

# THIS POINT

NEWSLETTER

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HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWS: INSIDE COVER	
POINTS IN THE PAST	1
"OUR TOWN"	3
IT WAS WRITTEN	6
AN INTERVIEW with LUIGI BERNARDI	8
THE GREAT DEPRESSION	10

PTA - PAST AND PRESENT	11
APPEARANCE IS NOT EVERYTHING	12
AFTER SCHOOL	13
TRADITIONAL HALLOWE'EN?	14
RICHMOND MUSEUM NEWS	15
POINTS IN THE FUTURE	16

## in time



## **PLAN TO ATTEND NOVEMBER 18**

The next meeting of the Point Richmond History Association will be Thursday, November 18 at 7:30 p.m. in Linsley Hall (235 Washington Avenue).

The main feature of the meeting will be a reminiscing session by some of the more knowledgeable male members of our community — offering them "equal time" for the May meeting, when the panel was all-female. Plan to attend, and invite friends !

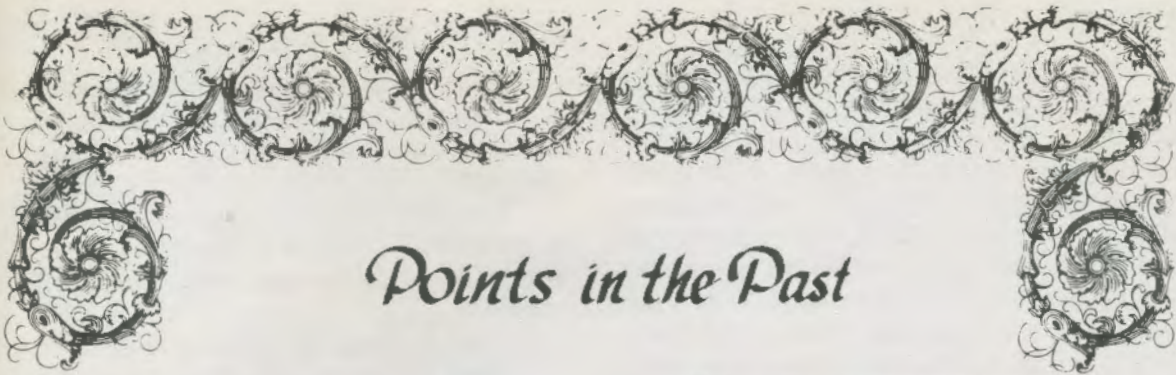
An entertaining and educational meeting is virtually assured, with invitations going to Henry O'Hara, Gust Allyn, Luigi Bernardi, Lawrence Thole, August Zanzi, Al Raffanelli, Al Frosini, Walter Hess, Allen Clark, Jim Carey, Jay Vincent, Mario deValle, Raulo Ferrari, Leo Gozzi, and Mike Raffanelli.

If you are, or know anyone who is, informed, first hand, about Point Richmond's past, please call 235-4222, and plan to come, and participate in a lively discussion!

We want, and welcome more members--so, if you are not a member, please fill out the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it in now! You will receive a mailed subscription to "This Point In Time", and an invitation to all meetings and events sponsored by the Association.

*- Donna Roselius*





## Points in the Past

Articles from old Richmond newspapers and books, courtesy of the Richmond Museum.

### 160 YEARS AGO . . .

On November 19, 1822, in northern Ireland, John Nicholl was born. Considered a pioneer in the development of Contra Costa County, he came to this country in 1849, and in 1900 he started the town of Point Richmond.

— *The History of Contra Costa County*, by E. J. Hulanski

### 80 YEARS AGO . . .

The Santa Fe Company announced plans to build a new depot at the foot of Macdonald Avenue approximately 600 feet beyond the present site. "Station Agent Trull informed a Leader representative that it was the intention of the company to (also) erect a regular station, shed and ticket office" at the foot of Richmond Avenue in the Point. Initially the Point Station will consist of a "concrete platform and walk composed of rock, sand and oil for a distance of 150 feet."

The lack of a local station imposed a real hardship. "The People of Richmond will feel very grateful to the Santa Fe Company for this favor as it will be a great saving of time and energy to be able to step on to the train without having to walk half a mile to do so."

The controversy regarding the location of the new school was prominently featured in the Leader. When the first school house was built in Point Richmond Mr. Nicholl was asked to donate a site. "At the time he told the (school) board he had nothing to give but he had plenty to sell." Eventually Mr. Mintzer provided an area for the school building.

With the necessity of building a new school, Mr. Nicholl was again approached. He offered a site behind "Smokey Row". This area, a huge hole in the side of the hill was "made by a landslide from the summit of the knob . . . it is the drainage canal of the entire mountain." When he realized he couldn't sell this "hole", Nicholl called the area a "picnic ground" and "natural amphitheatre" and left it blank on the map. At the time it was felt he had donated it to the city, but "Nicholl never gives away anything. If he does he always has a string of some sort attached by which he can pull it back."

Unable to attract a great many people or businesses to his property, Nicholl "has now awakened from his stubborn reverie and asks the whole town to come clear across the track to his cavern and build with their own money therein a ten thousand dollar school building (on his ten hundred dollar property). He wants them to do this in order that he may sell some more of his 400 acres of land at fancy prices."

— *Richmond Daily Leader*, Nov. 7 & 8, 1902



## 70 YEARS AGO . . .

"The State Public Utility Commission yesterday granted permission to the Southern Pacific Railway Company to purchase the franchise in this city owned by John H. Nicholl and H. C. Cutting. The Nicholl franchise extends from Standard Avenue along Washington Avenue to Park Place and thence to Cutting Boulevard. Cutting's franchise is along the boulevard and north on Tenth Street. . . This permit clears away the last obstacle in the starting of the work on the proposed extension of the Espee interurban electric system into Richmond."

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Oct. 19, 1912

City Superintendent of Schools Walter T. Helms "did a little figuring and found that there are 1,668 children in the grammar schools and 175 students attending the high school, which makes a grand total of 1,843" enrolled in Richmond schools. Of this number, 354 attend the Standard Avenue School.

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Oct. 22, 1912

At the City Council meeting on October 28, 1912, the contract for the job of improving Terrace, Vine, Scenic and Crest Avenues was awarded to the Worswick Paving Company. The bid of \$27,989.12 was considered reasonable by the city engineer.

In a November 8, 1912 update, it was reported that the Nicholl oil well was well over 1100 feet deep. " 'I have a water supply that is worth all the coin that I have expended in the well — and that is some money,' said the veteran capitalist."

—*Richmond Daily Independent*

## 50 YEARS AGO . . .

"A squad of Federal prohibition agents . . . descended on Contra Costa County last night and after a series of raids in El Cerrito, Richmond, San Pablo, Port Costa, Rodeo and Martinez, placed 15 alleged bootleggers under arrest." Included in the list of alleged Wright Act violators were several local businessmen:

Gust B. Green of 37½ Park Place  
Mike Cebelo, of 146 Standard Avenue  
C. Raimondi, of 18 Standard Avenue  
Joseph Matteucci of 125 Standard Ave.  
Peter Boljat of 221 Standard Avenue."

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Oct. 20, 1932

—*Teresa Albro*





## OUR TOWN

*The following excerpts from recollections of "old-timer" Bill Foster were recorded by the late Don Church, and edited for print in 1966 editions of the weekly "Point Counterpoint", by late Point poet Robert C. Friend.*

It was 6:30 p.m., past sundown, one day early in 1903 when Bill Foster alighted from the train at the Santa Fe station in "East Yards" (later to be Point Richmond); and his own words best describe that moment: "I stepped off the Santa Fe Train from Fresno . . . and trudged down the tracks of the railroad toward the town on the hill called "East Yards" to find my sister, Mrs. J.H. Bedford, who had settled there a few years ahead of me. There was no road from the depot to the town and you were on your own going down the tracks . . . The swamps and the mosquitoes were terrible. One would have to fan them off in droves. It sure was terrible."

Terrible conditions or no, Bill was not one to dally, for the next day he went to work as a grocery boy in the Ben Shelline store located in the Castle Garden Hotel, near the Santa Fe shops. Hours: 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily (except Sunday). Salary: \$30 per month.

"East Yards", 1903, was in the midst of a booming expansion. John Nicholl, whose memory is honored by a park, a "Nob" and a tree-shaded street, owned most of the town property and waxed wealthy as the village mushroomed out along Standard Avenue, where, in the true frontier tradition, evolved the notorious "Hell's Half Acre" complete with red lights and the ladies who kept them lit. As Bill recalls, "It was like the Goldrush - gambling saloons, dance halls, fast women, and drunks everywhere. The town was very wicked; and a decent lady wasn't safe on the streets after sundown."

## EARLY STANDARD OIL . . .

Foster became part of a vast influx of fortune-seekers lured to the then swamp-girt village by the promise of ready cash. The Standard Oil Company was moving from Alameda to its present site and the never-ending job of building and running the West's greatest refinery made the town a mecca for men of all trades and also, the peripheral parasites whose aim was to keep the men happy - and broke.

At the time the company had four stills operating, plus an office shack, euphemistically called an "Administration Building"; but as refinery construction loomed ahead and workers poured in, saloons, gambling houses, bordellos, and boarding houses popped up like mushrooms, lining Standard Avenue from one end to the other, and all catering to the whimsies of the off-duty pleasure-bend working men.

Transportation to and from the refinery was non-existent. The men walked on boardwalks (whose levels rose or fell depending on the height of whatever door sill they passed); and in the rainy season one misstep would plunge the unhappy pedestrian knee-deep in mire. Even the "big bosses" who lived mostly in Berkeley or Oakland, got off the street cars at the county line (now El Cerrito - Albany), and were driven to the plant in an old hotel bus owned by a Mr. Brown and pulled by a spanking span of elderly mules. That was real commuting.

The company payroll, which fed life into the town built by "black gold", was brought in twice a month. At first the money was carried by a lone messenger driving a horse and buggy; but, human frailties being the same the world over, this fine fellow was highjacked a couple of times somewhere out in the boondocks and thenceforth the payroll came under heavy guard.

## WASHINGTON AVENUE . . .

Hub of all the hustle and bustle of the Point following the turn of the century was at the convergence of Washington and Standard Avenues. Pat Dean, regarded by many of the residents (including Pat) as the "boss of the town", ran a saloon and dance hall on one corner of the intersection directly across the street from Mrs. McNally's Hotel. On the north side, competing for the transient trade was Mrs. Dwyer's Hotel, nestled next to a saloon and eating house run by Johnny Demire. Alongside the Demire sanctum was the Sam Curry establishment. Enterprising Sam was prepared to take care of you to the bitter end. On the ground floor he ran a livery stable, while upstairs was an undertaking parlor. The other corner of the crossing was occupied by DeSoto's "Hunters' Home", a saloon featuring a long open back porch from which (in Bill Foster's words) "you could stand with a shot gun and pop ducks galore, as it was swamp to the Standard Oil Company's gates."

Strung along up Washington Avenue were the stores of the early day merchants: McCracken's Clothing Store, King Brothers' Cigar Store and Pool Hall, the Gilt Edge Saloon (with Hoover's boarding house, "all you can eat for 25 cents" in the rear). Then came the pioneer newspaper, "The Record", a two-sheet publication run by Lyman Nangle, who apparently moved his headquarters as often as his rent became overdue. Next to "The Record" stood Frank Dietrick's Jewelry Emporium, and, on the northeast corner of Washington and (West) Richmond Avenues was the Critchett Hotel. Across the street from the Critchett stood the town's (and the area's) first bank, the Bank of Richmond, with Mr. Stairley as cashier. You could tell it was a bank, for it had a huge safe standing squarely in the middle of the room, and a highly polished counter over which to do business. Also on "the avenue" were Otto Ludwig's butcher shop and V.A. Fenner's hardware store. Elsie and Elsie's Dry Goods Store (this apparently feminine establishment was owned by the Elsie boys, Sandy and Russell) was located on the south side of the street.

### PLEASED TO MEET YOU—

Yes, we want to meet you. Then again we want to "meat" you. The "meating" will no doubt be agreeable all around. Meet us in our meat market in Richmond avenue. The "meating" will be a tender one, too. We like to "meat" the people of Richmond because the people like our "meating" place. That's why so many people come to meet us at our "meating" place and the "meatings" are always agreeable and tender. If we don't "meat" you just right, tell us. If our "meatings" are pleasant, tell your friends.



## SANTA FE MEAT MARKET



The Methodist Church had been built in 1900-01 (Rev. Rich or Rev. Younglove) and at this time its neighbor, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church (Father Scanlon) was under construction. To raise funds for the new church (as Bill Foster recalls) "a carnival was held back of Sam Curry's livery stable and Minnie McNally was chosen queen. She was better known around town as pretty Minnie with a dirty neck." (Keep in mind this is a quote from a fellow who was "one of the boys" at that time.)

## PEOPLE AND PLACES . . .

Six decades before the era of Drs. Casey and Kildare, the infirmities of the Point's populace were well attended (in number at least) by a hardy handful of medics of varying capabilities. A 1901 issue of the "Record", now in the Richmond Museum, ran ads for Dr. Gorsich and Dr. Stockwell. Bill Foster also remembers Drs. Abbott, Barney, Campbell, Morrison and Lucas. The latter was an intern (in Foster's words) "who worked for Dr. Morrison when my two-year-old nephew died of food poisoning in 1903. Dr. Morrison was out of town."

The U.S. Post Office was then on upper Richmond Avenue and the daily delivery was dealt out by Postmistress, Miss Lucetta Woods, a step-daughter of Ben Boorman.

The Point merchants were dependent on such old timers as Palen Church and George Dimmick who ran express wagons to and from the Santa Fe Depot. Members of the sudsy set were afforded their favorite brew through the kind ministrations of Al Browning and Harry Yager, who for years drove the Enterprise Brewery Truck which supplied the local pubs with "Old Foamy."

Down at the corner of Richmond and Railroad Avenues stood Henry Sirrenburg's Saloon, and across the tracks was "Smoky Row", a collection of shabby houses. John Murray opened the Point's first blacksmith shop, near the tunnel. He soon sold out to Dick Paasch, who ran it for some years. Up on Park Place the Spiersch boys, Dick and Fred, operated a plumbing shop. There, also, was Oliver Wylie, boss of a fine eating place for the railroad men. He employed some pretty "hashers", but the men soon married them off.

The West Side Improvement Club had taken up a collection and (as Bill Foster says) "put a fountain at Park and Washington for horses, dogs and the general public." In 1909 Ed McDuff ran a big hotel, the St. Francis, and bar, too. "If you wanted a job and weren't known at the oil company, you had to contact Ed and put up at his hotel. No put-up, no job."

*The second half of Bill Foster's reminiscences will appear in next month's issue.*



151-155 PARK PLACE  
built prior to 1902 by C. Macway



## IT WAS WRITTEN . . .

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF LOCAL CHURCHES  
COME STORIES OF EARLY POINT RICHMOND,  
AT A TIME WHEN PEOPLE ENJOYED  
AND TOOK TIME TO COMPOSE  
THE "WRITTEN WORD".



### THE METHODIST CHURCH -- 1900

*(In October the Methodist Church will have been recognized as a religion in Richmond for 82 years. First references are obtained from the "RECORD":)*

*(Items in italics were handwritten in the margin)*

"The first religious services held in Richmond or any of the territory contiguous thereto were conducted by Rev. J. Williams of Vallejo and Rev. T. Leak of Martinez, two Methodist ministers, Monday evening of last week (Oct. 8). They were held in the new Critchett Hotel. Services were also held on the succeeding evening, Tuesday, 9th, by Rev. T. Leak in the back room of Pioneer store, and on Sunday morning last (14th). An organization was effected with four members -- Mr. and Mrs. Solodahl, Mrs. Geo. McCool and Mr. Odell sr. Frequent services will be held and from this little band it is expected that a church will grow. A house of worship is in prospect. The Nicholl Co. has offered advantageous terms on a site and aid will be asked from the Church Extension fund. The RECORD bids them Godspeed."

*The church archives also houses the first records. written by the secretary, L.T.Gorsuch. The 'Ideal Church Record Book' from which the records are taken, had this introduction by the publishers, Curts and Jennings:*

*"In preparing this Record for the Church the publishing agents have kept in mind three things: 1st -- Completeness ... 2nd -- Simplicity ... 3rd -- Cheapness. A book of this character which is to cross many generations, records of incalculable value, should have the best material and workman-*

*ship available. We have not allowed our desire to produce a cheap book to tempt us into the folly of making a poor book. But we have had in mind continually the fact that many circuits and frontier charges are without a suitable record because the price of such has seemed beyond their means.*

*"With this explanation we send forth the "Ideal" trusting that it may aid the Church in keeping the admonition of the Apostle, 'Let all things be done decently and in order.' "*

*The first church records were presumably written by the secretary, L.T.Gorsuch:*

*"Historical Record of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Richmond, Contra Costa County, Calif. Service held by Rev. Thomas Leak of Martinez and Rev. James Williams of Vallejo on the eighth day of October 1900. The First Gospel service was held by the above named Brethern on September 26th in the half finished office of the Critchett Hotel. The charter members were as follows: J.O.Dahl, Mrs. Dahl, Mrs. Emma McCool, and A.Odell. On the 15 day of October Bishop J.W. Hamilton and Presiding Elder John Kirby sent Rev. W.N. Younglove, a member of the Michigan Conference, to Martinez to confer with Rev. Thomas Leak and on the 19th they came to Richmond to look over the ground. They selected a church lot and on the 26th Rev. W.N. Younglove reported their convictions to the P.E. Rev. John Kirby, 1532 Willow St., Alameda and with the promis (sic) of \$400 dollars \$ 200 of which was paid him by the P.E. Rev. W.N. Younglove was duly appointed and came to Richmond the same day as pastor*



of the church. His first service was held in a Passenger Coach near the Round house on Oct. 21st 1900 by permission given by Mr. Higgins, superintendent of traffick (sic). Those present were Bro. and sister Dahl, Oscar Martin, Wm and Emma Dahl, Mrs. L.J. Stanley and two little girls. A sunday school was organized and lesson studied but no officers elected. On the 28th of October services were held in half finished house of Nicholds and Co and on Nov 4th by invitation of Mr. Harley were to hold them in his half finished house but carpenters would not give off so we had to return to the Nichcottage."

*(to be continued in November)*

*— Mid Dornan*

## THE BAPTIST CHURCH

*The following article is from the Point Richmond Baptist Church files:*

October 18, 1914

Church Letter and Statistics for 1914, signed by A.C. Austin, pastor; T.F. Stout, clerk, Mrs. Paul Dunlap, treasurer.

"The First Baptist Church of Point Richmond, though small in numbers, never fails to have both morning and evening services every Lord's Day, and the regular mid-week Bible Study. We pray that the Lord will direct us in all things and that we shall advance in the real work of His Kingdom.

"In a material way, we have no debts with the exception of the original \$500.00 given to the church when the church building was first erected. Our current expenses for light, fuel, and street and sewer improvements are met immediately after the presentation of the bills. We have partitioned the building so as to have two new class rooms, and have papered the church complete.

"Our Ladies' Aid is a power for good in the community. They are always at the front in every good cause.

"While we have nothing of a startling nature to report, still we hope, with the help of Him who does all things well, to advance His kingdom in the coming year in greater measure than in the past."

Now known as the Point Richmond Baptist Church, but still located at 304 Washington Ave., the above excerpt could be just as accurately reported today. In fact, since 1903, our church has conducted services and we are so pleased when someone from our early days returns for a visit, which happened recently in the person of Mrs. Dorothy Lipp. Mrs. Lipp lived in Point Richmond 65 - 70 years ago and remembers much about the early residents. She walked into our Sunday morning service not long ago and announced, pointing to our baptismal, "I was baptised right there almost 70 years ago and it scared me so much I haven't been back."

*— Roy Jones*

## OUR LADY OF MERCY . . .

Father Carmello Mifsud is presently intermitently attending a Vatican Institute, held in Menlo Park until December 14. Substitute Priests will preside until that time.

*— Allen Smith*





## AN INTERVIEW WITH

# Luigi Bernardi

The next time you're on your way to Brickyard Cove via the tunnel, look to your left at the white house with a picket fence partially constructed of slats from the old household wine crusher, located just short of the Dornan Grove that was recently planted by Scouts of Troop 111. You'll likely as not see Luigi Bernardi dressed in his bib overalls and beige canvas hat surveying the landscape, perhaps chopping wood, and chatting in either English or Italian with any joggers or walkers who may happen by.

Luigi, the third of seven children, was the first son born to Bart and Madeline Bernardi, in 1904, in the province of Cuneo, the town of LaCoronella, Italy. His father was married to a persuasive woman who one day said something along the lines of, "We are poor here. There is opportunity in the United States, and friends of ours are going. Let's go too." The year was 1907. A third class passage to New York was followed by a period of quarantine, and eventually the family of five landed in Point Richmond.

Within three days of arrival, Mr. Bernardi had also landed a job at the new Standard Oil refinery, with help from a gentleman of Italian extraction who made it his business to assist those newly arrived from the old country.

For the sum of \$100, the Bernardi's purchased a single walled, four room house which, though expanded and remodeled in 1934, has remained the Bernardi family home ever since. The house had no utilities, but there was space for a small orchard, a vegetable garden and a few goats (purchased at the suggestion of a Point Rich-



mond doctor who prescribed goat's milk for newborns).

Luigi recalls his hike to old Washington School across the "trail we blazed" over the hill to Belvedere, across Crest and Scenic and down Montana, then to the three story "stately mansion" which was the old grammar school. Luigi would have us believe that the kids of the era were remarkably well behaved and would daily march into class to the strains of "Stars and Stripes Forever", played on a wind-up Victrola. Deportment was monitored from the top of the building and transgressors were directed to hold out a hand for a smart slap with a ruler. Luigi acknowledges that he offended once, perhaps, but was otherwise a "model student. I think I learned what there was to be learned." We propose to enquire of Mary Casey about the truth of this assertion.



The principal of that era was Nora Ashfield, "a tall stately woman, who was very stern," and who served as eighth grade teacher as well. She "must have liked me," Luigi reports, as evidenced by her skipping him a half grade. The other teacher Luigi recalls nostalgically is Hazel Monroe, third grade teacher, in whose class occurred a well-remembered "stand-up spelling bee" in which Luigi was finally counted out for spelling "aisle" for "isle". Luigi admits he had an "eye" even at that early age and still recalls the last day of school when Ms. Monroe appeared in a black silk dress "looking like a queen."

As a youngster, Luigi kept busy with various money making schemes. He sawed wood, helped dig out the basement for the hall under Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church (the priest rewarded the boys with B.B. guns), cleaned chicken houses (four bits a day), dug and sold for tallow the bones buried near the old brickyard (the one on the site of the police target range) and scavenged the brass, copper and lead from the piles of "junk" dumped by Santa Fe. He also delivered newspapers, and with the profit from all this enterprise he took in movies at the old Point Theater, owned by Mr. Tcherassy, a large French gentleman. Across West Richmond from this building, which is now the Point Orient, was Livingston's Nickelodeon — a movie house of great appeal — so named because of the price of admission. A favorite offering was "The Mine with the Iron Door."

To obtain a bike, Luigi and family sold seeds for a three to five year period, and when he was sixteen, they received the prize, a \$50 bicycle, which served the riding needs of all three boys in the Bernardi family.

With the advent of World War I (Luigi was then 12) he raised and sold rabbits for

\$2.50 to \$3.00 apiece ("I thought I was gypping people") but his customers were delighted with his "grass fed" rabbits and treated him as something of a worthy contributor to the defense effort rather than as a war profiteer.

Luigi recalls a fondness for Muscat grapes, and in this connection, a visit to Winehaven where he was offered the chance to sample from six gondola carloads of Muscats came to mind. He accepted the offer, and it took several years to regain his taste for this varietal.

Living on the side of the hill farthest from "city", as he did, "all the city dirt didn't get in our eyes," Luigi reports. For example, for years he watched men disembarking from the S.F. ferry and heading for the houses and hotels stretching the length of Railroad Avenue. One of his friends, Frank Glen, age 13 and as naive as Luigi, remarked on the inhabitants of those buildings — "There are women in that house and they always seem to be sleeping. they always get out of bed; when they come out, they hardly have any clothes on." He remained in blessed innocence for years afterward.

Luigi's first full time job was at the second section of the Parr terminal, pouring concrete, in 1920. After a bit more schooling, at Richmond Union High School (then located on Twenty-third Street, between Bissell and Macdonald) he worked successively as a boilermaker, a foundryman, and assembly worker at the local Ford car plant where a maximum of 360 Model A's and B's were produced each day. He also worked as a boat builder for Moore's yard in Oakland, where Tom Davidson, Caroline's father, also worked during World War II; and as a carpenter in a production shop, Western Door and Sash, *once located on Twenty-third Street*. Finally, in 1961 he started on his



last full time job with Dolan Lumber in El Cerrito doing the kind of work he had always found most appealing -- salvage.

The prosperity which working and the single life afforded permitted Luigi to purchase his first Model T Ford, which he used to cruise the primitive local streets, offering rides to promenading Richmond beauties. On one occasion, he and his brothers completely disassembled the car's engine, transmission, etc., labeled all the parts, and then reassembled it. To their credit, the car performed as well as before.

When the Plunge opened in 1927, Luigi recalls that Captain Rumsey's daughter Laura, who became the wife of Planning Commissioner Leo Carey, was voted beauty queen for the occasion. Laura's sister, Dorothy, incidentally, married George Miller, Jr., who later became state Senator.

When World War II began, Luigi's Mother was required, as an alien, to leave the area for Hayward. Luigi was left to tend the six cows, the chickens, rabbits and the orchard by himself. She was sorely missed, but ultimately returned to the family home. "Thank goodness, because I was in the rabbit business up to my neck." She lived on into her 94th year.

Luigi Bernardi is now 78, and lives with his younger brother Antonio, also a life-long bachelor. On your next trip through the tunnel, slow down and say hello. You'll probably find both Tony and Luigi outside repairing some of the damage done by the 1982 storm and landslides.

-Roz Bury & Doug Corbin

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## THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The great depression began in 1929 with the stock market crash. Richmond was somewhat insulated from its first repercussions because of new business developments that were already financed. Two of the largest of these were the Ford assembly plant and the construction of Terminal No. 3. Since they kept many people employed, Richmonders were optimistic that the hard times being experienced by the rest of the country would not affect them. But by 1931 the full impact of the great depression hit Richmond.

From 1930 to 1940 no major industry located in Richmond, except for the Ford motor plant. Population crept from 20,093 in 1930 to only 23,642 in 1940. The need for new housing reflected this slow down, with only 285 building permits issued in 1935, as compared to 337 in 1912. School enrollment decreased. Telephone connections dropped from 4,857 in 1930 to 4,286 in 1934. One thing that increased was library circulation - 369,940 books were in circulation in 1930, compared to 447,497 in 1933-34. Richmonders knew a bargain when they saw one!



All of Richmond's major industries kept running, although production cut back and employees' hours were shortened. Eleanor Hurley remembers an across-the-board pay cut from the San Francisco firm where she worked. Did workers complain? No! According to Miss Hurley, they were happy to have work at all.

Many Richmonders maintained vegetable gardens that helped them get through tough times. Standard Oil arranged with Mechanics Bank to collect interest only on home mortgages until employee hours could be increased. Arrangements such as this meant that few Richmonders lost their homes during the depression.

By 1937-38 the economy began to improve and Richmonders were hopeful once again. In December, 1940, Richmond began producing ships for Great Britain. After Pearl Harbor, Richmond continued constructing ships — this time for the United States. The depression was over and the war boom had begun.

—Michelle Brown

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## PTA — PAST AND PRESENT

The foundation for what was to become Richmond's Parent Teacher Association were laid on March 21, 1916. On that date Superintendent of Schools, Walter T. Helms, organized a meeting to form a group to benefit under-privileged children at Lincoln School. The meeting was held at Lincoln School.

The executive board of the group were Mrs. A.B.Ledgerwood, president; Mrs. J.T. Narbett, Miss Nora McNeil, Mrs. Stivers and Miss Nettie Windrem. The total membership was twenty-seven, including Mrs. W.T. Helms and Mr. and Mrs. B.X. Tucker.

Fund raisers were held to provide milk for needy children. The fund raising events included a concert raising \$175, a paper drive which brought in \$450 and a dance, held at East Shore Park, which made a whopping \$1000! John A. Miller acted as publicity chairman for the latter event. The funds generated provided milk for children at Lincoln, Nystrom and Peres schools.

The success of the original PTA generated organizations in other schools. All were members of the Berkeley Federation, but in 1923 the Richmond PTA formed an independent group called the Richmond Federation. The name was later changed to the Richmond Council of Parents and Teachers. The first executive board of this group consisted of Mrs. Billie Brown, Mrs. Talitha Edgar, Mrs. R.N. Farhenholtz, Mrs. W.N. Morgan, Mrs. A.L. Rector, Miss Nora Ashfield, Mr. F.C. Shallenberger and 'Doc' Slaivright.

Mrs. W.T. Helms and Mrs. B.X. Tucker began a scholarship fund sometime before 1923. In 1923, the Richmond Council took over maintenance of the fund, and in 1932, the fund became a student loan fund. Interest-free money for college educations is still provided, by collections taken each year at PTA Founders Day celebrations.

Organizations must reflect society's values and meet its needs. As times change so must organizations. The Parent-Teacher Association which began as a fund-raising organization to aid needy children has continued raising funds, but its goals have broadened, to benefit all school children.

continued, on page 15



APPEARANCE IS NOT EVERYTHING  
(or)  
IS CLEANLINESS NEXT TO  
GODLINESS?

From its inception, the Point Richmond Business Association has tried to assume a leadership role in promoting the physical appearance of our community, with particular emphasis on the business area and its environs.

The Association has sponsored yearly clean-up days with dumpsters and tools supplied free by the City of Richmond; and most recently, a street tree replacement program is beginning to provide living trees where ugly snags or empty wells existed only a few months ago. Plans and specifications are ready, and bids will soon be solicited for the Railroad Avenue parking project. Although it will provide paved parking for over 80 vehicles, the project will also serve as an entrance to Point Richmond from the east and a buffer screening the railroad operations with a line of stately Sycamore trees tied together at the base with an irrigated strip of flowering vines, shrubs and ground cover.

Despite these successes, the campaign to make Point Richmond a cleaner and prettier place to live or work is suffering from the usual effects of misinformation and selective apathy. One of the unfortunate fallouts of Proposition 13 is that the City no longer provides most of the public housekeeping services that were once taken for granted such as street sweeping, weed removal along streets and medians, and the planting and maintenance of street trees. All of these have become the responsibility of individual property owners, some of whom have risen to the task and some of whom are apparently prepared to wait, forever if necessary, for the City to send someone out to do it for

them. As a result, many sections of our community are beginning to take on appearances more characteristic of an abandoned mining town than an active and thriving urban neighborhood. For example, a person wishing to stroll along Scenic Avenue between Washington and Tunnel, or along the west side of Santa Fe between West Richmond and Cottage, would literally have to take to the streets because the sidewalks are choked with weeds higher than a man's head. Railroad Avenue has become a public dumping ground with piles of rubbish collecting around strategically placed dumpsters, and the termination of Crest Avenue (gateway to Nicholl Nob and the crown of our very own Miller-Knox Regional Park) has become a handy shooting gallery with piles of broken glass testifying to the accuracy of our local marksmen.

It is the responsibility, both moral and legal, of those of us who own or rent property in this city to keep that property, *including the adjacent streets and sidewalks*, free of weeds and rubbish (Richmond Municipal Code, Chapter 12.12, Weed and Rubbish Abatement). The City has the authority, and, we believe, the obligation to enforce this law. After providing written notice and sufficient time to comply, the City may move in and accomplish the cleanup with contract labor. The property owner gets the bill which, if unpaid, becomes a lien on the property and is collected along with annual property taxes. Because of the built-in collection procedure, the net cost to the City is virtually nothing.

If enforced, this ordinance could provide a powerful incentive for the private sector to fulfill those responsibilities that the public sector no longer has the funds to discharge. Richmond could certainly benefit from any effort to transform its not unfairly acquired seedy image. The problem is,



however, that the responsible municipal department heads have chosen not to place a high priority on the appearance of Richmond. The City Council has, for months, failed to act on a proposed resolution which would create a Beautification Task Force, and the former City Manager recently stated flatly that he will not enforce the abatement ordinance on a scale sufficient to result in widespread compliance. As an association of business persons, we feel that an attractive city is a boon to business, and we wonder why it has not sustained more support from our elected representatives at City Hall. The Point Richmond Business Association will continue to push for measures to make our community more attractive, to the benefit, we hope, of businesses and residents alike, and we urge anyone who is interested in this matter to attend our monthly meetings and let your concerns be known to your council members and to staff persons at City Hall.

- Tom Butt

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## AFTER SCHOOL

Although school officially ends early each afternoon, some of our students stay later to participate in Washington School After School, a special program organized by the PTA.

Beginning with Monday's jazzercise class for all ages (adults are welcome for \$3.00 a session) and ending with softball on Fridays, the After School program offers a wide range of sport and craft classes geared to each grade level.

Bob Dodson, a R.U.S.D. teacher is coaching the softball, soccer and football programs. The enrollment form for sports noted "In case of rain, class will meet . . . at the entrance to the auditorium." Let's hope we don't have TOO many football or softball games in the auditorium.

Crafts classes include basket making, weaving, mask making and ceramics, all under the direction of Richmond Art Center or community instructors. I have a feeling that some of us will be seeing hand crafted Christmas presents from our little elves. Won't it be wonderful!

With all the budget cutbacks in art and sports due to ever decreasing funding to schools, it's very special to have a low cost after school program to fill the gaps. Extra plaudits have to go to Susan Burman and Linda Mitchell for doing a heroic job of coordinating the Washington School After School program in so short a time.

- Judy Spediacci

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## TRADITIONAL HALLOWE'EN? NO, THANKS!

Do you wish kids were more like they used to be? Well, maybe your judgment is a little hasty or your memory a little rusty. A limited sampling of Hallowe'en remembrances reveals what angels we are blessed with today.

How long has it been since your windows were soaped, your car covered with broken eggs, or your garbage can tipped over on Hallowe'en?

I grew up with a mother who was a bigger kid than I, so Hallowe'en was celebrated full-tilt at our house. My mother had grown up in Iowa where she spent "gate night" — the night before Hallowe'en — knocking over gates, fences and outhouses (her dog fell into one of the exposed holes). Then, she had the audacity to return to the scenes

of her crimes to trick-or-treat the following night. The tricks consisted of soaping windows, and "tick-tacking" them. A tick-tack is a wooden spool, knotted at each end, wrapped with string, and held by a spike inserted through the hold. Held against a window, the string is pulled, making a sound like the window breaking. I guess she thought she was doing the inhabitants a favor by not breaking it.

Bill Williamson, who grew up in rural Tennessee, also remembers knocking over outhouses, and says that kids as well as dogs fell in. He said that the older kids trick-or-treated, but it was too far for the younger ones to travel, so they had parties where they dunked for apples and ate donuts off strings.

Doug Corbin didn't have any outhouses to knock over, so he and a friend knocked over garbage cans. One night they were running down the street tipping cans with a great clatter when a man heard them coming. He turned his dogs on them, so they flew over fences with man and beast in hot pursuit. In the process, Doug lost his bike key, so he had to carry his bike home. A just reward.

Many of us remember great feats, of hanging large objects from unlikely perches. My bike was hung from a lamp post on the main street of Santa Cruz. Liz McDonald's grandfather and some of his friends took a buggy apart and hung it from a church steeple. Marian Downey says that one year the kids at the high school on Twenty-third Street here in Richmond hung a huge dray wagon from the second story overhang.

Everyone remembers parties with great fondness. In Santa Cruz, the Recreation and Parks Department always had a big party for kids where everyone went after trick-or-treating. Liz McDonald remembers a similar party



at a theater on College Avenue in Berkeley and Oakland. Marian Downey says that one year when her son was in junior high school here, the parents decided to keep their children from going trick-or-treating by having a big party at the school. During the '60's, Washington School had lavish Hallowe'en Carnivals, which lasted far enough into the evening to tucker out little trick-or-treaters. Many business districts used to sponsor window painting contests, probably to prevent them from being soaped.

Costumes are still the most important aspect of Hallowe'en. They seem more complicated, along with everything else today. You don't see as many ghosts and skeletons as you used to, but having one day a year set aside when you can be anything you choose, seems downright therapeutic, and maybe for that reason Hallowe'en remains at the top of kids' lists of holidays. It's nice they can still manage to have fun without inflicting so much damage.

— Rosemary Corbin

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## COLLECTORS' TREASURE AND JUNK FAIR

The Richmond Museum, in cooperation with the Recreation and Parks Department, is preparing a major fund raising event to benefit future Museum programs. The "Collectors' Treasure and Junk Fair" and raffle will be held in the Museum's Seaver Room on Saturday, November 20, and Sunday, November 21, from 10:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Prizes donated by Richmond businesses will be raffled, and food will be on hand. If you have treasures (or white elephants) to offer for the sale, call the Richmond Museum, at 235-7387, today!.

*PTA - PAST & PRESENT, continued from p 11.*

The present Washington School PTA has made a sharp departure from fund raising activities, instead directing its energies toward providing activities that have been discontinued because of the lack of District funding, through the After School Program. Jazzercise, mask making, ceramics and sports are provided for minimal fees. Instructors for the first session are Jeanine Edwards, Gayle Mettey, Sharon Beattie, Bob Dodson, Kay Coffee and Linda Mitchell. Steve and Susan Burman, Linda Mitchell and Mr. Nino Petroni, principal, are responsible for implementing the program. Future classes will include Christmas present making and creative writing.

PTA meetings have changed too. Formerly devoted mainly to business matters, they will now feature guest speakers and panels to discuss issues of current interest to parents and teachers. Business will be handled in executive sessions. It is hoped that these changes will induce more parents to become involved in PTA.

PTA's executive board includes Torn Butt, president; Lilly Tate, vice president; Mr. Petroni, second vice president; Sandy DeValle, secretary; and Wendy Thompson, treasurer.

—Michelle Brown







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Editorial Staff: Teresa Albro, Michelle Brown, Roz Bury, Rosemary Corbin, Mid Dornan, Lucretia Edwards, Donna Roselius, Judy Spediacci.

Illustrations: Roz Bury, Donna Roselius,  
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Articles for the next issue are due by November 20. They may be mailed to the History Association, 212 Bishop Alley, Point Richmond, CA 94801; or left with Trannie Dornan at the Richmond Supply Company, 145 West Richmond Avenue. For information or small news items, call 235-4222.

Membership in the Point Richmond History Association includes a subscription to this newsletter. Membership dues may be sent to Michelle Brown, 25 Idaho St., Point Richmond, CA 94801.

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## POINTS IN THE FUTURE

Nov. 6 - Library Fun Run - "Jog your Mind, Run to the Richmond Public Library" - Free. Prizes, refreshments, for participants. 9:30 a.m. Starts & ends at the Library.

Book and Bake sale - 9:30 to 4:00 at the Library.

Nov. 6 - "Point Richmond Ramble" - Sierra Club Hike, meeting at the Plunge at 11:30 a.m., with David Sawyer and Nancy Main, leaders, and Donna Roselius as historian. Wear walking shoes, and bring a snack.

Nov. 10 - Library Birthday Party - Program honoring Ethel Kerns, Quilt raffle, Raffle tickets on sale at Library.

Nov. 12 - Point Methodist Church - Annual Country Faire. Luncheon 12 noon to 1:30 (Reservations-234-0780), and afternoon bazaar of Christmas and Thanksgiving handcrafts, baked goods, etc.

NOV.18 - Point Richmond History Association Meeting. 7:30 p.m., Linsley Hall. Reminisce with some of the Point's men, who grew up in the "good old days".

Nov.20 - Deadline for articles for the December Newsletter. (Send articles to 212 Bishop Alley, or leave with Trannie at the Richmond Supply Co.

Nov.20-21 - Richmond Museum Collectors' Treasure and Junk Fair. 10 to 4:00.

### TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ SINGLE  
☐ SENIOR CITIZEN (65+)  
☐ FAMILY  
☐ ORGANIZATION  
☐ HISTORY-PRESERVER  
☐ HISTORY-MAKER

\$10.00 \*  
 5.00 \*  
 20.00 \*  
 25.00 \*  
 50.00 \*  
 100.00\*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TEL NO. \_\_\_\_\_