

# CAMEL



# TRACKS

Year 2008

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Nov./Dec.

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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*

## *GREETINGS, BE THANKFUL, BE MERRY!*

It is amazing that we spend the last two months of the year celebrating. Here we are midst the worst crisis that most of us have every experienced as far as our economic well being is concerned and we celebrate – and well we should! It reminds me of a song from perhaps a quarter of a century ago when all that was sung without accompaniment was “BE HAPPY” and if you weren’t happy, the song made you happy.



*Membership Holiday Potluck, 2008*

What do we have to be happy about in this time of crisis? Well, let’s start with Thanksgiving. I

ponder, “I am alive. I can move, I can see, I can think, I can drive my car, eat, sleep and communicate with others. I can attend church, I can pray, I can give to others.” These alone are things for which to be thankful. But there is so much more. I am a part of this wonderful little museum. I can watch it



*Membership Holiday Potluck, 2008*

progress. This year saw the greatness of working together for common goals. A year ago, we did not have our beautiful Spenger Garden. We did not have our spectacular Industrial Exhibit. We had not had the experiences of creating these wonderful additions to our museum complex. We are working together as a strong board bent on serving the community by preserving and disseminating the story of the creation and development of

our city. In the process we make history ourselves. In our personal lives, we are able to help others by contributing to the Community Action Council. We can get together for the grand dinner that they with Valero serve to hundreds each year. We can help St. Paul’s with their “Feed the Hungry” program. There are so many ways we can enjoy the citizenship that we are privileged to hold.

We must not forget the wonderful parades and celebrations that we have here in Benicia. When I first moved here I was told by a friend that Benicia finds reasons for parades that other cities would not think of.



*See Greetings, Page 3*

## *The Museum Welcomes our New Members*

◆  
Robert Braulik

◆  
Malee Ketchum

## Museum Docents

Brita Bautin

Glenn Boatman

Megan Ching

David Galligan

Kimble Goodman

Elly Harkins

Toni Haughey

Debbie Johnson

Gloria Lambousy

Larry Lauber

Jim Lessenger

Phyllis Malicki

Mary Marino

Elizabeth Murphy

Lorraine Patten

Monica Rhee

Ron Rice

Kyleigh Suro

Donna Worthington





## From the Director

There has been so much excitement around the museum this past year through the accomplishments we have shown to those around us. You may be wondering what will come next. There is very much to do.

We are looking forward to our 25th anniversary in 2010. Hopefully, we will have created enough excitement to celebrate in a big way. We have very much to do. In the forefront will be the efforts to bring the stern of the Galilee back to Benicia. The National Park Service is willing to let us retrieve it from Fort Mason but in order to do so, we must have a place to house it. We will be focusing on that this coming year with the hope that it will be here for our 25th celebration.

Another effort that is of immediate importance is the space behind the Silas Casey building where we do the education "hands-on" for the students. It is in really bad shape and the city has told us that we must do something about it. We are not utilizing all of our property behind the building. To give us space and to improve the area, we need to grade the enlarged area and apply new asphalt. We cannot do this without putting in drainage along the building. The model for the drainage will be what was done behind Stone Hall in preparation for the garden. The work done there actually improved the drainage from under the building and the sandstone inspectors told us that it actually saved the building from deterioration.

A bit easier and less expensive project is the enlargement of the parking lot at the museum entrance. Again, we found that we were not utilizing all of our property. The fence will actually be

moved back forty feet, the area graded and new gravel put in so that there will be more adequate parking for the museum. The reason for the gravel instead of asphalt is to retain as much of the look of the era when the building was erected as we possibly can.

And then there are the bathrooms. Rather than to spend a large amount on the bathrooms we have, we are working on ideas for construction of a separate building for the facilities. It would be impossible to provide adequate bathrooms in Stone Hall for the whole complex. There is no water to Silas Casey or the Powder Magazine and even people in the garden would find it inconvenient to have to go to Stone Hall. So, we are hoping to build a facility that will house bathrooms for the whole complex. Included in the building we will include changing rooms for the brides and grooms who have their weddings or wedding receptions here. (We have already had two weddings in the garden.)

With all this moving around, we will have to deal with fences. Fences will need to be moved and reconstructed. We are attempting to make our enclosure as safe as possible. Amports has installed a gate to keep out the cars that used to use our parking lot as their "donut" run. It may have been one of them who took down our flagpole housing which Column Concepts so graciously repaired for us. The gate on the road to the Powder Magazine has been replaced due to irreparable damage when someone crashed through it. Fortunately, he had good insurance.

These projects will be areas for discussion at the upcoming board meeting which because of Thanksgiving is being moved from the fourth to the third Wednesday of the month. Of course, financing will be one of the main concerns of the Board. It looks as though we just might have a bit of excitement working on these ideas and preparing for our anniversary celebration.

*Ann Hansen*

## Curator's Corner

### Opening of WWI exhibit



World War I was known as the First World War, the Great War and the "War To End All Wars". It began in Europe in 1914 and ended on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. We remember this date every year on Veteran's Day which was formerly called Armistice Day.

The Benicia Historical Museum has created an exhibit "WAR TO END ALL WARS...90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of WWI.". The Museum has acquired loans and donations for this exhibit that help to tell story of this war. Included in the exhibit are storyboards about the beginning of the war, United States entering the war, Benicia's involvement, the Benicia Arsenal involvement, the Spanish Flu, the trench life and cases that contain uniforms, personal articles, medals, WW1 rifle, photos

and the music of that period. Our opening celebration will be on Sunday, November 9 at 2 p.m. Please come and view the exhibit which will run until February. Refreshments will be served.

*Beverly Phelan*

## Mystery Picture



John's Place restaurant, Where was it located?

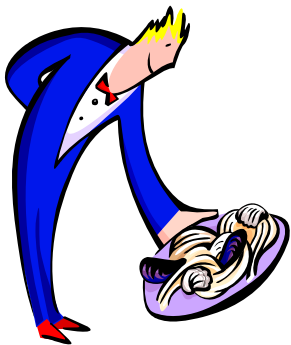
## Greetings

*Continue from page one*

Soon we will be seeing the Christmas decorations; we will have the parade, the lighting of the tree and the unparalleled Merchants' Open House. There will be parties and lunches and dinners and always the gathering of toys for children. Our fire department does a great job of coordinating this beautiful tradition. And then there are the giving trees and the holiday dinner boxes which we gladly fill for those who do not have the wonderful holiday feasts that we have. Hopefully, we all give till it hurts so others will share in our good fortune. And then there is the gratitude for being here – no one shows it more than ADOBE with their fantastic prize-winning display.

With the Christmas season, we here at the museum have our membership pot luck which we celebrate with the Benicia Historical Society. It is a fun time when we are entertained by the Melody Choral Singers, have a great feast, contribute to the food pantry of the CAC and share fellowship with all. We encourage our members to attend. Hopefully, we all remember the true meaning of the season and bow our heads in thanks giving for the blessings of the past years. We will remember friends, family and associates who have bade us farewell and we will look to the coming of another new year – we know because of external circumstances that it may be a very difficult year, a painful year, a cleansing year but we know that it will be a year of opportunity for us to grow and progress in our pursuit to make things better. It can and will be a Happy New Year if our attitudes permit it to be.

Good wishes and blessings to all.



## PAUSE FOR PASTA

This past month, we sent out invitations to you to Pause for Pasta. We know that you all look forward to the Pasta Tasting each year. However, because of the economy and of the plethora of auctions this time of year and because we had exhausted ourselves and our volunteers with the events in September, we could

not see our way clear to stage another big event. That meant we are not doing a major fundraiser. But it doesn't mean that we don't need the funds that it raises each year. On the contrary, we need them more than ever.

We did have a fund set up for the construction of the garden but because of the huge spike in construction costs, we had to dip into our operating funds to pay the bills. We are still struggling and hope that you, our wonderful members, will continue to support us and while you may have to cook the pasta yourselves, we would be most happy to have you send us a donation for what you would have spent had we served it to you. You are greatly appreciated.



## OUR WANT AD

Do you have a TV that hasn't been converted for HD and you don't want to bother doing the necessary steps to convert it? Or perhaps you just have a TV that you want to retire in favor of a new one. The 19 – 25 inch range is what we prefer. We would appreciate such a donation which, of course, is tax deductible.

We also can use your outmoded DVD player if you have one.

The reason we can use this "outmoded" equipment is that it is just fine for our recordings which we are converting from tapes to DVD,

Call the office at 745-5435 or Larry Lauber at 745-5662.

## WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

Our museum was not always here. Do you know or do you remember the different stages these wonderful buildings went through before they became your museum? It was due to Harry Wassmann's and others constant quest for a place to call home for the artifacts that had been gathered that they became the home of your museum. Discussion after discussion left the group empty handed until the proposal for the Camel Barns was made.

I was not here! I hear lots of stories about what the condition of these buildings were before they became a museum. Some seem almost unbelievable. It looked like a coat of black paint covered the floor in Stone Hall. The reality was that the build up of dirt and soap was so thick that it appeared to be coated with black paint. Pete Goodson, a former board member and president, and his helpers worked at it till they discovered the beautiful Douglas fir that you now see when you come to Stone Hall. What had been on this first level of the building was a paint mixing business, big vat and all. Upstairs was home to the beginnings of Bradbury and Bradbury with the wallpaper business that existed there. We have come a long way! Much hard work has gone into the rehabilitation that has taken place.

There are many stories of the degradation of the buildings that had taken place. What is now the office was a metal artist's workshop. Silas Casey Hall was used as a target practice area for the police department. We had the bullet holes in the plaster that we took down to prove that. What a difference removing the plaster made. It took a week of hard labor to remove the plaster and expose the beautiful sandstone walls and the wonderful redwood beams in the ceiling. Word is that the plaster was put on to prepare the space for food service. It is gratifying to know that we have restored the integrity of that section of the building. We, of course, hope to do the same to the rest of the building. In the meantime, we have presented you with a spectacular exhibit.

As tenants of these city buildings, we recognize our obligation to keep them in as good a shape as possible. As historians and principals in museum administration we recognize our obligation to restore the integrity of the buildings and maintain them as the historic structures they are. We are the stewards of the city's property and therefore, beholden to all citizens to develop the "best little museum in California and beyond". That is our aim, that is our gift to the citizens of Benicia.



## CONGRATULATIONS, JIM!

While we know Jim Garrett through his many volunteer hours here at the museum where he has spent hundreds of hours in hard work, there is another side to him.



We know him as a writer. His "The Golden Era" a history of Benicia High School football from 1948 through 1960 is here in our library at the museum. It is a two volume compilation. Jim uses the same thoroughness and care in researching and writing in these volumes as he does in all his work; as he must have done in his teaching.

Jim was recently recognized in the LEATHERNECK, a Marines magazine with the publication of "Hold That Line." The poem is a tribute to the brave Marines who held the line in the thick of battle day and night.

CONGRATULATIONS, JIM.

## HAVE YOU SEEN?

If you have been to Stone Hall recently, you noticed a big improvement.

Remember our old beat up bar? We always draped cloths over it to make it presentable. Inevitably, renters would stain them, tear them or carry them off. Who could remedy the situation for us? Would it be a good idea to just tear it down and start over again, or what would be the best idea? Enter Jim and Roberta Garrett.

At our request Jim and Roberta sized up the situation. When they start work on something, we know exactly what they are going to do and what is necessary to achieve it. Their precision is remarkable. They tackled the problem systematically and came up with a beautifully reconstructed bar, stained to fit with the ambience of Stone Hall. The problem of always dragging the bar from one end of the hall to the other depending on the arrangement wanted by renters or when we were having an event there was solved. The bar is now on wheels which lock to keep it in place. There will no longer be scratching of the floor because of dragging the bar around.

Thank you Jim and Roberta. Once again the Garretts have come through for us. They are very faithful and long-standing volunteers.



## TEN GUN SALUTE SCOTT REEP



We cannot thank Scott Reep enough for his hard work on behalf of the Museum during our celebration. Without Scott's dedication, we would not have been so successful in bringing the service groups of Benicia together in sponsoring a single event. It is only fitting that Scott helped us make history in achieving this task. And, of course, a

big "thank you" to all the wonderful organizations who came to our assistance. Let's do it again! Thank you All!

## Calendar of events

**WAR TO END ALL WARS...  
90TH ANNIVERSARY OF WWI  
Opening Sunday, November 9, 2008  
Museum**

**MEMBERSHIP HOLIDAY POTLUCK  
Sunday, December 7, 2008  
Stone Hall**

**WINTER QUARTERS CONFERENCE  
February 27 to March 1, 2009  
Camel Barns Complex**