

# CAMEL



# TRACKS

Year 2009

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

Jul./Aug.

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**Ann Hansen**

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**Monica Rhee**

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*Assistant Registrar  
Volunteer Coordinator*

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*Assistant Registrar*

**Jim Garrett**

*Multitask Volunteer*

**Mary Marino**

*Spokesperson/ Education chair*

**Lorraine Patten**

*Museum Educator*

**Toni Haughey**

*Gift shop manager*

**Marie Earp**

*Docent Coordinator*

**Rhonda Hicks**

*Concert Coordinator*

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*

## *YOUR MUSEUM, YOUR DESTINATION*



The old song, *Do You Know the way to San Jose*, could be paraphrased to *Do You know the way to the Camel Barn Museum?*

We have long recognized that you and others have trouble finding us. We thought that camel tracks on the road from downtown to the museum might help you and visitors find us more

readily. We were told that was not a good idea from Public Works standpoint. . We are glad to see new signs around town that indicate the direction to take to get to the museum. We are not the Fire Museum and we are not the State Capitol. We are the historical museum. We have been told we are out in the boon docks – so far away. Actually, we are just a few minutes from the bottom of First Street to our doors. We give directions on our phone message. Our website [www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org) has a map that will lead you here.

Why should you come here? If you ask that question, it means that we have not reached you to tell you all the great things that are happening here and that you have not been here for quite a while, if ever...

Your museum is well on its road to becoming what we refer to as “The best little museum in California and beyond”. Four years ago, we installed state of the art exhibits chronicling the history of Benicia. At the time we did not have the funds to do all the interactive elements but we are slowly adding them. We have redesigned our gift shop and are carrying very interesting books relating to Benicia. We have expanded into a second building with a remarkable



## *The Museum Welcomes our New Members*

♦  
Grace Murphy-Jerkins

♦  
Carol Ubalde

♦  
Jim Vanier

## *Supporting*

♦  
Soroptimist International  
Of Benicia

## *Patron*

♦  
Jim & Roberta Garrett

## *Benefactor*

♦  
Dr. James Lessenger &  
Dr. Leslie Lessenger

## *Museum Docents*

Louis Alfeld

Lisa Argue

Brita Bautin

Glenn Boatman

Alexandra Borostyan

Tania Borostyan

Megan Ching

Cathy Forbes

David Galligan

Kimble Goodman

Elly Harkins

Toni Haughey

Debbie Johnson

Gloria Lambousy

Larry Lauber

Jim Lessenger

Phyllis Malicki

Mary Marino

Louise Martin

Leonide McKay

Elizabeth Murphy

Lorraine Patten

Ron Rice

Carol Scott

Rodney Warren

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## From the Director MAINTAINING THE FACILITY



What do you have when you have four pre-Civil War buildings built of sandstone that have withstood the ravages of earthquakes, storms and the usual wear and tear caused by weather conditions? The question is open to very lengthy expositions of our needs which could fill a book or two.

Our buildings are on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

Early organizers of the museum had the foresight and wisdom to see that they were accepted on the register. There are many ramifications and requirements attached to this designation. Foremost, of course, is the preservation of the buildings. We, of course, have been entrusted with this task by the City of Benicia through our lease of the buildings. There is much involved in keeping the buildings usable for the public.

Our buildings have been used in many different ways. They were built by the US Army as the first arsenal in the West and served the military with supplies and munitions in wars from the Indian Wars through the Korean War. The buildings suffered misuse over the years from 1964 till 1984 when the city heard the pleas of the early organizers of the museum. Wallpaper manufacturing was done here. Painters left their evidence in layers of paint to be scrapped from floors, artists and craftsmen created their wares. One building was used for target practice by the police department. The building that the office is in was a machine

house. Of course, it is well known that the camels from the army's unsuccessful experiment in the desert were brought here for auction. Though they were here for a very short time and were never housed in the buildings, the designation of Camel Barns has become an inextricable part of our legacy.

But what of these buildings and surrounding grounds? We are surrounded on all sides by Amports Industries but in our little niche we have a vibrant community of Board members, small staff and many volunteers. Not the least of these volunteers are Jim and Roberta Garrett and Board member, Larry Lauber. The Garretts are constantly repairing and upgrading our workplace. Ask Jim if something is possible and you very promptly have a drawing and estimate of what it will take to do it. Larry is indispensable in recognizing the needs and safety hazards. He has spearheaded an almost impossible job of clearing the dry grass and weeds away. With the help of Allied Waste's donation of dumpsters, he has cleared away these fire hazards with minimal work crews. We have been told that fastest fire fighters could be here would be more than five minutes in which time the hillsides could be engulfed in flames and the buildings greatly endangered. No wonder the fire department was happy to have us do weed whacking.

Of course, we are constantly faced with the damage that the elements are doing to the sandstone. We have had the damage assessed and know that it will take a couple of million dollars to re-enforce and strengthen the structures. Many new materials and techniques have been discovered to help repair the damage. We see signs of the deterioration as we open and close outside doors and see the small piles of sand that constantly remind us that our days are numbered for repair. Efforts were made in the past to shore up the buildings with coats of concrete. It was a valiant effort but one that has come back to haunt us as we learn that the concrete keeps the

*See Director, Page3*

## Curator's Corner

Since November of last year, the War To End All Wars...90th Anniversary of the End of WWI exhibit has been viewed in our museum. The uniforms, weapons, music sheets, panels telling the story of why the United States got involved in the war, the trench life, the Spanish flu, food rationing, the Lusitania, those who were serving and those who died from Benicia and the latest addition to the exhibit a Letter Keep Safe. We hope that all of you had a chance to see this exhibit. It will be removed by July 1st.



The next exhibit in that area will be Oldies but Goodies. We will be taking out of our collection items that have not been on display and haven't related to an exhibit so far. Some of these items may be familiar to some of you and

others who may be too young to have seen them. The exhibit should be up by the middle of July. Go to our webpage [beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](http://beniciahistoricalmuseum.org) to get more information on the exhibit's installation.

The museum exhibition space starts in chronological order of our history. The Native American exhibit on the Patwin tribe is at the beginning of this area. The exhibit is still in the planning stage and will hopefully be installed by September. The Patwins were an Indian tribe that belonged to a larger group called Wintun. There were five other tribes under them. The Ulalatos in Vacaville, Libaytos along Putah Creek, Malacas in Lagoon Valley, Tolenas in Upper Suisun Valley and the Suisunes in Suisun. There were approximately 2500-5000 Patwins in existence. The tribe was a victim of smallpox, which was brought in by the settlers.

Have you seen the Industrial Exhibit yet? Please come and see what industries came to Benicia and prospered. The fact that we were an inland port plays a big part in this exhibit.



## Destination

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exhibit showing Benicia's contribution to the development of industries in California and the country...



During the school year we host tours for elementary school students who are given a "hands on" experience of making adobe brick, grinding corn, washing clothes in wash tubs and other early American activities.. They tour the museum, the

Powder Magazine and then take part in these activities. It is a great experience for the students, teachers and parents who accompany them.

Besides the historical aspects of the museum, we are fast becoming the venue of choice for many activities. We have hosted many individuals and organizations in Stone Hall, some of which are city functions, AAUW, Soroptimists, Kiwanis, Boy Scouts, Friendship Club, Chamber of Commerce, National Civil War Association. musical recitals and many other activities... Entertainment in Stone Hall has included comedy shows, musical groups of various genres, even dances. ... Our Celtic music series has been very popular. while receptions and parties for weddings, graduations and other occasions have been very successful.

The activities in Stone Hall have spilled over into the new Spenger Garden venue. It is here that beautiful weddings and receptions are being held. Being behind the building and bounded on one side by the hill, it has protection from the wind. The late afternoon sun is blocked by the shadow of the building. This summer, we begin our first series of concerts in the garden. And, of course, at the dedication of the garden, we saw the beautiful performance of Isadora Duncan dances done by Lois Flood. This is an awe inspiring venue. You do yourself an injustice if you do not come to enjoy it.

Elsewhere in this newsletter there is a schedule of activities for the summer. They include concerts, comedy show, information on exhibits and Singles activities. You can always get information off our website or our phone recording. This is your museum, come and enjoy it.



## Director

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sandstone from breathing and holds the damaging moisture in. One of our efforts must involve the removal of the concrete on the outside and the plaster from the walls in Stone Hall. When we removed the plaster in the Silas Casey exhibit hall, we exposed the beautiful sandstone and redwood beams that had been there for over 150 years still intact but covered up for half a century.

There are many more things that could be said about our buildings. Changes from one era to another occurred as the army adjusted to the needs of the warfare waged at different times. The workforce changed drastically from military to civilian as hundreds of citizens joined the war effort in support of the armed forces. And then when the army left and the city had to reckon with the empty buildings and the loss of revenues that ensued. At that point dedicated Benicians interested in preserving Benicia's history stepped in and set up a nonprofit organization to give Benicia the benefit of its heritage.

## GARRETT'S HONORED

It was Flag Day and flags were flying to honor our country. Stone Hall was decorated in patriotic colors and there was a congenial atmosphere among the volunteers who came to let us tell them how much we appreciate them.



Different flags waved in honor of the Garretts. David Galligan, president of the Board of Directors presented Roberta and Jim Garrett the **Volunteer of the Year** award. There has never been an award so well deserved.

Roberta and Jim are here at the museum week after week doing whatever is necessary to build, repair, refurbish or create. Roberta works with Beverly and Kellie in Collections on a regular basis. She can be seen at other times assisting with construction or repair jobs to help maintain our grounds and facilities. When a job needs to be done, they are there and very often find other volunteers to help them. They have been faithful members of the museum and can often be seen at museum functions.

It is no wonder they were chosen for this award! Thanks, Roberta and Jim.

## SEE US ON FIRST STREET

Our curator, Beverly Phelan, has been busy planning, measuring and creating displays for your pleasure as you stroll First Street.

Thanks to the inspiration of Sue Fisher-Jones and the generosity of Kathleen Olson and Valero Refining our first installation in windows downtown is up in empty storefront windows. Sue, a true museum person, was responsible for getting our heads together to bring you a taste of the museum through our carefully planned exhibit. Kathleen secured permission for us to use the windows. Valero provided the funds to produce the display. We are very grateful for this opportunity.

The windows feature photographs of important segments of Benicia history. Perhaps there are those among us that do not know that Stephen Vincent Benet was once a resident of the Commanding Officer's Quarters. Then, of course, we want to celebrate our legacy of colorful parades. Our display deals with famous people and historic places in Benicia.

You will find other interesting photos of historic Benicia in the new Relic Tavern. For months before opening Thomas Hamilton and Beverly spent hours in consultation over what pictures would be appropriate for the display planned for the Relic. They add a nice touch to the ambiance of the Relic. Congratulations to owners on their successful opening. Enjoy the exhibit. We welcome your comments.

## 10 GUN SALUTE

*Our salute this month goes to our own Toni Haughey.*

Toni has been a board member for about a year. In that time she has been remarkable in her dedication to the Museum. She has worked tirelessly as the Chairperson of the Program Committee which has four sub-committees under it. She has become a docent and has worked on exhibits in the museum. Toni has put her skills as a former retail person into service as manager of our gift shop. Our gift shop is taking on a new identity as a general store. Kudos to Toni "for all you do."



## ON THE SINGLES SIDE:

Singles, don't forget the second Wednesday breakfast. Come to the Benicia Grill on 8 July 2009 at 9:30 a.m. We meet every second Wednesday of the month throughout the summer for breakfast. And our T.G.I.F. Singles Night at the Museum will be the evening of 24 July 2009.

*The 24 July T.G.I.F. will be held from 5:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Garden area. The COST will be a \$5 Donation and a Side Dish or Desert to Share. Soft Drinks, Wine, hot dogs and music will be provided. In addition, we will provide a tour of the Museum Powder Magazine building at around 7:00 p.m. if there is interest.*

If you plan to come, please RSVP to Larry at 707.745.5662 or email [LLauber@sonic.net](mailto:LLauber@sonic.net).

## Calendar of events

### WAR TO END ALL WARS EXHIBIT

OPENED NOVEMBER 9, 2008  
BENICIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

### SPENGER GARDEN MUSIC SERIES

**EDNA LOVE AND THE NORTH BEACH BRASS BAND**  
MARDI GRAS IN DETROIT  
SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2009  
SPENGER GARDEN@ 8:00 PM

### MIRTH & MUSIC AT THE BARN

**COMEDIAN ROCKY LAPORTE**  
OPENING ACT BY AMBER ESTRADA  
THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2009  
STONE HALL @ 8:00PM

### SINGLES NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009  
STONE HALL  
5 TO 9 PM

### SPENGER GARDEN MUSIC SERIES

**GEORGE COLE AND VIVE LE JAZZ**  
MIX OF EUROPEAN, AMERICANA, GYPSY AND JAZZ  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 2009  
SPENGER GARDEN@ 8:00 PM

### SPENGER GARDEN MUSIC SERIES

**BANSHEE IN THE KITCHEN**  
CELTIC WITH A FRESH PERSPECTIVE  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 2009  
SPENGER GARDEN@ 8:00 PM

### SINGLES NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2009  
STONE HALL  
5 TO 9 PM

### SPENGER GARDEN MUSIC SERIES

**THE LINDA FERRO BAND**  
SULTRY AND SASSY BLUES, ROCK AND POP  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 2009  
SPENGER GARDEN@ 8:00 PM