

# THIS POINT

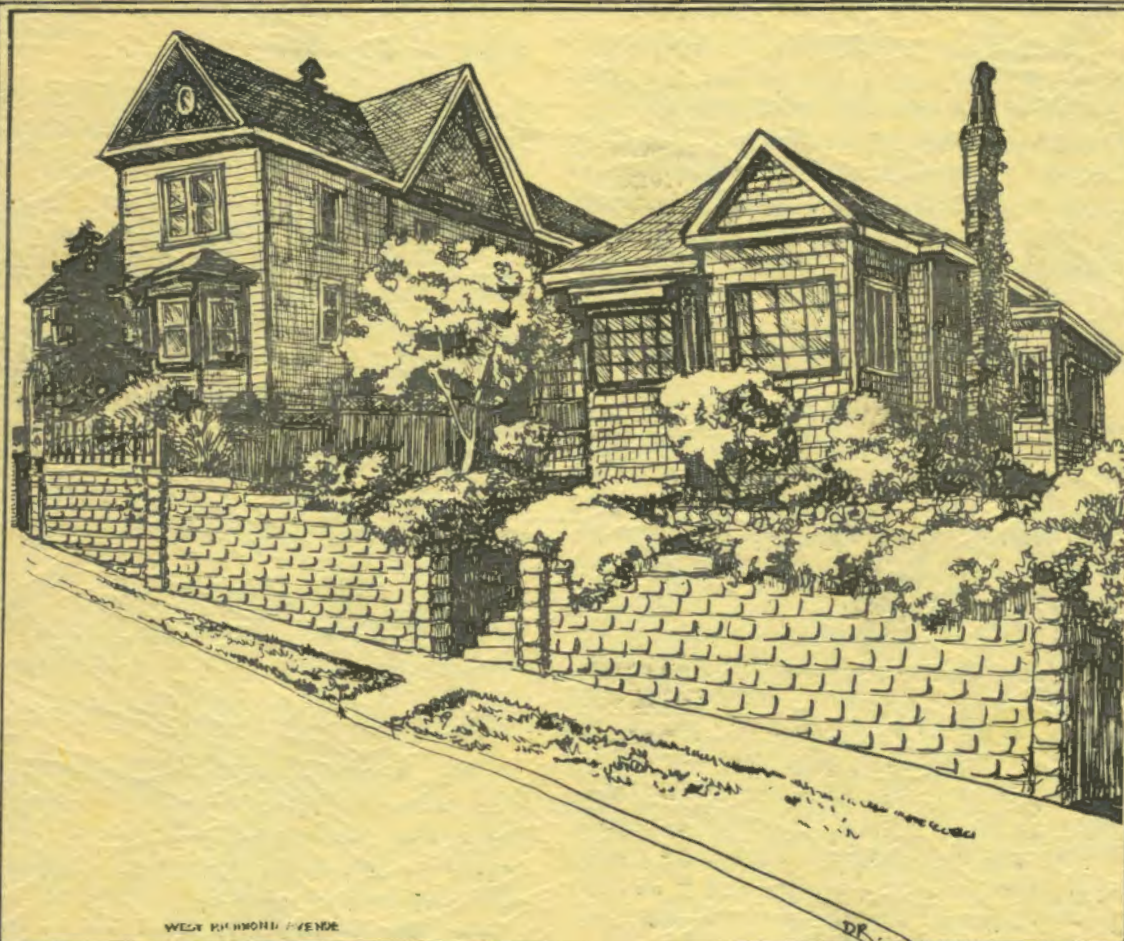
NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE POINT RICHMOND HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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WEST RICHMOND AVENUE

HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWS:INSIDE COVER	
POINTS IN THE PAST	1
WHAT'S IN A NAME?	3
AN INTERVIEW with MARIAN DOWNEY	5
OUR TOWN	6
IT WAS WRITTEN (church history)	9

MILLER-KNOX SHORELINE PARK	11
UNITED STAND ON BUSES	14
POINT RICHMOND PARKING DISTRICT	14
WASHINGTON SCHOOL NEWS	16
WEST SIDE BRANCH LIBRARY	16
POINTS IN THE FUTURE	16

## in time



## HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWS

### NEXT MEETING :

On Thursday, January 27, 1983, the History Association will meet again (let's hope for better weather), at 7:30 p.m. in Linsley Hall, corner of Washington and Nicholl Avenues. Please mark your calendar now, since the newsletter will not be published in January.

Tom Ryan, president of the Richmond Museum Association, will be our featured guest. His encyclopedic knowledge and entertaining manner will make him a perfect target for your questions. An excellent slide program assembled by the museum may also be presented. Be sure to attend, and invite a friend or two. Refreshments will be served.

### LAST MEETING:

November's meeting fell in the midst of a series of storms, and although the attendance was heartening (about fifty people) the cold rainy night kept some home. We are most grateful to the men who took part in the discussion: Jay Vincent, Al Frosini, Bill Stribley, Luciano Forner, Jerry Solich and Greg Solich; all of whom added valuable information to our archives, as the video tape testifies. During the lively conversation, we picked up bits of information - The only remaining building in what was known as 'Smoky Row' is the hamburger stand at the corner of Garrard and E. Richmond Avenues; The Nickelodeon on West Richmond Avenue provided a special chair for one of its regular customers, Mrs. Brazil (who ran the town's creamery), a heavy set woman who didn't fit on one of their regular folding chairs. When the new Movie Theater was built, Mr. Tcherassy, the proprietor, provided Mrs. Brazil with a special seat by removing the arm rest between two seats; Jay Vincent recalled collecting lumber on the shoreline

periodically, that had fallen off passing steam schooners; and the hydraulic dredger that kept the shipping channel open, that dumped the silt along the shore from Ferry Point to Keller's Beach, causing Keller to extend his wharf bit by bit, to boatable water, resulting in a wharf that zig-zagged its way to the Bay.

### RECENT BUSINESS:

The Association donated \$100 to the Richmond Library, on its 75th Birthday, to be used for the Richmond Collection.

Donna Powers has donated several sepia-tone enlargements of pictures in the Don Church collection lent to us by Allen Smith. Teresa Albro is busy recording the information from this gold mine of memorabilia. Chevron U.S.A., who has promised to reproduce photographs, will hopefully begin the process soon.

We have just received from Mary Helen Calfee, some old picture postcards of early Point Richmond - another valuable addition to the archives!

The proposal for 'Dornan Drive' is now before City Council committees, and should soon return to the Council for a decision.

### LETTERS:

Mrs. Emma Montgomery, now of Saratoga, who grew up here on Bishop Avenue, writes that she has just received her A.A. degree in education. Returning to college after her husband was killed by a hit-run driver, Mrs. Montgomery managed to get in a great variety of courses, and even made the Dean's list. Since she last attended school in 1922, this is an accomplishment worthy of note. She has offered her obviously sharp mind to share memories of early Point Richmond with anyone who visits her in Saratoga.

-Donna Roselius



## Points in the Past

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

### 80 YEARS AGO . . .

Oh, the good old days? The December 9, 1902 issue of the Daily Record warned the local citizens to "load their shot-guns with a good quality of bird shot and turn loose the bulldog, for there's a tough gang of hobos in town, and judging from their appearance they would not hesitate to rob and even murder to secure plunder. Today these toughs — there are fifteen or twenty of them — are engaged in begging from everybody about town and tonight they will probably scatter about, singly or in pairs to rob and steal from the inhabitants. Better put your valuables in a safe place until they are fired out of town."



The Rev. Father M.P. Scanlan announced plans for the groundbreaking of the new Catholic Church. Since the organization of the church at the Point, mass has been conducted at various places around town and is presently being celebrated at Downar's Hall. "Details of the structure are not at hand, but it is to be of modern architecture in every respect and will contain an auditorium large enough to seat 300 people. . . To the great energy of Father Scanlan is due this enterprise. Since he assumed charge of the Point Richmond parish last summer he has brought order out of chaos . . ."

The recently opened People's Theatre, Point Richmond's new playhouse located on Railroad Avenue near Richmond Avenue, "is meeting with unqualified success. . . The entertainments are clean and up-to-date and there is nothing in the behavior of the actors to offend the most fastidious. The lady performers are even forbidden by the management to assume décolleté costumes and this is a more stringent rule than applies in the fashionable theatres of San Francisco."

—Point Richmond Daily Record, December 20, 1902

### 70 YEARS AGO . . .

The Board of Trade's New Years Eve Celebration Committee revealed plans for a huge New Years event which will take place on the city streets. The activities will be held on the east side along Macdonald Avenue



between Fifth and Sixth Streets, and on the west side near the Indian statue at Washington Avenue and Park Place. The streets in these areas will be closed to traffic and "the pavement will be waxed until it is as smooth as the finest maple floor." Two masquerade balls will be held with many prizes for the participants and four bands to "keep up the enthusiasm . . . The grand march for both events will be started at 10 o'clock on that evening, with a band of music heading each caravan of merry-makers."

"There will be 2200 incandescents hung for the occasion, with large welcome banners on both sides of town. The highway from the Santa Fe right of way to the west side will be one big white way." A display of fireworks from the west side hills including "hundreds of bombs, golden, silver and emerald fountains, gigantic chrysanthemums, golden geysers, and burning aeroplanes will illuminate the sky at midnight and the words 'Richmond 1913' will be flashed in bold lettering and gorgeous colors."

In addition, a "death-flirting wire rope exhibition" will take place between the LaSalle building and the top of the First National Bank (more than 100 feet in the air). DeNovo, the "greatest tight rope walker in the world . . . will wend his way as the Old Year goes out and the New Year comes in . . . When he reaches the center his entire form will be lighted with electric bulbs and he will proceed to do some hair raising stunts on a trapeze."

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Dec. 11,  
12, 19 & 20, 1912

"Washington Street hill, in front of the City Hall, has been a favorite stomping ground for the 'Coaster Kiddies' since the recent visit of Kris Kringle." The local children, on their new coasters, fly down the hill-side street. Recently a five year old Standard Avenue boy suffered a fractured should-



er blade while playing with a group of children in this area. It is a dangerous sport and there have been numerous complaints to the police department. "Chief of police Arnold decided that he would have to either arrest the juveniles or place an officer stationary on the corner. The last course was adopted."

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Dec. 27,  
1912

## 60 YEARS AGO . . .

City Manager J.A. McVittie has undertaken the task of finding out how much it would cost to install some 1700 street signs throughout the city. Once the city has an estimate of the cost, it will be necessary to determine how the project will be financed. "Richmond may eventually have street signs which will permit one to find his way without counting blocks and carrying a map."

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Dec. 12,  
1922

While watching the Richmond-San Rafael ferry boats last Sunday, Christmas Eve, for contraband liquor transported across the bay in automobiles or motor trucks, one "sniffer" became suspicious of a load of Christmas trees. Looking under the trees loaded in



a truck belonging to Archie Tortino of Richmond, the agent found 10 gallons of "jackass brandy and a quantity of wine." It was reported that the truck also contained a still, however Tortino allegedly threw it overboard before the agent could stop him. The truck, Christmas trees and liquor were confiscated and Tortino was cited to appear before the prohibition commissioner. Merry Christmas.

—*Richmond Daily Independent*, Dec. 28,  
1922

—*Teresa Albro*

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#### KINDLING WOOD FOR SALE!

Cheap, at \$2.00 a wagon load, at the  
California Powder Works, Hercules,  
California.

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ad in a 1902 newspaper . . .

### WHAT'S IN A NAME ?

Ever wonder where some of the more uncommon names for local schools, streets and towns got their names? Most streets are named in honor of early Richmond settlers. Schools get their names from early school officials. All the nearby towns have Spanish names, with the notable exception of Richmond.

*Contra Costa* means opposite coast. Contra Costa County first included Alameda County, which was on the "opposite coast" from San Francisco.

*El Cerrito* means little hill. The little hill stands between San Pablo Avenue and the Bay. El Cerrito was originally named Rust, after the prominent resident and postmaster, William F. Rust.

*El Sobrante* means the left-over surplus lands between grants.

*San Pablo* is Spanish for St. Paul.

*Richmond* may be named for Richmond Virginia, but no one knows this as a certainty. The name Point Richmond was on the geodetic coast map of 1854. It was at the place later called Ferry Point, where the San Joaquin Valley Railroad (soon taken over by Santa Fe) established its terminal. Dr. C. L. Abbott, pioneer Richmond physician, proposed the following theory about the origin of the name of Richmond: The federal surveying party, who were in charge of charting the coastal area, were on friendly terms with the new California State officers. One of them, Edmund Randolph of San Francisco, was born to a prominent family in Richmond, Virginia. Dr. Abbott suggested that Randolph, out of loyalty to the town of his birth, was responsible for putting the name Richmond on the first map.

*Garrard Boulevard* was named for E. J. Garrard, who was a member of the first Board of Trustees. He called the first meeting to order. Elected as Councilman in 1909, he served as mayor from 1914 to 1917, and again from 1921, to 1923. He continued to serve as Councilman until his death.

*Bissell Avenue* was named for William A. Bissell. He was an official for Santa Fe Railroad. Mr. Bissell helped provide capital for the Barrett Ranch subdivision in the early days of Richmond.

*Chanslor Avenue* was named for Joseph A. Chanslor. He was an oil well developer and also helped provide capital for the subdivision of the old Barrett Ranch.

*Macdonald Avenue* was named for A. S. Macdonald, who is credited with discovering Richmond's possibilities as a city. He promoted the original deal to establish Santa Fe's western terminal here, and he subdivided the old Barrett ranch, creating 5,000 business and residential lots which make up greater Richmond today.



*Barrett Avenue* was named for George H. Barrett, a pioneer resident. He owned and lived on the 550 acres of level land that greater Richmond now occupies. His ranch was bounded on the north by the present Barrett Avenue, on the south by Ohio Street, on the west by Garrard Boulevard and on the east by Twenty-Third Street. Barrett was not aware that Santa Fe had decided to locate in the area and consequently realized little on the sale of his property to Macdonald and the other subdividers.

*Tewksbury Avenue* was named for Dr. Jacob M. Tewksbury, who owned 2,200 acres of land in Richmond that was originally part of Rancho San Pablo. When the great land case was settled Dr. Tewksbury was awarded 1,200 additional acres. His widow, Emily, sold 118 acres to Pacific Coast Oil (now Standard Oil) for their new refinery. Dr. Tewksbury was responsible for building two dikes and the first road between what is now Point Richmond and the mainland.

*Castro Avenue* was named for Francisco Castro, who was the first white man to settle in Contra Costa County. Castro was awarded 18,000 acres from the Spanish Government for loyal service. The Rancho San Pablo extended from the present Contra Costa-Alameda County line to Pinole.

*Nicholl Park, Nicholl Avenue and Nicholl Nob* are named for the Nicholl family. John Nicholl purchased 567 acres from the Castros, and when the Rancho San Pablo land dispute was decided, Nicholl exchanged 400 acres of his land for 150 acres in Point Richmond. In 1899 he sold 57 acres to Santa Fe for their terminal, for \$80,000. Nicholl's sons John H. and Joseph continued to manage the estate after their father died in 1914 and greatly affected the course of Richmond's history.

*Rumrill Boulevard* was named for Azro Rumrill of San Pablo, who was a member of the Board of Trustees and worked hard for local schools.



*Helms Junior High* was named in honor of Walter T. Helms, the first District Superintendent of the Richmond School District. known as the Father of Richmond Schools, he served as superintendent from 1903 until he retired in 1949.

*Nystrom School* was named for the President of the School Board in Richmond's early days, John Nystrom. He owned a ranch on the south side of Richmond.

*Harry Ells High School* was named for another School Board trustee. He lived in Stege.

*Peres School* was named in honor of John Peres, the third trustee on the School Board in 1901, with Nystrom and Ells.

*Downer Junior High School* was named for Edward M. Downer, the founder of the Mechanics Bank.

#### Sources of information:

Cole, Susan D., *Richmond - Windows to the Past*, 1980.

Whitnah, Joseph C., *A History of Richmond, California*, 1944.

Pt. Richmond History Association, *This Point in Time*, 1980.

- Michelle Brown

## AN INTERVIEW WITH

# Marian Downey

John Edward McMenamin brought his wife, Mary, and his two little daughters, Marian and Ruth, to Richmond in 1908. He was one of many Irishmen who came from Whiting, Indiana to work in the new refinery here. His brother, Patrick Henry, came from the Pratt Refinery in New York. Mary's brothers, Michael and John Carey also abandoned Whiting for Richmond at about the same time; Michael's daughter, now Clarice Stribley, came along as well.

In 1914 the McMenamins bought the house Marian now occupies at Crest Avenue. Marian's parents stayed on at Crest Avenue after Marian's marriage to John P. Downey. Also there until 1960 was "Henny" or "Patty", Patrick Henry McMenamin.

While on her first "tour of duty" on Crest Avenue, Marian received her education at the old Point Richmond School and at Richmond High School on Twenty-third Street. Following graduation, she took a job as a bookkeeper at the new Woolworth's on Macdonald Avenue. Marian's next job was at Winehaven, in the office, she hastens to point out.

Following her marriage to John Downey, who was with Santa Fe, she left the Crest home for various other houses locally, finally moving to Needles where her husband became chief clerk in 1941. Later transfers took them to Barstow and San Bernardino.

Their son, Allan, attended school here and in southern California. He returned to U.C. Berkeley where he played drum in the U.C. Band. Marian says that his interest in music began when Virginia Bryant gave him a drum at age five. He now plays with the U.C. Berkeley Alumni Band.

Allan married Jean Francis (daughter of Henry and Ethel Francis of Point Richmond) and pursued an army career. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel a couple of years ago, and now he and his wife and two of six in Martinez.

Pat, Marian's daughter, also attended school in southern California and is now working at a law firm in San Francisco.

Son Allen's military career has afforded Marian unusual travel opportunities; she has visited throughout Europe, Hawaii and, of course, Ireland.

In addition to her rich sense of humor, Marian is very creative. She used to paint, sing, dance and play the piano. She, Virginia Bryant and Zelda Chapin entertained the local lodges with songs, skits and piano-logues. She has long been active in Club Mendelssohn, first as a pianist and later as an



actress. The Club at one time staged elaborate productions. Marian served as organist and choir director at Our Lady of Mercy



Catholic Church, and continues to participate actively in the West Side Improvement Club.

Marian expresses great fondness for Point Richmond. She was delighted to come "home" to Crest Avenue in 1960 following her husband's death, and she points out that many people who leave ultimately return. Her recollections of childhood here suggest a near idyllic existence, though one suspects Marian would have had fun anywhere. She speaks of saving money for Saturday dances at Kozy Kove where there was a coin-operated player piano, and a good hardwood floor that was polished by dancing feet. Marian reports that that same fine hardwood was recycled and now comprises the better part of two houses at Fifth and Bissell.

In those days, electronic sound reproduction devices hadn't yet made an appearance, so folks learned to play the latest tunes on the piano. Marian had a jump on her friends, because her uncle Henny arranged with New York relatives to send her the latest music publications, so she had them in her hands well before they made an appearance in the local stores.

A personal note: Marian is still vigorous and a "go getter"; she's been champion quilt-ticket salesperson for the last two years, and the best neighbor anyone could ask for.

—Rosemary Corbin

## 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.*

### PART II

## LAW, ORDER, AND GROWING PAINS . .

In the booming first decade of the century, law enforcement in embryonic Point Richmond was more fantasy than fact. Jimmy Arnold, the first Chief of Police, operated out of a 12 by 12-foot shack in back of the fire house. This was the "City Jail", where an occasional culprit from the bawdy houses ("Little Barbary Coast") just down Railroad Avenue was confined. Also on the Police 'Force' was Harry Livingston. John Murray was Constable until he lost out, in the 1910 elections, to John Gregory, who sported a waist-long beard. Mostly, however, the people took law in their own hands. Lee Windrem and a chap named Grady were the only lawyers in town and they nearly starved, for matters of litigation were often settled with fist or firearm. Pay days at the refinery always triggered a big night in the town's many and varied amusement parlors. Gambling stakes ran into the thousands of dollars and drunken gun fights were commonplace. And, since the Point boasted no cemetery, the demise of a citizen (from the above or natural causes) entailed a post mortem pilgrimage to the cemetery in Martinez.

Bill Foster was a charter member of the Point's first Fire Company, along with most of the prominent townsmen, such as Joe Willits (Fire Chief), Dick Spiersch, Oliver Wylie, John Murray, Harry Marland (who was first president of the volunteer group), Ed McDuff, Joe Black (the coal dealer, naturally) and others. Their equipment was a two-wheeler hose cart housed in the Park Place Firehouse, which then was built on 'stilts', as the tide washed under it twice a day. The City Council paid \$5.00 to the first rig to hook on to the cart and haul it to a fire.

Bill Foster well remembers one of his "big moments" when, in his words, "There was a fire started one afternoon in the Chinese Laundry next to Ed McDuff's hotel. I



hooked on the fire cart to pull it to the blaze, but my horse balked and would not budge an inch. Well, by the time the men got the cart to the fire, no more laundry. Just a bare lot!"

There were some exciting (and trying) times as the town's population grew to 1500. Rain, sometimes accompanied by 80 mile winds, fell hard and lasted for days. The town (as Foster recalls) "was a mess. Women wore no high heel shoes, but rather knee-length boots to maneuver in the mud." John Nicholl laid out streets all over Nicholl Nob, but no one built there. It was, as Foster says, "a flop."

People used to walk through the railroad tunnel on fair days, to the old "Cliff House" (Keller's) and go boating. Or they could continue to Ferry Point and catch a ride on the old riverboat "Ocean Wave" for the one-hour ride to San Francisco.

#### TOWNSFOLK OF EARLY POINT . . .

While we are sifting Bill Foster's matchless memory for the Point "way back when" let's recall a few more of the townspeople who helped start Our Town toward its present pleasant place in our lives. Like Jimmy McVittie, once the City Manager, but then a refinery worker who liked to sit around and spin yarns with the boys in George Drew's Cigar Store. Or John Roth, the Justice of the Peace, a picture of punctilio in his long-tailed frock coat. And John Matson, who opened the Point's first bakery. Matson brought his nephew, Andy Nelson, (of the present Nelson's Market on Macdonald Avenue) to the Point all the way from Germany and the young Nelson learned to speak English while driving the bakery delivery wagon.

Coleman and Sons ran the town's first wood and coal yard, on Standard Avenue.

W.T.Foster, sire of Bill Foster, ran the Prestolite Plant, which formulated illuminating gas for the auto lights of that era. This venture was located in the swampy area back of Curry's livery stable, near the railroad and next to the Tilden and Eakle Lumber Yard. Tilden, as older residents know, went on to bigger things. Eakle died in his home atop Washington Avenue.

About this time a building boom started and houses sprouted up everywhere. Land (let us shed a bitter tear) was dirt cheap, and good lots went for \$50, with \$5 down and \$5 per month consummating the deal. A Dr. Tewksbury owned much of the undeveloped east side of the Point and did well enough from the sale of his holdings to have a street named after him.

The cost of living index in those halcyon days was mighty low. If a family spent at the grocer's counter to the extent of \$5, the delivery wagon was needed to cart purchases home. Today (as Foster puts it) "you carry \$5 worth of groceries in a no.12 paper sack!"

The townsfolk of the day were a sociable lot. The local mecca for communal cavorting was Shad's Hall, a large semi-public structure on Washington Avenue, where twice weekly the Point's genial gentry and their ladies gathered for a good old fashioned dancing party. On other nights the hall was used for lodge meetings.

#### SHAKY LIVING CONDITIONS . . .

Point Richmond began to flourish with the start of the century. Industry brought jobs and money to the village and it swiftly took on a quality of permanence and self-sufficiency. But the same industry that inspired the town's coming of age was, by its very nature, the cause of continual apprehension on the part of the citizenry. To quote Bill Foster: "The people of the town had



fear in their hearts at all times. First the powder works in Pinole would blow up and shake the town. Then the one in Giant would go off and shake it some more. And about every month an agitator would blow its top at the Refinery and out went most of the windows in town. Then came the 'Big Shake' the 1906 earthquake. Hills rolled and chimneys came down and the Santa Fe roundhouse folded up (also a lot of brickwork at the Refinery, especially chimneys. The refugees came pouring into the town and tents went up on every lot, with people cooking in the streets and sleeping here or there."

Despite all this the Point kept right on growing. Dr. Abbott (1907) built the first hospital, a two story building on the corner of Santa Fe and West Richmond, to which a third story was added later. The City Hall was erected on Washington Avenue in 1909. It was also of two stories, and as Foster notes, "regular Councilmen were elected and seated." However, these gentlemen, when seated, apparently did nothing about the Point's water supply, which "was vile, tasting like rotten eggs and very hard. It was piped from wells in San Pablo. Dead cats were found in it and sickness was on the go from it." It was some years before 'good' water was piped from Oakland.

### THE BIG FIGHT . . .

"Then (Bill Foster again) came the Big Time! Pat Dean got the Nelson-Wolgast fight for Point Richmond. They built a big outdoor ring seating 20,000 persons. It rained hard the night before the fight and kids came over from Frisco selling newspapers to sit on for 25 cents each. The fight was on and it started to rain again. They fought 42 rounds in the rain. Wolgast won and after the fight he ran to the dressing room back of Pat Dean's saloon covered from head to toe with mud. Lots of cars came from San Francisco

and Oakland and when the owners went to get them they were all down to the floorboards with mud. George Dimmick, the express man, was all the next day pulling autos out to dry land with his horses. Big day for him! The town jumped from 2,000 to 20,000 that day. It was a banner day for the saloons, and for me. For I saw the whole fight from a nearby telephone pole!"

### FINAL FILLIPS . . .

In the pre-World War I years the Point responded vigorously to the stimulus of industrial growth. The Standard Oil Company built a big factory, employing 200 women, out at Point Orient; and shortly thereafter the forerunner of today's long wharf was installed to handle tanker cargos. The S.P. and the Santa Fe Railroads ran a spur, called the "Belt Line" out to Point Orient to carry workers to and from their jobs. This venture brought more industry in the form of a large winery at 'Winehaven', which offered "free wine and eats" to the weekend patrons of the bay excursion boats so popular in that time. A huge "shrimp camp", run by Chinese, also operated near Winehaven. Tons of the delectable Bay shrimp were brought in there and dried for the export market. Also located in the general area were a rock quarry and three brickyards (Richmond Brick, Union Brick, and Central Brick) which manufactured the first brick in the state.

As late as 1905 San Pablo (the town) was bigger than the Point and Billie Belding's San Pablo Grocery made daily deliveries to customers in 'Our Town'. But then Julius Stiefvater went into the grocery business on Richmond Avenue and soon Belding's deliveries ceased. Tony Silva was the town's first barber (shave and haircut 30 cents). Tony later moved to Richmond and took up undertaking with Burt Curry.



A Mr. Bly and Tom Conn were early "top-of-the-hill" settlers. One could stand on the heights in those days and look out over the present Richmond, seeing only a vast swamp "with a tent here and a house or two there." But soon the city of Richmond began to take shape. To quote Bill Foster, "The real estate sharks came in droves selling lots. Some of them you would go out in a row boat to see. They had long poles with the lot numbers, driven into the swamps around Bissell and Chanslor Avenues. Men like Dr. Blake with the Post Office and Drug Store at Fifth and Ohio; Mr. McEwen, who had the first town Water Works on Florida Street; The Dooling Brothers, in the grading business; hotel man Theo Marcollo at First and Macdonald; George Swartz' Bike Shop between Tenth and Eleventh Streets; "old man" Burke's hardware store (he moved from the Point); Rhodes' tailor shop at Sixth and Barrett; and Col. Rheem, Standard Oil Refinery Superintendent, who installed a street car line (flat cars with benches) from the refinery to Sixteenth and Macdonald; and many others, all had a hand in shaping the new Richmond, and in slowing down the Point.

Thus, by the end of World War I, the Point had lapsed into a lingering lethargy from which it has only recently awakened. And, as for Bill Foster, let us close these chapters with his own recollection of, perhaps his finest hour — at the opening of Richmond's first theater. Bill speaking: "At the opening night they took a vote on stage as to who was the most popular young man and girl in town. I, Bill Foster, was chosen as the man of the town, and a girl, who worked in the Sixth Street Post Office, was chosen. I forget her name, but boy, she was pretty! I took her to a dance at Maple Hall one rainy night and packed her home in my arms to save her white shoes from the mud!" Those were the days!?

## 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".

### POINT RICHMOND BAPTIST CHURCH ..

Sometimes soft and sweet, sometimes loud and lively, the sounds of Christian music still echoes every Sunday around our hallowed old church, just as they have every Sunday for the past eighty years.

Imagine a time eighty years back, right here in our beloved village. The clop-clop of horses on Washington Avenue has been replaced with the clatter of Diesel-powered Mercedes-Benz. The Point Richmond Baptist Church in 1900 was but a dream, but not an impossible one (nothing is impossible to a Baptist!) The property on which our church was built, together with the park lot on the corner next door are first recorded as being part of a huge land grant known as San Pablo Rancho. Later, in 1901, this parcel became part of the Nicholl subdivision. In 1902 the church lot (extending up Washington to Scenic Avenue), the corner lot adjacent, and all the lots on the south side of Nicholl Avenue between Washington and Santa Fe were purchased by Sam and Rose Curry. Their old home still stands at the corner of Santa Fe and Nicholl Avenue, beautifully maintained.

In 1903, when the original eight members of this Church were meeting in the old Henly house on Tunnel Avenue, and voted to acquire the two lots on Washington and Nicholl Avenues — the park lot and the lot where the Church now stands — and the First Baptist Church of Richmond (now the Point Richmond Baptist Church) began to build.



The children's playground on the lot adjacent to the church is officially named Janice Playlot -- after the daughter of Sam and Rose Curry -- who used to play there.

Now it is Christmas 1910, and our building houses a busy, active church and we have made a beautiful park adjacent. I quote, in part, from a deed recorded December 27, 1910, Vol.161, page 190, Deed 32, between the City of Richmond, a municipal corporation, and the First Baptist Church, a religious corporation -- in which we gave the park lot to the City:

"Witnesseth: That the said party of the first part (The Church), for and in consideration of the sum of One Dollar Gold Coin of the United States of America, to it in hand paid, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged . . . all that certain lot, piece, parcel, or tract of land situated, lying and being . . . to-wit: Beginning at a point on the south-westerly line of Lot One, Block H, Nicholl Subdivision . . ." And that lot goes for \$150,000 today! (Baptists never have any business sense!) But many Point Richmond kids have enjoyed that little park through the years.

And whenever you want to join us in some old-time hymns and newer gospel songs -- we sing them all, every Sunday.

—Roy Jones

## POINT METHODIST CHURCH . . .

*The following is a continuation of the first records of the Methodist Church in Point Richmond, as recorded in the RECORD, and presumably written by the secretary, L. T. Gorsuch, in 1900. The minutes were begun in the November issue of This Point in Time Newsletter, Vo. I, no.4.*

"On November 11th services were held in Richards Hall and Nov. 18 the following

were elected officials of M.E. Sunday School. Superintendent A. Odell, Assistant S—W. N. Younglove, Sec. Oscar Dahl, Treas. J. O. Dahl, teachers A. Odell, Mrs. E.C. Redding. The first evening service was held Nov. 18 with 16 present. On Nov. 23 the coast was swept by a fearful storm in which all the tents and some houses of Richmond was (sic) blown down and people took refuge in halls and half finished houses. The Critchett Hotel was a storm retreat. Nov. 25 had no service—the Hall being occupied by storm sufferers. Dec. 2 a man was painting in Hall and would not give off and Mr. and Mrs. Kritchett (sic) gave use of Hotel Parlor for church services. Dec. 9th Mrs. C.O. Cox (so called) was sick in Hall and pastor took service to his cottage on Richmond Ave. Had S.S. and morn and eve services. 23 present in the eve in room 12 X 16. On the 31st day of October Rev. W.N. Younglove started a subscription paper to secure money for the erection of a new church resultting (sic) as follows:

O.J. Dahl — \$5.00	L. T. Gorsuch — \$10.00
W.N. Younglove — \$10.00	Lyman Naugle — \$5.00
Frank Critchett — \$20.00	Wm Mintzer — \$5.00
D.S. Griffith — \$5.00	C.A. Odell — \$5.00
Wm. Richards — \$5.00	Mrs. Emma McCool — \$5.00
Western Land Co. — \$5.00	W. T. Morgan — \$5.00
Rev. J. Kirby, PE — \$10.00	Central M.E. Church — \$34.00

Dec. 3 pastor was before the Preachers meeting in San Francisco and they raised \$46.75.

"On Dec. 23 were to have gone back to Richards Hall. The Pastor saw Mr. and Mrs. Cox and they gave them consent (they lived in a part of Hall) and so advertised. But as Sunday School time formed they had gone away taking key with them so took all the services back to the shack.

"On Dec. 15, 1900 Mr. William Critchett assisted the pastor in staking out the ground for the church building (Where? - written in margin). The first money having been paid Mr. Mintzer on Dec. 12 -- \$5.00 to secure the site. Mr. Mintzer gave one lot (\$350) and



discounted others to \$400. On Dec. 17th, 1900 the ground was broken for new chapel, the Pastor doing the work and nearly completing the trench for foundation.

"On the 3rd, 1901 of Jan the worst storm swept the coast that had been known for years blew down the Cox house opposite the church lots and also Lyman Naugle's store house and the - - - wash house.

"On Jan. 5th 1901, the Bill of lumber was given to W.H.Johnston of Stege for the construction of the church and on the 7th the Pastor appointed the following brethren as a Building Committee - E.W.Redding, Mr.O.T.Higgins, A.Odell, O.J.Dahl and Dr. L.T.Gorsuch. And twenty (\$20.00) dollars was paid by Rev. W.N.Younglove on the church lots and Dr. John Kirby paid balance of \$40.00 bring (sic) \$15.00 and the contract was made over to him.

"The first 15th the Pastor called the first meeting of the building committee, but as E.W.Redding and Dr.L.T.Gorsuch was all that came could do nothing so an other was called and held on Jan. 17th. Present Dr.L.T. Gorsuch, E.W.Redding, secretary, treasurer at which writing plans were adopted and pastor ordered to let contract to remove the dirt for a basement. On Friday Jan. 18th the first lumber was put on the ground.

"On the 21st at a committee meeting Mr. Coalman was given the contract to remove dirt at 30 cents per yard. Present E.W. Redding, O.T.Higgins, L.T.Gorsuch. Pastor in chair."

-Mid Dornan

## **RICHMOND BAKERY**

Washington and Park Avenues

**BREAD, PIES AND CAKES.**

**J. Matsen, Proprietor.**

Ad from a 1902 newspaper

## **RECENT HISTORY - THE MILLER - KNOX REGIONAL SHORELINE PARK**

### **FIRST OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE PARK - ITS BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

*An Idea in 1947 - a promise in 1964 -  
an unmet 1969 deadline - promises,  
proposals, studies, recommendations,  
delays - in the realization of the  
shoreline park in Point Richmond.*

Since Richmond was born and has largely existed to serve industry, it is not surprising that until very recently there was no public access to the Bay along the entire thirty-three miles of city shoreline, from Point Isabel to Point Pinole. With the exception of the mile of residential zoning at Point Richmond and a sixty-foot boat launching ramp, the shoreline was zoned for industry, although much of it, including the hills and flat land at Point Richmond was undeveloped.

In 1947 plans for an aquatic park at Point Richmond were first proposed and were included in Richmond's Interim Master Plan. Between 1947 and 1954 the City made a beginning towards acquiring underwater property in the area, and \$48,000 was set aside for eventual development of a small boat harbor.

In 1954 when State tideland oil revenues were made available for waterfront parks, the Aquatic Park seemed about to become a reality. But the idea was strongly opposed by the Standard Oil Company on the basis of possible interference near the 'Long Wharf' and the plans were shelved. The \$48,000 fund was diverted to other purposes.

Ten years later, in 1964, as an inducement to Contra Costa County to join Alameda County in the East Bay Regional Park



District, Contra Costa was promised a 200-acre West County waterfront park by June, 1969. The East Bay Regional Park District pledged that \$100,000 a year of Contra Costa County tax funds would be set aside for four years to provide money to purchase land for the park. In 1964 \$400,000 seemed a princely sum, and quite adequate to make a good beginning at land acquisition. Point Pinole was, at the time, made available for purchase by the gunpowder manufacturers who had owned it, and was proposed as the park site. But before any arrangement could be consummated, the entire property was purchased by Bethlehem Steel Company, whose stated intent was to develop it extensively as an integrated steel production plant.

With Point Pinole eliminated, various alternate West Contra Costa shoreline sites were reviewed and evaluated, and in 1966 the Point Richmond area was chosen by virtue of its size (large enough to qualify for a regional park), climate, variety of terrain, superlative hill views, and accessibility to the public in a heavily populated area.

This site of hills and shoreline had the enthusiastic support of the General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District, Mr. William Penn Mott, but when Mr. Mott was called to Sacramento to head the State Recreation and Parks Department, the attention of the new manager, Mr. Luckman, was absorbed by other priorities. The Regional Park Directors, who were understandably eager to acquire still available untouched wilderness areas deep in the county, were chary of the idea of spending taxpayers' dollars on highly priced industrial land whose potential they could not envision. So activity ground to a virtual halt until 1968. At that time, frustrated by the lack of progress, the Park Committee of the Point Richmond Civic Group disaffiliated from the

Group to become the Contra Costa Shoreline Parks Committee. The Committee took it upon themselves to remind the Park District of its pledge to Contra Costa County by launching a vigorous campaign of speeches, trips, motion pictures, parties, newspaper articles, publications (the "Tiny Tennis Shoes Press"), television shows and other means of informing the public. In addition they attended all Regional Park Board meetings.



In 1969, since negotiations by the Park District seemed to have stalled with the Santa Fe Railway Company (which owned all of the flat land and much of the hill land at Point Richmond), the group communicated directly with Mr. John S. Reed, president of Santa Fe, and discussions were promptly reopened. Eventually, after many fits and starts and a few more letters to Mr. Reed, Santa Fe agreed to sell 8.5 acres, at \$10,000 an acre, on the flat land between the Bay and Garrard Boulevard, with permission for a bridge approach to the shore over the tracks. In addition the Santa Fe generously contributed forty-four additional acres of underwater lots along the railroad tracks, plus a strip 2800 feet long and forty-eight feet wide, linking the new park site with the city's lovely little Keller's Beach park. opened in 1967.



While this was going on, the top of Nicholl Knob, long envisioned as the crowning peak of the amphitheater of hills embracing the park area, was threatened by unexpected East Bay Municipal Utility District plans to hollow it out for construction of a 500,000 gallon water tank. The owners of the hilltop lots, who had purchased it in 1962 to reserve it from potential development and preserve it for eventual park acquisition, now offered it to the Park District for the original purchase price plus the taxes paid over the years, stipulating only that the property revert to them if the District failed to use it for park purposes.

Though this offer was accepted, and the EBMUD graciously withdrew their tank plans, another crisis challenged the battered Shoreline Parks Committee when Regional Park District plans for elaborate development of the miniscule 8.5 acre park site were disclosed — plans which were quite contrary to the 'minimum development, maximum land acquisition' concepts which had consistently been urged. Matters were complicated in this situation, for with rising land costs and gradually inflating money, the \$400,000 which had originally been set aside for the Point Park out of County Park District tax funds, no longer seemed the 'princely sum' that it originally appeared. In a laudable effort to utilize the fund to maximum effect, the District had applied to various federal agencies for matching funds. This effort proved successful and matching fund grants were obtained from H.U.D. and Federal Land and Water Conservation. Unhappily, this money was designated for development of public oriented recreation, not for land purchase, and the Park District Directors made it very clear that no money was available in the District budget for further land acquisition, nor would be, unless a proposed tax increase was approved by the voters; a tax increase which would double

the existing district tax rate. For a time it seemed that the little 8.5 acres would be heavily and ornately developed in a style highly unsuitable for the peaceful majesty of the terrain, which though abused by industrial neglect, provides a unique oasis of peace, simplicity and beauty in its hill-and-shore relationship to the Bay. Vigorous community protest of the idea of elaborate development plans resulted in a series of public meetings at which citizens were urged to express their views on how they felt the park should be designed. The consensus was overwhelming that there should be a peaceful sanctuary with plenty of open space for people to move about, away from the pressures of the urban hubbub.

In 1971 the Park District contracted with the landscape design firm of Arbogast and Newton to work on plans for the park. To all those familiar with Keller's Beach, this appointment was a felicitous one, for Arbogast and Newton played a significant role in the graceful, ingenious design which made that small pocket-handkerchief of land much bigger (and available to more people) than it actually was. It seemed appropriate and fortunate that they were available to provide the same ambience to the larger adjoining area.

*Next Issue: Park Dedication & further development.*

*—Lucretia Edwards*

## Curry's Opera House Point Richmond

**2 BIG NIGHTS 2**  
Fri. and Sat. Dec. 12 and 13

**THE WESTON & HERBERT  
BIG VAUDEVILLE SHOW**

from  
a 1902  
newspaper



## UNITED STAND ON BUSES

Surprising unanimity was reached by all attending a meeting in the Community Center at 7:30 p.m. Monday, November 1, 1982 to protest the current AC Transit bus routes through town. In mutual agreement the Point Richmond Business Association, the Point Richmond Neighborhood Council and the Point Richmond History Association requested that AC Transit representatives discuss the problems publicly in the hope of concluding with an equitable solution.

The existing problems date to earlier days, when land fill connected this little island to the mainland, and made construction of buildings possible on the 'flat'. Then, with the exception of a possible heat wave, mud-laced citizens sloshed jauntily with horse and buggy through a town whose structures perched atop raised foundations, for obvious reasons. Necessity brought forth further filling and later paving of thoroughfares, raising the level of streets in the lower lying areas. However, the flat downtown district is still so close to sea level that heavy vehicles create a response similar to a minor earthquake. The intermittent vibrations of daily bus traffic endured by these buildings and narrow streets is unwarranted.

Park Place and Washington Avenue, neither of which has a bus stop, make a convenient turnaround loop for AC Transit. This route adds no substantial service to the community, but it does add a physical and aesthetic blight to an already congested area. The intersection of Washington and Standard Avenue, and especially Park Place and West Richmond Avenue, are visibly hazardous to the safety of pedestrians and vehicles, parked or moving. The "Dip", next to a crosswalk, jogs bus drivers and their passengers and sends foot traffic scurrying breathlessly to the sidewalks.



All suggestions for alternate routes were floored by the opposition of AC Transit representatives, with the exception of the following: The buses would turn right, onto Railroad Avenue, then left on Standard, making a U-turn in the triangle just before Castro Street, where the Marin Pumphouse stood before its removal about six months ago. This route would be advantageous to both AC Transit and Point Richmonders, resulting in fewer unexpected stops (remember the "Dips"), fuel savings, more accessible restaurants (for the bus drivers), and encompass a greater expanse of the town, to the advantage of those walking to bus stops. This might be a feasible solution to the 'ultimate goal' of removing buses from the center of town.

Supervisor Tom Powers is inquiring into ownership of the triangle and related information involved in this proposal.

—Roz Bury

## POINT RICHMOND PARKING DISTRICT

Parking has been perceived as a problem in the Point Richmond Business District for at least 15 years. A study by the Point Richmond Businessmen's Association (former name of the Point Richmond Business Association) in 1967 indicated a net deficit of 126 spaces and suggested that a portion of the Santa Fe Railroad right of way be acquired and developed to provide additional



parking.

Since 1967 the business district has continued to develop a higher intensity of use for existing buildings. Point Richmond restaurants have become a major luncheon attraction creating an extremely high parking demand during the noon hour. A consultant retained last year by the Point Richmond Business Association concluded that the business district had a net shortage of approximately 280 parking spaces. This conclusion was reached using criteria from national studies which have been compiled to assist both cities and businesses plan for optimum parking utilization. As a result of the parking shortage, patrons of Point Richmond businesses are being inconvenienced, and the businesses themselves are probably not reaching their full potential. No one really knows how many people are taking their business elsewhere because they do not want to hunt for a parking place or walk through the mud once they find one.

In a related development, Santa Fe let it be known about two years ago that it was their intention to fence off that portion of right of way directly east of Railroad Avenue which currently serves as unofficial "overflow" parking for many businesses, commuters and employees.

Realizing that we were not only experiencing a parking shortage but also that we were in some real danger of actually losing about 84 parking spaces along Railroad Avenue, the Association began once again, in 1979 to work for the creation of a Railroad Avenue parking area. It has been a long and protracted effort which appears to be nearing success.

First the parking study was conducted, and then petitions were secured from owners of 60 per cent of the land area to be included in the assessment district. Bond counsel was retained by the City of Richmond

and plans and specifications drawn up by the Public Works Department. The improvements will be paid for by selling tax-free bonds amortized over 15 or 20 years. All the property owners in the business district will be assessed for a portion of the cost based on the parking requirements of the businesses on their property and the amount of on-site parking currently available. Properties nearest Railroad Avenue will pay more than those located farther away.

As properties with a low parking requirement are developed to more intensive uses, a mechanism in the district ordinance will require owners to contribute a fair share to the district to be used to acquire additional parking sites or to defray a portion of the assessment to others who have already paid a fair share.

The plan calls for developing a strip of paved, landscaped and lighted parking along the east side of Railroad Avenue to accommodate 84 vehicles. The project will not only provide much needed parking but will also substantially improve the appearance of the whole east side of Point Richmond as it appears to visitors and residents approaching from the east on West Richmond Avenue. The lighting will provide additional security, and the landscaping which includes flowering vines growing on a six-foot high fence will help screen railroad operations.

If the current schedule holds, the City Council will call for bids at the December 13 meeting. The bids will be opened early in January, and a final public hearing held on January 23, 1983. Shortly thereafter, the bonds will be sold and construction commenced. The current estimated cost which includes land acquisition, construction, design and engineering, legal fees, miscellaneous expenses, bond discounts and contingencies is approximately \$180,000.

Tom Butt president,  
Point Richmond Business  
Association



**KEEP A GOOD THING GOING —  
WEST SIDE BRANCH LIBRARY  
— EST. 1909**

While the Main Library was in its formative stages, the West Side Improvement Club was busy establishing a Point Richmond Library in the old city hall building on Washington Avenue. Within a few months it had a collection of five hundred volumes. A year later this collection became a branch library for the proposed city library (it became known officially as the West Side Branch of the Richmond Public Library in January, 1910.)

**ELVES WORKING  
AT WASHINGTON SCHOOL**

Santa Claus is coming to Washington School and heralding the Christmas season is the second session of Washington School After School.

All our little "elves" will be making felt ornaments with Glenda Kretzner, doing dough art with Donna Roselius, learning to bake Christmas breads and cookies with Gwynne Tysell or finding out how Christmas is celebrated in other lands in the International Christmas Crafts class taught by Diane Glower of the Richmond Art Center.

The sports program will continue with outdoor sports, weather permitting, and indoor sports on inclement days. Our athletes will have a chance to improve their sportsmanship with team activities like football and baseball, and can build their individual skills in track, tumbling and gymnastics.

Our emerging scientists will have a chance to explore the mysteries of nature in Bob Dodson's Science class, and to experience nature first hand on Nature Walks to Nicholl Nob and Keller's Beach with Shirley Butt.

Washington School After School is a terrific program designed to supplement the daily learning in the classroom in special small classes. Anyone who has a special skill or interest that they would like to share with our children in a small group, please contact Susan Burman at 234-5063 or Linda Mitchell at 234-6159. Wouldn't it be a wonderful Christmas gift to share your specialty with children.

*—Judy Spediacci*

**WEST SIDE LIBRARY  
HOURS CHANGE**

Although the number of open hours must remain the same, the West Side Library is changing its schedule in response to requests for evening hours.

Please make use of your local library — the circulation records are used to determine the number of hours per week that it may be available to the public.

The new hours as of November 29 are:

Mondays: 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Tuesdays: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and  
5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Wednesdays: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**POINTS IN THE FUTURE**

**BAPTIST CHURCH NEWS . . .**

On October 24, members, friends and relatives enjoyed a Point Richmond Baptist Church picnic at the Rod and Gun Club. Delicious food, fun games, and a good time was had by all who attended.

On Sunday, December 19, at 7:00 p.m. the Point Richmond Baptist Church and the First United Methodist Church will hold their annual joint Christmas Pageant. This year, the program will be held at the Baptist Church at 304 Washington Avenue, and the



program will be put on by the Sunday School children from both churches. Each year the children do an outstanding performance, and the public is invited to attend and to enjoy the fun and fellowship that two neighboring churches have enjoyed for many years.

The public is also invited to attend our weekly services held each Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. for Sunday School and 11:00 for the morning service.

—Pam Wilson

### MORE DATES TO NOTE:

Friday & Saturday evenings, until Dec. 18 —

“Born Yesterday” at the Masquers.

Matinees on Dec. 5 and 12.

Reservations: call 526-1038

Dec. 19 — 7 p.m. Methodist/Baptist Christmas pageant.

Dec. 22 — (Wednesday) Caroling by the Methodist Church. Anyone in the community interested should contact Mid Dornan (234-5334) and if you have someone you want caroled, the group will TRY to honor your request.

Jan. 20 — Deadline for articles for the Feb. newsletter. (Send articles to 212 Bishop Alley, or leave with Trannie at the Richmond Supply Co. on W. Richmond Ave.

Jan. 27 — 7:30 p.m. - Linsley Hall. Next meeting of the History Association. Tom Ryan of the Richmond Museum Association will be featured speaker.



“This Point in Time” is published by the Point Richmond History Association, 212 Bishop Alley, Point Richmond, CA 94801.

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

Illustrations: Roz Bury, Donna Roselius, Layout: Jodi Roselius

Articles for the next issue are due by January 20, 1983. 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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### TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (CHECK ONE)

<input type="checkbox"/> SINGLE	\$10.00 *	NAME _____
<input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR CITIZEN (65+)	5.00 *	
<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY	20.00 *	ADDRESS _____
<input type="checkbox"/> ORGANIZATION	25.00 *	
<input type="checkbox"/> HISTORY-PRESERVER	50.00 *	
<input type="checkbox"/> HISTORY-MAKER	100.00 *	TEL NO _____