

# CAMEL



# TRACKS

Year 2008

Phone (707)745-5435 email: [info@beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](mailto:info@beniciahistoricalmuseum.org) website: [beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](http://beniciahistoricalmuseum.org)

July/Aug.

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*Membership*

The mission of the Benicia Historical Museum is to engage the community in the evolving history of Benicia and the Arsenal and their influence in the development of our country.

The Museum complex is the center where history is seen, enjoyed and preserved. Through exhibits, events and educational programs we enlighten the public about the history of this unique city.

*Revised and adopted 2006*

## *COME TO THE GARDEN PARTY*

It won't be quite like Ricky Nelson's trip to the Garden Party back in the early 70's but there will be room for reminiscing and visiting with old friends – especially friends of the Benicia Historical Museum. So many of you have waited so patiently for this day and it is finally here. We are celebrating in a



big way – we want to share with our friends throughout the city and the Bay Area as well as the state and the whole world.

This is a momentous occasion when we dedicate this beautiful garden to the memory of Paul and Catherine Spenger who were very special friends of the museum. Their family and friends generously donated to a fund for a memorial. The museum dedicated funds to the project and after many years of planning, permitting and now months of construction we are proud to say, "We did it!"

The garden dedication will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, the 6th. We are hoping that surviving relatives of the Spengers will be here to celebrate with us. Immediately following that you will be treated to Lois Flood doing Isadora Duncan historic dances. There are many other activities that will enhance the celebration. As you know, the Hunley will be on display for the weekend. The Industrial Exhibit will be opened and dedicated.

Also included will be an antique doll exhibit. The museum and the Powder Magazine will be open. We also are expecting to have a Civil War encampment to give you a greater sense of the history we are protecting for you.

There will be activities for the kids. Adobe brick making will be provided as well as grinding corn and roping the steer. Children under 12 will be admitted free. The donations for all others will be \$10.00 per day for Saturday and Sunday which will include admission to the museum, powder magazine, Hunley, Industrial Exhibit and all activities including the concerts and the doll exhibit.

## *The Museum Welcomes our New Members*

Diane Lowe Pinkham  
Faustino



Mike & Gayle

Ioakimedes



Hilda Lopez

## *Barracks*

Daniel & Becky Purdy

## *Camel Corps*

Rodin Mohammed

## *Patron*

Jim & Roberta Garrett

## *Supporting*

Mark Brackett



Allen Green

## *Museum Docents*

Megan Ching

Brita Bautin

Brad Bogel

Kimble Goodman

Elly Harkins

Kathryn Heyer

Debbie Johnson

Gloria Lambousy

Larry Lauber

Jim Lessenger

Jeff Matthews

Elizabeth Murphy

Lorraine Patten

Dominique Pongun

Ron Rice

Bruce Robinson

Kyleigh Suro

Eve Thorne

Jim Trimble

Phyllis Malicki

Chris Valentino

## OUR WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS



If you look around the museum, you will be unable to find anything that has been done without volunteer help. People often ask how we manage to get things done. "Our

volunteers" is the answer we give. Everyone from the Board on down is a volunteer except for the Executive Director, Office Manager and Grounds keeper.

There are some volunteers who are so regular that they are seen as permanent non-employee employees. With that in mind, we hope that we can improve our recognition for these great people. Let's begin with our collections department, we could not have a museum without them. Their contributions have been in excess of four decades. Harry Wassmann, having been curator from the beginning till two years ago, passed the baton to Beverly Phelan who has been involved almost since she came to Benicia. Her husband Jim has been unfailing in his support and backup.

Kellie McCormick came as a volunteer over five years ago as an art history major. She is now completing her Masters in Museum studies. She is assisted by other volunteers. Roberta Garrett has been a long time, steady faithful collections person. Not only has she worked in collections but she assists her husband Jim Garrett in the many projects he has been doing for the last three years around the museum whether it is in cleaning out the building, organizing sale of surplus, constructing doorways or repairing tables and chairs. Louise Martin was so invaluable working in collections and volunteering in other areas that we couldn't resist asking her to be a Board member. She now serves on the Board and is doing a terrific job of managing the volunteers. Her organizational skills are phenomenal. Bob Kvasnicka is having a great time working with the camera collection, doing invaluable work in identifying and cataloging.

In addition to his work as intern, Chris Valentino puts in many hours on volunteer projects and his enthusiasm for all things historic is unbelievable. Along with his assistance is Eve Thorne who is volunteering on projects such as helping Dr. Lessenger in his research and as a docent. Dr. Jim Lessenger does countless hours in training docents, research and as a

Board member and he also is a good bar tender.

Jumping from Collections, I must mention here because of the time of the year, another valuable volunteer project. This year marks our third year of having a float in the Twilight Parade. With the expertise of Glenn Boatman, we produce a prize winning float that is not only timely but pertinent to the history of the day and the city of Benicia. This year our float concentrates on the Arsenal, not just as a military institution but as an important adjunct to industry where all things military were manufactured. It features the hardworking people who made it possible to transition to civilian days later on and it celebrates our museum as the keeper of Benicia's history. Thanks Glenn and all who took part in the float.

The entire Camel Tracks edition would not be enough to write about all the great work our volunteers do. You will hear from us again on this subject and in the meantime, we want all those we have mentioned and all of our other volunteers

to know that we appreciate all you do for us. Many thanks.

*Ann Hansen*

## Curator's Corner



In the last newsletter I mentioned that Matthew Turner's great grandson donated materials

on his great grandfather. Matthew Turner is one of the greatest historic figures in not only Benicia and the Bar Area, but in the country. I felt I needed to write about this great shipbuilder.

Matthew Turner was born in Ashtabula County, Ohio by Lake Erie in 1825. By 1847, while our town was being founded, he built the schooner GEORGE R. ROBERTS for service on Lake Erie. He came to California in 1850 via the Mississippi River, Isthmus of Panama.

In 1853, after having gold mined in

Big Oak Flat for three years, he built his first ship, the schooner TORANTO. For the next 15 years, he was a Pacific pioneer ship captain.

In 1856, he received an award by Queen Victoria for lifesaving at the Straits of Magellan. Several years later he discovered codfish in the Pacific in the Amur River region. He also discovered codfish three years later in Alaska, Shumagin Islands.

He built his first ship, the NAUTILUS, in 1868 and sailed to Tahiti in 17 days, bringing fresh fruit back to California in 19 days. He developed "Turner mainsail" a unique and distinctive West Coast and Pacific Rim sail rig.

By 1868, he opened his first shipyard in San Francisco at Brickyard Point, China Basin. He built 80 ships in 8 years there.

Matthew Turner came to Benicia in 1883 to build his ships. Benicia had bedrock to the water's edge for his ship's

ways. You can see these ways off 12<sup>th</sup> St. at about 5:00 p.m. He built another 154 ships, including the Galilee built in 1891. The bow sits behind our other Camel Barn.

In 1902, he received another award by the King of Norway for lifesaving on Malden Islands. He retired the next year after building over 240 wooden ships, an American record.

During the 1906 earthquake and fire his office on California Street in San Francisco was destroyed. He commissioned four more ships from his retirement funds to rebuild San Francisco. He died at the age of 84 in Berkeley.

Matthew Turner was the most prolific sailing shipbuilder in American history. He was a Bay Area legacy second to none among notables such as Levi Strauss, A. P. Giannini, Leland Stanford, or others.

*Beverly Phelan*

## THE INVASION OF THE YOUNG

This invasion, we welcome! We stand in awe of these young people who make our heads swirl with all their knowledge and dedication. For years, Valero has provided us with a stipend to hire an intern for the summer. Once in a while we have been able to supplement with another intern. This summer we are fortunate to have two interns and two wonderful volunteer interns.



Brad Bogel, Katie Heyer, Chris Valentino and Eve Thorne

Christopher Valentino is helping in the Collections Department where he is immersed in everything historical – research, scanning, accessioning and anything Beverly and Kellie may need help with. He is especially appreciated because of the extra work involved with opening the Industrial Exhibit. Katie Heyer is assistant to the Director and is helping with preparations for the many activities involved in the September celebration and general administration of the Museum. She has been a long time volunteer and is a trained docent. Chris has a year left at Benicia High and Katie is headed to Davis to start her college career. He is also a trained docent.

What a blessing our two volunteer interns are! Eve Thorne has become involved in research with Jim Lessenger. She also is on the committee working on the Living Histories program. Eve is a college student who is home for the summer. She is contributing ten hours a week. We appreciate all her efforts. Then we have Brad Bogel, our last year's intern who has just graduated from Benicia High and is heading to Cal Poly. Brad has been volunteering throughout the year even though he was carrying a very heavy academic schedule. He is helping prepare the float for the Twilight Parade and is always ready and willing to do whatever task is at hand. He is planning to help with the kids activities for the big weekend -- he loves the kids and they love him. Both Eve and Brad are trained docents.

## THE HUNLEY RETURNS



By popular demand the H. L. Hunley is returning to the Benicia Historical Museum. It will be an integral part of the celebration taking place September 5, 6, and 7th. There has been new research on the Hunley and our friends John Dangerfield and John Nevins will be returning to give us updates and information on this unique testimony to Civil War history. The Hunley Exhibit will be open on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and on Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

*The Hunley: "First submarine to sink an enemy ship in war"*



Eight men sat cramped inside the Hunley, a confederate Civil War submarine which looked much like a modern cigarette boat and cranked themselves underwater into the Atlantic Ocean. They were propelling a torpedo attached by a spar, which they would plant into a warship and then explode the torpedo. The Hunley would dive, escape the explosion, and return to its base. The Hunley had sunk twice before, the second time killing its inventor, H.L. Hunley. However, its proponents convinced the Confederate Generals that it could work.

On February 17, 1864, The H. L. Hunley did cause the sinking of the USS Housatonic, a union ship blockading Charleston, but the Hunley itself did not escape. It was lost and not until 130 years later was it found in Charleston Harbor and raised. Now it is the subject of extensive research, and a replica tours throughout the country.

Mary Marino

## WELCOME NEW DOCENTS

It takes interest and commitment to decide to become a docent. It is a great way to learn more about local history and it is a great way to volunteer at the museum. We have a growing team of docents. This month we have added six to our roles.

Dr Jim Lessenger trained the docents by giving them instruction, providing them with a manual and taking them on a tour of the facilities. The training usually takes two to three hours and is intensely interesting. After the candidates go through the training they are paired with experienced docents before they are on their own. If they are underage, they need to be with an adult but they still are responsible for the attention to the visitors. If students are in need of service hours, this is a good way to earn them.

We welcome to our ranks the following new docents: Megan Ching, Chris Valentino, Eve Thorne, Jeff Matthews, Kimble Goodman and Elly Harkins. This group more than any other we have trained represents the widest range of ages we have had. Congratulations to all of you and thanks to Jim for training you.



## INESTIMABLE VALUE

As a member of the *Benicia Historical Museum* you are aware of the exciting changes, events and programs currently underway, as well as those planned for our future – and we need your help!

Volunteers play a critical role in helping support programs and events that allow the museum to preserve and share Benicia's unique history.

There are several volunteer opportunities available for fun, events this summer and beyond! We hope you will consider sharing your time, talent and support as volunteer at one of more of the following:

- **The Hunley in Benicia – September 5-7, 2008**  
*Setup, tickets, traffic control, event support, cleanup*
- **A Taste of Pasta Dinner and Auction - November 1, 2008**  
*Setup, transportation, tickets, auction support, servers, cleanup*
- **Events - Supports all concerts and museum activities.**  
*Setup, decoration, tickets, serve refreshments, cleanup*
- **Docents**  
Greets visitors at the museum, answers questions, highlights new exhibits

If you'd like more information on these events or are interested in joining the growing team of volunteers and members, please contact: **Louise Martin: 707.746.7271, or email [bhmvolutters@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bhmvolutters@sbcglobal.net)**

Thank you for your time and support!

## TEN GUN SALUTE to Mary Marino



Let's fire away to salute Mary Marino. Mary has put her considerable expertise to work at all things Benicia Historical Museum. She is our Education Chair and has worked with volunteers to analyze and refocus our elementary education program. She has been tireless in her scheduling of personnel to cover all bases. Her group has come up with innovative ideas and has done well in educating the students who come to the museum. In addition, she has been our spokesperson for the past year and a half and helps keep us in the forefront of the news. She has never said "No" to a request for help.

## Calendar of events

### SPINNING WHEEL IN CONCERT

Saturday, August 16, 2008

Stone Hall

8:00pm

### HUNLEY IN BENICIA

September 5, 6 & 7, 2008

Powder Magazine

### MOLLY'S REVENGE IN CONCERT

Saturday, October 25, 2008

Stone Hall

8:00pm

### A TASTE OF PASTA DINNER AND AUCTION

Saturday, November 1, 2008

Clocktower

### MEMBERSHIP HOLIDAY POTLUCK

Sunday, December 7, 2008

Stone Hall