myrla Raymundo



Sarabjit Kaur Cheema is a Vice-President of the Sikh Temple's Executive Committee at 300 Gurdwara Road in Fremont. It is a very beautiful and big temple close to the hills. She is the only woman serving for almost three years in the 16-member two-tier management.

These are some interesting facts about the Sikh religion. The word Sikh means disciple. A Sikh is a person who believes in One God and the teachings of the Ten Gurus, enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture. All Sikh men are required to tie a Turban on their head. Turban is optional for women. In the United States, almost 99% turban-wearing men are Sikhs. The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak, who was born in 1469 AD in the village of Talwandi, now called Nankana Sahib, near Lahore (Pakistan.)

Sarabjit was born on November 17, 1959. She and her husband Pritam Singh Cheema have three boys, Narjot, age 19, Livjot, age 15 and Akaljot, age 14. They came to Union City in 1992. Her parents live with them.

She studied in India and has a masters degree in Mathematics, Bachelor degrees in Physics and Chemistry and an Engineer in Training (EIT) here in the United States. She has nine years experience as a teacher of Mathematics and Science in India.

From November 1992 to November 1995, she worked as Teacher's Aide and substitute teacher for the New Haven School District, while working nights and weekends in an IBM Company. She quit the school job when she started working as a Letter Carrier in the Post Office in 1995 for one and a half years and as a Window Clerk for one and a half years.

In January 1999, she quit post office and started teaching Mathematics part time at Chabot College for one year and joined Cal-Trans in the same year. Presently, she works as a Transportation Engineer with the California Department of Transportation.

Because of her excellent experience as a teacher and as a volunteer in the schools, she decided to run for School Board in 2006 and placed second out of five fresh candidates running for one open seat. She is always instrumental in supporting education and youth activities.

Sarabjit is a member of the Faith-Based Committee of the Union City's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and a member of the Union City Historical Museum.

**Ardis Quam Edwards  
Decoto School Teacher**

By Myrla Raymundo



Ardis Quam Edwards was first employed at Decoto Elementary School at Decoto, California on September 22, 1952 as a full-time teacher. Ardis was a teacher at Decoto Elementary School, Barnard White and Searles up to 1958.

Ardis was born on July 30, 1930 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She and the family came to California in 1951 and settled in Albany. She is the oldest of six children. They are Ardis, Norman, Jr., Joanne, Patricia, Frances and Pamela.

She attended school at South Sioux Elementary School, Augustana Lutheran College and San Jose State, where she obtained her teaching credentials.

She and Paul Edwards, an Airline Captain at Northwest Airlines, got married in 1953 and had six children, Kevin, 52, Kendall, 51, Erin, 49, Sally, 47, Kristin, 46 and Keely, 45. They have five grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

In 1958, she quit teaching to raise their children.

During that time, her husband Paul was suddenly grounded from his job as an

Airline Captain because of serious health problems. In 1984, she decided to step into the cockpit and learned to fly an airplane for her husband. For two months, Ardis, the mother of six, had flying lessons almost daily. Her husband's private tutoring allowed her to bypass ground school.

At age 53, she earned her pilot's license. She said, "Love is a great motivator."

In 1984, she piloted their private airplane with her husband until 1988 when they sold the airplane. Her husband died in 1988 at age 58.

Ardis is a charter member of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Fremont. She credits the prayers of her family and church friends for upholding her while she pursued her goal.

She said that every time she would get in the cockpit, she would pat the empty seat beside her and say, "God, you're my co-pilot." She said there is no way she could have done that in her own strength.

Ardis lives in Fremont and is busy volunteering in her church and other organizations. She was featured in the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary History issue of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Fremont as the last remaining charter member.

She still keeps in touch with Dr. Harold Schoenfeld, Superintendent of Schools in the Decoto School District and other teachers in the District.

Ardis is in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in the World, Who's Who in California, Who's Who in the World of Women and Who's Who in the West.

**RECENT HAPPENINGS**



Union City 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Faith Based Committee visited the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church last July 7, 2007. Myrla Raymundo, Larry Gissible and a Purple Lotus monk are pictured above.



The Alma Via residents had a presentation of the history of Union City at the Museum on July 20, 2007.



Museum officers Rorie Rabuy, Tessie Gatan and Myrla Raymundo attend a Chamber mixer last June 2007.



Museum member Antoinette Pinto came to the Museum recently for a visit.

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The Fundraising Committee is coming up with ideas to generate the funds to keep the Museum going.

I hope to see broader participation from the members. They can help in being a docent, working for a special project, or helping with fundraisers.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



### **Teresita "Tessie" Gatan**

The Union City Historical Museum elected officers and directors' works are now in full swing.

Our work is to continue to record and preserve the history of Union City.

We will continue with the strategic plan started by the Founder/CEO, which would be the end result of the objective and purpose of the Union City Historical Museum.

The Strategic Plan Committees are working on their respective projects.

The Union City Historical Museum Newsletter, published every two months, is a good source of historical news and new happenings in the area.

The Museum website is full of information about the Museum.

We will continue to send to owners of historic buildings and homes, letters for possible historic designation of their properties.

Walking tours from the Museum are always held every Thursday and Friday. There is also a Presentation of Union City History to visitors.

If you have things in your possession, which have historical value, please donate them to the Museum. They will be in good hands.

We will continue to send stories and events to the media outlets, newspaper, local cable access TV, etc)

Again, thank you for helping me and the Museum officers and directors in the achievement of our objectives and goals. We will continue with our good works.

## TESSIE

**About Peter Pinto** - Peter Pinto's 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.

**About Hellwig Brothers** - Sausage made in Hellwig Brothers' butcher shop was known throughout the township.

## FOUNDER'S NOTES



I always say that it delights me to go through the pages of old and yellowed newspapers and read about the old Union City.

**About Ben Matsumoto** - Alvarado grew as the combined effort of peoples of many cultural heritages. Land was relatively cheap by 1910. The Spanish and Portuguese established their homes in Alvarado, working for large farmers and at the salt mills. Ben Matsumoto, well known in Union City because of his grocery store on Smith Street, was born in Alvarado. So were his sisters, Grace Handa, Alice Motozaki, and Dorothy Matsumoto. He said that there was a one-armed bandit in there. In 1924 the boarding house burned down. The grocery store still exists.

**About Louis Pagan** – Louis Pagan was born and raised in Decoto and has about 140 kinfolks in the vicinity. Louis attended the new Decoto Grammar School built in 1925.

**About Peter Decoto** - Peter Decoto, the son of the city founder Ezra Decoto, was the Decoto Boy Scout leader.

**About old man Perry** - On Holy Ghost feast days, old man Perry supplied all the steers to feed the whole town.

**About George Henry Oaks** -There was a little shack where the Alvarado "Pioneer" newspaper was founded in 1925 by George Henry Oaks. His son, George P. Oaks continued publishing the newspaper until 1946. George Oaks bought the Centerville News from Miles Smith and merged it with the Township Register, which was owned by Stuart Nixon, to form the News Register. The News Register would become the Argus, an ANG newspaper

It also gives me great pleasure to record and write the continuing history of our City. In 2007, the Sports Center opened to the public. There were numerous Chamber mixers worth recording. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union City

committees are now starting works on the events for 2009.

Visit the Union City Historical Museum and read all about our history. They are compiled in big white binders and are available for your reading pleasure.

Till then, until next issue.....MYRLA RAYMUNDO

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Myrla Raymundo, MBA, Founder/CEO

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Marina Bamont-Secretary

Hugh McNamara, Treasurer

#### **Directors – July 1, 2006-June 30, 2008**

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Miles Price

Rorie Rabuy

Myrla Raymundo

Al Rose

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Ray Raymundo

Angel Villorente

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#### **EDITORIAL BOARD**

**FY 2007-2008**

Myrla Raymundo, Editor

Jo Ann Lew

Miles Price

Ligfinio (Ray) Raymundo

(Layout Artist/Production)

#### **MUSEUM TOURS**

Tours are conducted by Museum docents every Thursdays and Fridays. If you are interested to know the history of Union City, please stop by the Museum.

#### **READ ALL ABOUT IT**

News coverage about Union City are clipped and filed by subject matter and are available at the Museum.

Myrla Raymundo started the collection in 1971. The Union City Library gave the Museum news clippings from 1800 through 1970.

The book **“UNION CITY THROUGH THE YEARS”** authored by Myrla Raymundo is available. Call her at (510) 489-0133 if you wish to buy the book about the history of Union City from its beginning to the present.