

THIS POINT

NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE POINT RICHMOND HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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in time

÷ POINTS IN THE PAST ÷

Notes from the historic past of Point Richmond, from articles in the Richmond Daily Record and the Point Richmond Record newspapers, and Evan Griffin's History of Richmond, courtesy of the Richmond Museum.

130 YEARS AGO . . .

"Point Richmond" was the name given the point of land projecting into San Francisco Bay that is now called Ferry Point. Government engineers designated the land as Point Richmond in 1852, but the reason for the name is unknown.

Because the Point originally developed as the East Bay "yard" for the westernmost terminus of the Santa Fe railroad, the town of Point Richmond was, for a time, known as "Eastyard." That name was soon discarded, however, and Point Richmond still designates the part of Richmond that was once separated from the mainland by marshes and water.

80 YEARS AGO . . .

Although only two years had passed since the inauguration of the first ferry service provided by the Santa Fe railroad from the East Bay to San Francisco, the service so joyously received was already being seriously criticized by Richmond's young Chamber of Commerce. In May, 1902, they passed a resolution to be presented to the Santa Fe's Captain Payson, stating:

"The Chamber of Commerce of the City of Richmond would respectfully represent to the management of the Santa Fe railroad that their service for this place is wholly inadequate to the demands of the people traveling between Richmond and San Francisco."

They stated that the 200 - 500 people daily had to pay a ten-cent fare to land half a mile east of where most wished to disembark. The Chamber requested good local service, landing passengers at the foot of Richmond Avenue.

The resolution admonishes the Santa Fe: "The management of the Santa Fe should recognize that Richmond is a healthy growing city, now firmly planted on the Santa Fe map. In a measure she is a child of the Santa Fe railroad and deserves better treatment at the hands of her progenitor."

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On April 21, 1902, the Bank of Richmond opened its doors (the building on the corner of Washington and West Richmond that is now Sherry and Bob's), and on May 5, it was able to provide a valuable service for Standard Oil - it was payday, and instead of receiving checks, employees lined up at the teller's window and received twenty-dollar gold pieces, and "bright silver dollars." Employees had previously been compelled to cash their checks at local shops and saloons.

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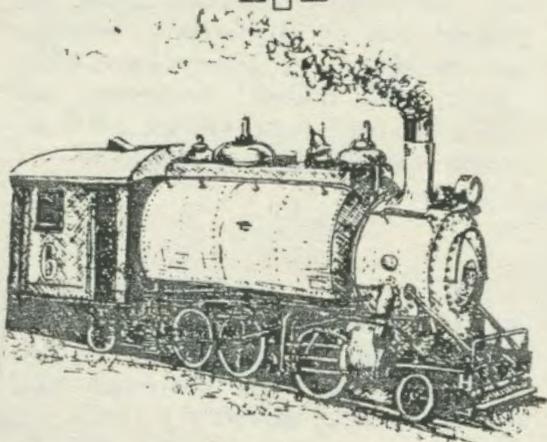
Standard Oil's new refinery was, in July of 1902, "pushing the new work of laying pipeline from Bakersfield to Point Richmond," and there was much construction work at the refinery.

In 1902, the new town needed a jail. Judge Lindsey and Deputy Sheriff Moitza stated, in July, that a jail would be built — “after working hard against all sorts of discouragements.” They had secured a site, with \$100 from the County, and some of their own money, to lease from Santa Fe, but they were denied approval by a County Supervisor, since the Santa Fe reserved the right to demand removal of the building at their will. Finally, the two succeeded in securing a lease from the Tewksbury estate, but it contained a flaw — the strip of land between the site and the street was owned by Santa Fe. The two threatened to “dig a tunnel under the railroad company’s land, if necessary, to the jail.”

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The Richmond Daily Record, in April, 1902, was enthusiastic about the potential Southern Pacific railroad line from San Pablo to Richmond, and the accompanying industrial expansion that it implied, saying, “Great things are in store for Richmond. When you see it in the Record, it is so.”

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AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY CASEY

The active, youthful mind and spirit of Mary Casey belie her age and length of residence here in this community. She attended Richmond schools, worked for the City of Richmond, and although her travels took her to many places her activities and enthusiasm centers here.

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Mary Casey and her family came to live in Point Richmond in 1906. Upon their arrival, they moved into a house on Golden Gate Avenue where she still resides. Her family operated a newspaper service next to the Colonial Hotel.

Not long after the family settled here, the Bay Area was rocked by the great San Francisco earthquake. “I remember how the house shook. We didn’t know what was happening. The lamps danced around so — we were scared to go back into the house. We didn’t have any damage, but out at Standard Oil they did.”

Mary Casey’s father operated “a little store downtown right next to where the Hotel Mac is now. Newspapers and everything in connection: candy, tobacco, cigars, all kinds of things . . . My dad died in 1914 and we had to carry on . . . it was our livelihood. There used to be a bakery over where those offices (“A Day at a Time”) are now, right next to the theatre . . . and every morning (the paperboy) would go over and buy doughnuts or coffee cake or something . . . My mother wouldn’t let them go out unless they had something (to eat).”

"There wasn't any Washington School . . . the school was down on Standard Avenue at that time. When they re-aligned Standard Avenue they moved the school. It was used as an apartment house . . . [The school] had eight grades, some of the grades may have been together. I'm not positive on all that because I was only in their seventh and eighth grades. And then the first high school was built down there at the corner of Eddy and Standard. It was about three rooms. That might have been 1907 or 08." The first graduating class consisted of one student, the next was three, then seven, and next either 20 or 21.

"I was in the first class to go all the way through Richmond Union High School . . . Twenty-third and MacDonald, where the Grand Auto is now. There used to be the high school there, and then it was a



junior high after that. It took in Pinole and all those other places around. They used to come from Crockett down here — of course they'd come down on the train. We used to go on the street car — [but] most of the time we'd have to walk, and then half a dozen street cars might come all together. We walked through the fields home . . . right down Ohio way."

"We were very clannish here at the Point, and when we were going to school they used to tell us we were . . . used to call this 'Nanny goat hill.'"

"You know where that high roofed house is . . . on the corner of Summit and Golden Gate? Right across the street from that . . . that's where the grocery store was. It's still standing, where all those garages are. Downstairs they (the Giovanetti's) had a grocery store; they lived upstairs. [It had] just essential things that you wanted, but it seemed like you could get everything there — I mean in the way of edibles . . . I don't mean clothes or anything like that, like they do in grocery stores now."

"There was a depot there . . . There's a strip there, between the railroad [tracks] and Railroad Avenue. The depot was in that area. [Passengers] got on and off the train going to San Francisco. You'd take the ferry across. They could come down on the train — you see, it used to go all the way — Stockton, San Juaquin, L.A., probably. . . and the ferry used to go from Ferry Point, down here (through the tunnel — it's just this side of Wharf Number one.)"

"There is a certain fascination about the Point . . . I've been here, there and around, but I just love to get back. I just love it."

THE EAST BROTHER LIGHT STATION



East Brother and West Brother Islands lie off Richmond's coastline in the San Francisco Bay. In 1873 the larger of the two little islands, the East Brother, became the site of the East Brother Island Light Station, a self-contained compound of three Victorian buildings, surrounded by a white picket fence. From 1874 until 1939 the Light Station was manned by the Keepers and their families of the Lighthouse Service, and after 1939 by rotating crews of Coast Guardsmen.

In 1969 East Brother was slated to be included in the Coast Guard's program of automation of lights and fog signals. Because the buildings were considered "attractive nuisances" they were slated for demolition.

The Contra Costa Shoreline Parks Committee, with the help of Point Richmond's spunky local newspaper, the "Point Counterpoint", publicized this possibility, and succeeded in having the installation placed on the National Register of Historic Places. While this move prevented demolition of the buildings, the Coast Guard was without funds to provide maintenance or service to the island, except that concerned with the now automated light and fog signal. For ten years the

island's supporters sought fruitlessly to find a local agency which would take an interest in the landmark and restore it to public use. At last the County School system expressed a desire to use the island and its buildings as a classroom for marine biology and conservation projects, but alas, Proposition 13 put an end to all but legislatively mandated studies.

In 1979, as a last hope of preserving East Brother and making it available for public use, East Brother Light Station, Inc., a non-profit corporation, was formed under the creative leadership of Tom Butt, a Point Richmond architect, and with a determined band of lighthouse lovers, preservationists and hard workers, skilled and unskilled.

The Coast Guard, happy that the historic buildings were to be preserved, awarded a 20 year renewable license, at no cost. With the help of a \$67,000 Maritime Preservation Matching Grant from the Department of the Interior, some \$15,000 of additional cash donations, and a massive amount of donated labor, materials and services, the organization began a \$300,000 rehabilitation and restoration project. This was completed in 1980; within budget, on schedule and without any serious accidents.

The reconstruction effort was a unique and heart-warming demonstration of private, public and corporate resources coordinated for the public good. Hundreds of tons of supplies and hundreds of volunteer workers were ferried to the island by a motley fleet of privately owned craft, working tug boats, Coast Guard buoy tenders, the Harbor Police boat, the Corps of Engineers snag barge and East Brother's own small Boston Whaler. This supply line kept going seven days a week for nearly a year.

Perhaps the most ambitious operation concerned the badly deteriorated original concrete rainshed, which drained rain water into a central underground cistern for the Island's water supply. First a crew from the California Conservation Corps spent six weeks demolishing and then cleaning up the rainshed area. Then over 100 tons of concrete mix were barged to the Island by the Corps of Engineers, and finally a CETA concrete masonry training class poured and finished over 8,000 square feet of new concrete, using only two small electric mixers.

Plans and old photographs obtained from the National Archives, the Coast Guard, and descendants of former keepers provided documentation and guidance in the restoration of the buildings, inside and out. Floor plans were altered slightly (with the permission of the State Office of Historic Preservation) to accommodate the new visitor oriented uses, and the interiors were carefully restored and furnished.

Modern technologies supplement the tradition of self-sufficiency that was a matter of necessity for the keepers of a century ago. In addition to the refurbished cistern and rainwater collection

basin, wood burning stoves provide heat; solar energy provides domestic water heating and a "Clivus Multrum" compost toilet provides organic waste disposal. In order to assure funds for insurance, for fuel and upkeep of the boat (which provides transportation to and from the Island) for the Lighthouse Keeper's salary and for maintenance, the East Brother Light Station, while a non-profit organization, now charges user fees for day use and overnight programs.

This is a very beautiful and special place, much loved by those who had the pleasure and privilege of working to restore it, and greatly enjoyed by those who come to spend the day or night. But it is not only these fortunate few who appreciate the East Brother Island. Local, state and National recognition have come to it, and to the people who rescued it from destruction. In 1980 an award was given the East Brother Light Station by the Richmond Friends of Recreation. In 1981 the California Heritage Council presented its Award of Merit, and 1982 has brought a bumper crop of kudos. In March at a ceremony on the Island, the Coast Guard gave a Certificate of Appreciation to the Light Station and the people who restored it, and a special Meritorious Public Service Award to Tom Butt, the president of East Brother Light Station, Inc., and the person who directed the whole restoration project. In giving it the Coast Guard pointed out that the highest award they give is for saving a life. Tom Butt received the second highest award for saving a light station. And in May, in Washington, D.C. the National Trust for Historic Preservation will give the East Brother Light Station its 1982 Honor Award.

THE CHURCHES OF POINT RICHMOND



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

In 1900, Methodism was the only religion in Richmond. Members first met in the Critchett Hotel; then in tents, until they were destroyed by storms; then the services were held in a railroad car. Their first church was a small wood frame structure next to the present church, which was constructed in time to house victims of the 1906 earthquake. Many of those who were given shelter remained here and became some of Richmond's leading citizens.

Traditionally, this small church has been served either by a student or a retired minister. The Rev. Glenn Miller, with his wife DeVerna and daughters Maxine and Laura, has served the church for three years. He plans to retire and move to Sacramento in June, but will remain active in the ministry.

For several years, the historic brick church at Martina and West Richmond has been undergoing repairs to preserve and restore it. Bazaars and luncheons have raised funds to install new carpets in the Sanctuary, reroof the main building, install new entrance doors and refinish the woodwork in the Narthex and Friendship Hall. When the priceless stained glass windows in the Sanctuary were vandalized, community and church members joined in repairing and protecting the windows from further damage. The small but dedicated congregation has now begun to repair and restore the basement and foundation — a financially monumental task.

By 1901 the three religious denominations now represented in the Point were organized. A 1902 newspaper shows the following church schedules:

Presbyterian: 3 p.m. at the Santa Fe School house.

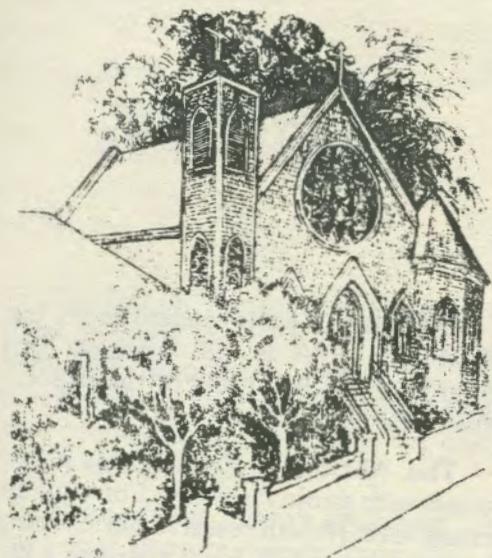
Baptist: Sunday School - 2 p.m. at the Fraternal Hall; also evening services.

Trinity Episcopal: Sunday School - 9:45 Church: 11 a.m., Fraternal Hall.

First Methodist Episcopal: 10 a.m. - Sabbath School; Preaching at 11; Class meeting at 12. (They had their own building.)

Catholic: Mass - Curry's Hall, 9:00 a.m. "After Mass there will be Sunday School for all children who have attained the age of learning."

Four Churches soon had their own buildings, three of which have been in continuous use since. The fourth, the Episcopal Church, built on the corner of Nicholl and Washington, was used by another denomination later, and recently was sold to private owners, and is once again for sale.



On Saturday, June 12, from 10:00 to 3:00 there will be a Flea Market at the Church, to benefit the Basement Fund.

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OUR LADY OF MERCY CATHOLIC CHURCH

This church is 80 years old, and the members are planning a day-long Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, August 15. All past and present members and friends are invited to join them.

Beginning with special musical entertainment at 2:00 p.m., a Celebration of Holy Mass will follow at 3:00. Then, they will rejoice around a steak barbecue from 4:00 to 7:00, but you must have a ticket or reservations, as they anticipate a sell-out. It promises to be a day of memories, reunions and nostalgia.

For reservations, the chairman, Allan Smith, advises you to call 232-1549 (Henry O'Hara), 232-1843 (the church), or 234-5149 (Allan Smith).



POINT BAPTIST CHURCH

The Point Baptist Church boasts that it is the only church in Northern California that still holds three regular meetings a week. Two are on Sunday, at 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.; the other is on Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. Although the congregation is small, they provide financial assistance to others when it is needed, and generously support the Richmond Rescue Mission each month.

Their Gospel Quartet, composed of Richard Wilson, Ruby and Chief Crittenden and John Milam is accompanied by Roy Jones, who says they sing the old-time southern Gospel songs – music with a beat – and they are also available for singing at other occasions.

Now called the 'Point' Church, members still think of it as the First Baptist Church, although some members, years ago, moved across town to build a new church and took the name 'First' with them. The Rev. Evan Anderson is the minister at the Point Church.

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KEEPING UP WITH HISTORY

People wishing to enquire about tax credits for their houses in the Historic District may talk to Bill Bonnell in the City Attorney's Office in Richmond City Hall. The office has the master list of all houses included in the Point Richmond Historic District.

The State Office of Historic Preservation (Department of Parks and Recreation, P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento 95811) also has a copy of the master list, and a great deal of knowledge. In San Francisco, The National Trust for Historic Preservation office does not have our list, but is also full of knowledgeable people who may be able to answer specific questions.

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A WHALE OF A DAY

The School Year is winding down, but Washington PTA is still working hard toward our last BIG event of the season — Whale of a Day.

This Whale of a Day will see a new format with an old fashioned County Fair atmosphere. We will preserve our exciting student art exhibit, for it's always a delight to see the world through a child's eye, but other treats will be added: a doll and doll house show will transport us back to our youths, and a quilt show will recall the days when ladies' nimble fingers sewed far into the night by oil lamps to create unique and wonderful masterpieces from scraps. Washington's own quilts from past Whale of a Days will be on display and this year's quilt, built on a theme of children's stories will be raffled.

For car buffs, there will be an exhibit of vintage automobiles and to top off the festivities we'll have corn on the cob, cider, fried chicken and home baked goodies as well as an "Incredible Edibles" baking competition, and entertainment by some of our own local talents.

We would love to have you participate in any of the above shows. If you would lend a quilt, please call Judy Spediacci, at 232-0635 in the evening; for dolls and doll houses, or Incredible Edibles, call Susan Burman, at 234-5063.

Whale of a Day will be Saturday, May 8 from 11 to 2 at Washington School.
PLEASE JOIN US!

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A Report From ...
**THE POINT RICHMOND
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**



The Point Richmond Business Association, formerly the Point Richmond Businessmen's Association, has represented the interests of the Point Richmond business community at least since the mid-1960's, and possibly earlier.

Although the group's beginnings are somewhat obscure, we do know that a 1967 study entitled "Point Richmond Commercial Area Development Plans, 1967 - 1975", show that Robert Barker, Maurice Dufault, Shiela Fostiak, Frank Kreuger, Ronald Roselius, William Shedd, and Isaac Solis were the prime movers of that era. The study's recommendations included establishment of a parking area within a portion of the Santa Fe right of way - a proposal that died from lack of support then but which has been successfully resurrected some 15 years later.

Over the past eight years, the association has sponsored or produced a number of useful projects and activities including landscaping, a business directory, clean-up days, street fairs, candidates' nights, highway signage, National Register Historic District nomination, outdoor concerts, and community business advertising. In addition, the association has taken and communicated to the City of Richmond positions on a number of general and specific issues including crime, parking, environmental impact reports for the Santa Fe overpass, Hoffman Freeway, and the Chevron Lube Oil Project.

Currently the membership includes more than 30 businesses and has a "hard-core" active attendance of 15 to 20 persons. The association meets the second Wednesday of each month at the Hotel Mac for lunch. Any person is welcome to attend.

In 1981, the association was formally incorporated as a non-profit organization. It has a board of seven directors which is elected annually by the membership, and which, in turn, elects the officers. The current officers are Tom Butt, president; Richard Alexander, vice president; Carol Taussig, secretary; and Claudia Beale, treasurer.

Ironically, the businesses that seem to have the most to gain from cooperative promotion in Point Richmond - the restaurants - have always been conspicuous by their lack of interest in the organization. It has been a continuing goal of those active in the Point Richmond Business Association to encourage participation by the widest possible representation of the business community. Perhaps 1982 will see that objective realized.



MOTHER NATURE DID IT!



Point Richmonders are saying, "Rain, rain, go away - come again during a drought," especially because of the unanticipated damage to their community that began on Monday, January 4, 1982, at 10:00 a.m. Flood water combined with soil to relocate portions of the hills, to the great dismay of the Homo sapien dwellers. Neighbors, assisted by Richmond Fire Stations 1, 3 and 7, laboriously maneuvered tons of mud-laced poison oak and debris into the street, so that City crews would remove it. To date, considerable renovation work remains.

What caused the slides? Conflicting opinions abound: Annual Fourth of July fires, building development, a May, 1981 leak in the Nicholl Nob water tank, or unconfirmed breaks in pipes? To compound the problem, the neglect of soil conservation, the natural holding springs, and the untended crevasses left by motorcycles were perfect fodder for Mother Nature's folly.

We were not alone. There was severe weather throughout California. The general consensus here, though, is that the numerous run-off problems were directly related to the City's lax maintenance. This, coupled with ignored claims and a seemingly apathetic City Council hasn't served to establish a congenial relationship between City officials and voters.

Local residents, undaunted by the City's unwillingness to give immediate help to prevent further loss, held an auction to raise the thousands of dollars needed to build a retaining wall. Dubbed "The Great Wall," it went up, thanks to the many individuals who donated time, back breaking work and materials. The hills that have provided our town with beauty and a wildlife refuge have served us all well; as kite flying children and arm-chair observers can attest. Even those rashy residents who spent the month of January itching continue to love our hills.

A friend in need is a friend indeed. Our Friend is still in need. In order to dissuade Mother Nature from further rearranging her "furniture", we must continue the work that has been started with the planting of fifty Redwood trees. Soil-holding ground cover must be planted, helping "old M.N." to keep her household in order. The hills are there for everyone to enjoy, and anyone can plant a plant. After all, we built a wall. A list of appropriate plants is available to all, so **please** call Gerry Swift, 232-5762, or Roz Bury, 235-5629, for information.

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WORKING TOGETHER WORKS !

The combined efforts of the Point Richmond community and the Animal Control Services are leading to the control of a long existing problem — stray dogs. Dogs have roamed the Point Richmond hills for many years, forming packs. Within the last five years, over twenty-five “wild” dogs and pups have been removed. Many of the dogs have been discarded by their owners, and either join or are devoured by the pack, as the deer, rabbit, quail, pheasant and dog bones discovered during the first flood this year testify.

Continued community support, leash laws and court citations provide the Animal Services of Pinole (235-7666) and Martinez (372-2995) with the vehicle needed to combat the infringements that endanger wildlife, other domestic animals and our own lives. Working together to preserve the natural wildlife on the Point Richmond hills is worth while, and must continue.



THE BRICKYARD

An ongoing concern of Point Richmonders, in particular the residents of Brickyard Cove, is the proposed development by the Innisfree Company on the hill above Brickyard Cove, and adjacent to the Miller-Knox Regional Park. There will be more public hearings on the proposed 310-unit subdivision known as the Brickyard, although several hurdles have already been successfully jumped by the developers. Compromises among the City, the developers and the East Bay Regional Park District have resulted in the agreed upon acquisition by the Park District of 14 acres of land along the top and northwest side of the ridge; and Innisfree has agreed to move eight condominiums to avoid intruding on the views from the park.



The proposed condominium / commercial development brings with it many potential problems that may be difficult to resolve. An obvious problem is traffic. Since the road now leading to Brickyard Cove is a "dead-end", it will be necessary to create some sort of thoroughfare, so that more than one exit exists for cars traveling to the Cove, the condominiums, the commercial areas, the yacht harbor, and the park.

The old kilns that are a picturesque reminder of the Brickyard that created much of the brick used in Point Richmond buildings and gardens, may not survive in the development - and, to many, that is a prime concern.

Hikers on the hills will not have the unobstructed views or choice of trails to hike on, once civilization has come to the Brickyard. The development will directly or indirectly affect much of the Point, and interested people should be alert to hearings and their results, in the future.

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POINTS IN THE FUTURE

- MAY 8 Whale of a Day Folk Art Festival at Washington School, 11 to 2:00 : Quilt show, quilt raffle, vintage cars, dolls, doll houses, food, live entertainment, etc. etc.!
- MAY 9 Bay Area Museum Sunday - Richmond Art Center student sale, 10 to 4:00; RUSD student art exhibit.

- MAY 10 Special Evening Presentation for parents and others interested in Art Classes for Children, at the Point Community Center, with Arline Hartman. 7:30 p.m. - an introduction to Creative Development as it begins in the young child, through a slide/lecture recently presented at the National Art Education Convention in New York City.
- MAY 11 Art Classes for Children, 3:15 to 4:45; Community Center. 1st thru 3rd graders; with Arline Hartman.
- MAY 12 Art Classes for Children, 3:15 to 4:45; Community Center. 4th thru 6th graders; with Arline Hartman. 5-week courses. Register May 10, or call Arline Hartman: 232-8650.
- MAY 24 Hatha Yoga, Mon. and Wed., 5:45 to 7:15. Point Community Center, with Susan Dunlap.
- MAY 8 & 15 Chinese homestyle cooking workshop, Community Center, 11 a.m. with Jennie Low.
- MAY 18 National Museum Day - visit the Richmond Museum today.
- JUNE 12 Flea Market - 10 to 3:00, Point Methodist Church.
- JUNE 14 Richmond Art Center summer class registration, 10 to 4:00.
- JULY 12 Hatha Yoga, Mon. & Wed., 5:45 to 7:15, Community Center.
- AUG 15 Our Lady Of Mercy Church, 80th Anniversary Celebration, see article for reservation information.
- AUG 15 DEADLINE for current and historic articles for "This Point in Time's" next issue.

Ongoing Classes at the Community Center:
 Tues. & Thurs. 6:15 to 7:15, aerobics, "Keep Fit" with Jodi Roselius
 Thurs. Dance Class 7:30-9:00 with Anna Bass.
 Tues. & Thurs. 9:15 to 10:15 - Moving Vine, "Pizzaz"

"This Point in Time" is published by the Point Richmond History Association, 212 Bishop Alley, Point Richmond, Calif. 94801.

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Illustrations by Donna Roselius and Roz Bury

Articles for the next issue are due by August 15. They may be mailed to the History Association, 212 Bishop Alley, Point Richmond, CA 94801, or left at Richmond Supply Company, 145 WRichmond Ave., Pt. Richmond. 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.

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

SINGLE	\$10.00
SENIOR CITIZEN (65+)	5.00
FAMILY	20.00
ORGANIZATION	25.00
HISTORY-PRESERVER	50.00
HISTORY-MAKER	100.00