



MARIN
HISTORY
MUSEUM

E-NEWSLETTER

January 2019

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Museum News

WE JUST WANT TO SAY

THANK YOU

**FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE
YEAR!**

Feature Article

The Great San Anselmo Flood of January 1982

On January 3, 1982 an arctic storm rolled into Marin dropping a blanket of snow on Mt. Tamalpais. At lower elevations it rained and rained . . . and rained. Some thought it would never stop. By 11:00 a.m., Hwy 101 had been closed. Buses had been canceled. The Golden Gate Bridge was shut down. From January third to the fourth, 13.75 inches of rain fell in San Anselmo, coming on the heels of an El Nino weather pattern that had dumped over 10 inches of rain in the last two week of December 1981.



Source: patch.com

By noon January 4, San Anselmo Creek had overflowed its banks. Downtown San Anselmo was particularly hard hit.

Every street level business flooded and sustained considerable damage. The *Marin Independent Journal* reported, "It was the day the Creek jumped its banks and carved a new course through downtown San Anselmo.

A river five-feet-deep roared down San Anselmo Avenue, consuming cars, flooding businesses and providing daredevils with an once-in-a-lifetime kayaking experience. As water rose inside businesses along the avenue, windows began to explode, spilling goods into the torrent. San Anselmo Avenue was awash with yarn, bottles of vitamins, honey, and toys. Damage to downtown businesses was put at more than \$4 million."



Source: patch.com

Anyone living in San Anselmo at that time has a story to tell. San Anselmo Avenue became a river. The only transport was by boat. Familiar businesses, like the Wells Fargo Bank, looked as though they were floating.

Floodwaters continued to sweep through San Anselmo for several days washing away everything in their path, including the footbridge over San Anselmo Avenue at Tamalpais Avenue. Basements, such as in the Public Library, were completely under water and flooded streets were not back to normal navigation for weeks.



Source: patch.com



Source: patch.com

But, 1982 was neither the first nor the last flood in San Anselmo's history. One of the worst was in February 1925 with others occurring in January 1943 (6.07 inches), December 1952 (6.79 inches), December 1955 (16.5 inches over 4 days) and December 2005. Undersized bridges, buildings over the creek and increased impervious surface throughout the watershed exacerbated San Anselmo's long history of flooding. Town officials continue to struggle to reduce the risk of a problem they know will return again one day.

This photo (below) from the Marin History Museum's collection of photographs by Ed Brady offers an aerial view of the flooded streets.



By Alice Tanner

Faces of Marin

Merrill "Mike" Robinson Convis
July 10, 1916 – June 22, 2003

**DRAKE SCHOLARSHIP
FOUNDATION**



Born in Chicago, Convis received a bachelor's degree in social studies in 1940. One year later, he married Marjorie Helen Illey and began teaching and coaching in Illinois and Wisconsin before serving in the Aleutian Islands as a Navy Seabee during World War II.

The Convis family moved to California in 1946 where he coached and taught English and History at Tomales and Sir Francis Drake High Schools. While teaching, Convis pursued his passion for sports as a starter for track and a referee for football. He earned a Masters degree in 1965, the same year he established the Drake Scholarship Foundation to help Drake graduates pay for college.

After retiring as Drake's Head Counselor in 1977, he went into real estate. Convis was elected to the San Anselmo Town Council in 1978 and served as Mayor in 1981 overseeing the town's flood response and recovery in January 1982.

By Jo Haraf

Bernard "Bernie" Del Santo
November 10, 1938 – June 19, 2018



Source: Patch.com

A lifelong Marin resident, Del Santo was born in Ross Hospital and grew up in San Rafael. After attending Marin Catholic High School, he enlisted in the U. S. Navy. A training injury forced him to return to Marin where Del Santo began his long career in law enforcement in 1962. In 1979, he was named San Anselmo's Chief of Police, a position he held for twenty years, supervising public safety during several of the town's local floods.

During his time with the San Anselmo police force, Del Santo created a regional traffic enforcement team in Ross Valley, taught defensive tactics classes for women, and served on the Marin County Narcotics Task Force. He retired from law enforcement in 1999 after a "messy misconduct scandal."

At his passing, Central Marin police Chief Mike Norton remembered Del Santo as "the epitome of what it meant to be a small-town police chief."

By Jo Haraf

Community Events of Interest

Thursday, January 10 8:00 p.m.
Northwestern Pacific Railroad History Symposium
Bob Battles, Sonoma County's First Electric Railroad
Elks Club, 1312 Mission Ave, San Rafael

NWPRRHS member and Archive volunteer Bob Battles will present an illustrated talk on Sonoma County's first electric railroad, the Petaluma & Santa Rosa. Bob Battles's decades of service as a volunteer at the Western Railway Museum and his experience in operating their electric equipment gives him a unique perspective on the P&SR's electric equipment and operations. Bob will cover both the history of the railroad and its electric equipment.

Doors open at 7:30 pm., with the program starting at 8. Refreshments will be served. There is no charge, although we are asking for a \$5.00 donation to cover the rental costs. There is parking in back of the building.

Talks and Walks

Marin History Museum presents:



Thursday, Jan 24 • 7:00 p.m. • Elks Lodge • 1312 Mission Ave, San Rafael

"ROSS: A Rich History"

Presented by Richard Torney and Fran Cappelletti

Join us to learn about the rich history of the small town of Ross, just "over the hill" from San Rafael. In a presentation that includes photos of people and events over the course of time, you'll be able to see how much has changed as well as how much has not. You'll also hear about the important contributions of Marin County residents to the development of the Marin Art and Garden Center.

Historian and fourth-generation Californian, Richard Torney moved to Kentfield with his family in 1955, and has been a favored speaker on Marin County history. On the Boards of the Kentfield/Greenbrae Historical Society and the Ross Historical Society, Richard also coordinates programs for the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society and is docent at the Mount Tamalpais Gravity Barn.

Fran Cappelletti, Librarian of the Moya Library/Ross Historical Society, researches the history of the Ross Valley, Marin County, and the rest of the Bay Area.

\$10 suggested donation. Free entry for Elks with ID card.

San Rafael Elks Lodge at Mission Ave at C Street in San Rafael. 1312 Mission Ave. Look for hidden driveway. Parking is in the rear of mansion. Follow one-way signs.

Please RSVP

info@marinhistory.org www.marinhistory.org 415-382-1182

From the Collection

Brand new to the MHM Collection!



Small sterling silver pitcher with hinged lid, probably used for milk or cream. Engraved "Hotel Rafael" on one side in script; stamped "Reed & Barton, Pat. Feb. 16, 1898" on bottom. It measures 3 ½" tall and 6" across from spout to handle. Donated to the Marin History Museum in 2018.

This lovely Barton & Reed silver pitcher comes to us with a wonderful provenance. It belonged to donor Doreen Wright's great-grandmother, Julia Singer, born Julia Sullivan in 1888. Julia moved to Marin County from Butte, Montana with her husband and son sometime between 1915-1920 and began working at the grand and ill-fated Hotel Rafael, most likely in housekeeping. As the five-story, 200-room hotel burned to the ground on July 29, 1928, the hotel staff, including Julia Singer, rushed to evacuate the 150 guests.

Following the fire, staff were thanked with furniture from staff living quarters and were also given serving pieces as compensation. During the chaos of the fire, this small pitcher somehow found its way into Julia's pocket and has been passed down through her family ever since.

Silversmiths Reed & Barton formed in 1824 and first produced tableware made of Britannia metal, a white metal alloy made from tin, antimony, and copper used in Britain to make flatware and hollowware. By the mid-1800s, Britannia was replaced as the preferred material for tableware by a new substitute for silver: silver-plate. Reed & Barton adopted this new technology and were very successful in the practice of silver-plating. After the Comstock Lode was mined during the 1860s, silver flooded the market, making sterling silver just as accessible as silver-plate. Reed & Barton turned to sterling silver manufacturing in 1889 and by the end of the century, had committed their entire factory to its production. This pitcher joins five other pieces of Reed & Barton silver in the Marin History Museum collection: a water pitcher, a serving tray, a salad fork, a demitasse spoon, and a teapot, all from the Hotel Rafael.

Sources: www.patch.com, www.raresterling.com

VOLUNTEER JOB OPPORTUNITIES

We can use your help! Have a little time on our hands and looking to help a local non-profit? Below is a list of some of the volunteer positions we need to fill.

Please let us know if any of these look interesting to you by emailing info@marinhistory.org or calling 415-382-1182. We would love to hear from you!

Writer

We are starting to create a lot of content for our eNewsletters, social media sites, and future traveling exhibitions and publications. If you like to do historical research and write short articles, we could use your help.

Editor

Along with writers, we need editors to give the final article its blessing before it

goes to print. This volunteer job can be done from home or on site. Let us know if you have that required eagle eye and grammatical tenacity to tackle this job.

Photographer

Capture the moment for us! Your photos of the Museum's special events and exhibitions will be invaluable for public outreach, future fundraising campaigns and our institution's historical record. We could use your help documenting our history!

Are you a student looking for community service hours? Know a student who needs hours before graduating? The Marin History Museum is a 501(c)3 and can grant students their community service hours. Let us know and we'll take care of it!

Marin History Museum - Craemer Family Research and Collection Facility

45 Leveroni Ct Novato CA 94949

Please call for an appointment

415-382-1182

Mailing Address: PO Box 150727, San Rafael, CA 94915

For more information:

www.marinhistory.org info@marinhistory.org