

# CAMEL



# TRACKS

Year 2009

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Jan./Feb.

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*Docent 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*

## *Happy Birthday Harry!*

Harry Wassmann is truly a Benicia man; born and raised in the home he and

wife Diane live in today on East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. If you knew Harry 20 some years ago, not much has changed in his appearance. You probably saw Harry over at the State Capitol building giving tours in his tails and top hat or at the Benicia Historical Museum as a docent with all the knowledge one needed to inform visitors of Benicia's rich history. You may have seen him at the Benicia Post Office picking up his mail from his post office box. If you have lived in Benicia since the 1970s then you would have seen Harry speaking at the Benicia City Council representing the Benicia Historical Society's need for a museum.



*Harry and Diane Wassmann*

There are many in Benicia who do know Harry Wassmann but there are those who have never met him. I was very fortunate to have moved to Benicia 23 years ago and that's when I visited the Benicia Historical Museum on my first weekend here and met Harry who was the docent that day. Little did I know then what

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## *Black Irish Return to release California Story*



The Benicia Historical Museum proudly announces that the Black Irish Band has chosen our venue for the Bay Area release of their newest CD, California Story. They will entertain us on January 17<sup>th</sup> with their latest original songs that commemorate the building of the west – our legacy which we have received from the early settlers who were responsible for so much that we take for granted. They will make toe-tapping music for our enjoyment. We are very happy to have them return to a favorite haunt of theirs, our museum.

The Black Irish Band has always done a superb job of entertaining the audience. They leave you wondering how

*See Black Irish, Page 2*

## *The Museum Welcomes our New Members*

Lisa Argue

Rodney Warren

Nancy Yingst

### *Friend*

Michael & Donna

Baldwin

### *Supporting*

William & Marie Earp

David & Gloria Galligan

Lorraine & Gerry Patten

Pete & Marianne

Goodson

### *Patron*

Scott & Chris

Strawbridge

Louise Martin

### *Camel Corps*

Donna Worthington

& Karl Uebel

### *Doña Benicia*

Thomas C. Benet

## *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

Donna Worthington

## From the Director



Happy New Year. What will 2009 bring? We, of course, want to keep moving on our adventure of making the Benicia Historical Museum the best little museum in California and beyond. We have some exciting things happening. We know that we cannot launch any big projects just now but there are lots of smaller ones that we can make happen. A very important one is the reconfiguration of the upper parking lot. We will very likely be doing

work in Stone Hall to restore its integrity. Plans will be developed for the moving of the Scampo and the Galilee and the recovering of the stern of the Galilee.

There continue to be many opportunities to volunteer. We want to swell the ranks of docents so that we can have all three exhibit areas open simultaneously. That would require at least three docents per shift. And when we have enough docents, we will schedule longer hours because we know that our hours are not adequate for all of the public. We are working on increasing our tours. You know, that a tour can be scheduled at times other than when we are open if done in advance. We are also looking for volunteers to work in the gift shop. We have concluded that this should not be a responsibility of docents on duty. We

are in the process of revamping our gift shop for better service to the public.

We will be getting national exposure in the near future. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is launching The Heritage Travel web site. We were invited to become charter members of the site. After doing due diligence as to the advantages of being featured nationally, we decided that it would be a good move. They are anticipating that the site will experience three million hits in the first year. Launching date will be April 2, 2009. They have been researching and planning for two years in preparation of the site going on line. The Trust works with members who are listed as national historic sites. We are delving into what fuller participation can mean for us. We have been members but have not been active.

Elsewhere in this edition you will find an article about Harry Wassmann. Harry was for many years the backbone of this museum. Without his perseverance we would not be able to present the community with the displays and programs that we can today. We are proud of our achievements but we know we owe a debt of gratitude to Harry – and his lovely wife, Diane.

Pay close attention to coming events, our concerts are very promising. Also, register for the Winter Quarters of the National Civil War Association at the end of February.

*Ann Hansen*

## Harry

*Continue from page one*

work, determination and love of history it took to have an historical museum in Benicia.

The Benicia Historical Society began with Harry in 1973. A few years later there was an effort by the Society to approach the City about having a City museum. The Society formed the Benicia Historical Museum and Cultural Foundation to concentrate on making a museum a reality. The Clocktower and the Southern Pacific Depot were being considered as possible locations. At the same time the City Council was looking for funding to preserve historic buildings in the industrial park (the former Benicia Arsenal). Thanks to the work of Gladys Wold, a Society member, about 20 or so structures in the industrial park were put on the National Register of Historic Places and considered worthy of preservation.

After many City Council meetings and Benicia Historical Society meetings the entire Camel Barn complex was dedicated to show the City's commitment to the establishment of a museum. Harry and the Society were elated at this news. The historical designation helped in the funding that was needed to prepare Camel Barn No.9 to be a museum. It was first named the Camel Barn Museum for obvious reasons.

Harry was the curator of the museum for 20 years. With his background in working for the federal government at Travis AFB as a Transportation Specialist, which included producing organizational charts and presenting the history of the organization, it was a natural thing for Harry to create exhibits.

Today, Harry can sit back and look at all that has been done since those early days and smile. Harry will be 90 years old on January 12<sup>th</sup> and we wish him a very big THANK YOU and HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

*Beverly Phelan*



## Black Irish

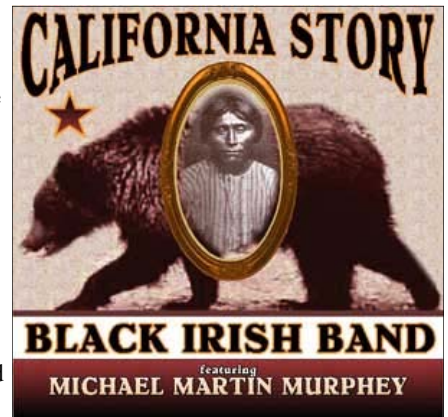
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they can do all they do. Is there anything they cannot do? Who are these astounding Guys?

You need only to go to their website and read their bios to realize that they are really quite unusual. They are known as the Hooligans of Jamestown and to look at them you would say the name fits just fine. But when you read their accomplishments you know that there has been a process of learning, melding and refinement. They individually have achieved

professional expertise on several instruments. They have traversed the roads of classical, jazz, bluegrass and folk music from various ethnic and regional backgrounds. They have settled on giving us Irish, Italian and American folk music. They play original songs, traditional western ballads to let us in on the spirit of the immigrants of this land, those men and women who tamed the Wild West. Their repertoire includes maritime and railroad music along with all their original tunes.

You surely, will not want to miss the return engagement of the Black Irish Band, the lovable Hooligans of Jamestown. The doors open at 7:30 and the concert starts at 8:00 p.m. You may purchase tickets at Main Street, Bookshop Benicia or online at [www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org). Admission is \$20.



## Members Make Merry



Tables were laden with food in the beautifully decorated Stone Hall. Kasma Kelley, our wonderful artistic decorator, outdid herself in coming up with ideas for the Old Fashioned Christmas theme. Who would ever

expect a fireplace in Stone Hall? Glenn Boatman and Larry Lauber provided construction and hi tech engineering for Kasma's dream. Stockings were hung and gifts abounded. The trees were beautifully decorated and massive wreaths hung from the walls. There were delicately made sleighs hand decorated by Kasma and her elf helper, Lorraine Patten, that provided centerpieces for the tables. Always assisting was Louise Martin who made sure that every detail of the pot luck was handled well. The Melody Choral Singers added their entertaining yuletide repertoire for our enjoyment as they did last year.

Pot lucks are a time for all to share, whether it is their favorite recipe or their holiday greetings, decorations or the joy of being together party goers enjoy them tremendously. Our Holiday pot luck is a time to share with our members and the members of the Benicia Historical Society. We divvy up the responsibilities and while it is challenging to change from the Thanksgiving theme to Christmas in the short time between the holidays, careful planning sees us through. The raffles are always fun and we had many gifts this year donated by both organizations. Marge Williford and Lorraine Patten did a great job in creating baskets. Time goes very fast and I am sure that when we start talking about the next pot luck we will be wondering where the year has gone.

Happy New Year to all.



## Where are the Bricks?

If you have been to the garden, you have seen bricks around the fountain but they weren't engraved. It was necessary to wait till all the bricks were sold to start the engraving because of safety measures necessary for permanently placing them. The bricks are being engraved at this time. When they are finished, all 138 of them will be set in concrete around the fountain. We expect that the process will be finished by the end of February if not sooner. We are sure you will be pleased with the results.

We failed to explain to everyone who purchased bricks for Spenger Garden that it would be necessary to wait till they were all sold before engraving could begin. We apologize for not letting you know about this fact.

## Benicia and the Civil War



It was astonishing to me when I overheard a professional business person expressing disbelief that Benicia had any involvement in the Civil War. It was, after all, a war between the North and the South on the other side of the country. There was no reason for Benicia or, for that matter, California

to be involved. Surprise! Surprise! Benicia played a very important role in the war. This fact is precisely why it is fitting that the National Civil War Association (NCWA) chooses to hold its Winter Quarters Conference here at the Benicia Historical Museum. Benicia played an extremely important role in the furnishing of arms and other supplies to the Northern army. California gold was essential to the financing of the war. Army personnel spent time in the arsenal and volunteers were recruited and fought with the New York regiment.

Benicia residents have a great opportunity to delve into the experiences of the Civil War era through the NCWA's Winter Quarters conference on February 27-March 1, 2009. This is the fourth year that the Museum is partnering with the NCWA in its Winter Quarters. Planning for this year began immediately after last year's event. The Association works diligently to engage authorities on all aspects of life during the Civil War period. Seminar periods on various subjects are from one to two hours. The seminars are led by prominent Civil War researchers and scholars as well as less known credible authorities. This year Museum board members, Dr. James Lessenger and Dan Dempsey, will be presenters of history of the arsenal and the museum buildings. Dr. Lessenger is currently researching arsenal history in preparation for publication of a book on the subject. He has an impressive PowerPoint presentation that he will share with the group. Dr Lessenger will lead a tour of the Benicia Arsenal.

While there is a great deal about the military aspects of the war, there is also emphasis on the life of the times. Subjects such as clothing, manners, photography, sewing, health and hygiene, cooking, scandals and Benicia's architecture are treated in the seminars. There is even treatment of the career of Charles P. Stone (Stone Hall is named for him) and William T. Sherman. There is something for everyone in these seminars.

You can pre-register by printing out the registration form and mailing it in. Onsite registration will be in Stone Hall February 27<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m... Pre-registered attendees and dignitaries will be invited to dinner and a presentation by the key note speaker on Friday evening. Classes will be held in Stone Hall and Benicia High School classrooms. Saturday morning registration will be in Stone Hall.

Go to [www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org) for further information and under Events click on NCWA Winter Quarters to be connected to the NCWA website.

## Thank You

Congratulations to Curt and Kristine Hoffman who have benched themselves in Benicia. They are the first to purchase one of the seven benches in Spenger Garden. We are grateful for their generosity.

The giving spirit helps the Museum keep things going. Our End of the Year remembrances by faithful members and the Pause for Pasta donations have totaled nearly \$6,000.

We appreciate your generosity. We know that the economic situation does not provide great discretionary income. That makes your generosity even more precious. We are truly grateful for your help in keeping us in the forefront of the community.

## Calendar of events

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

**BLACK IRISH BAND IN CONCERT**  
Bay Area Release of "California Story"  
Saturday, January 17, 2009  
Stone Hall @ 8:00pm

**SINGLES NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM**  
Friday, January 23, 2009  
Stone Hall  
5:30 to 8:30pm

**DOCENT TRAINING**  
Saturday, January 24, 2009  
Stone Hall  
9:00am to 12:00pm

**MEN OF WORTH IN CONCERT**  
New Release of "Great Intentions"  
Friday, February 6, 2009  
Stone Hall @ 8:00pm

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

**VOLKER STRIFLER BAND IN CONCERT**  
Saturday, March 28, 2009  
Spenger Garden

**THE ALHAMBRA VALLEY BAND  
IN CONCERT**  
Saturday, April 4, 2009  
Stone Hall @ 8:00pm

## Want Ads

### TV replacement:

It was just a year ago that the storms caused havoc with the power outage in Building #9. At that time, we had severe damage to the electrical system which destroyed the large TV that had been recently donated to us by Dannys and Bill Cody. The TV was so badly damaged that it was not salvageable. This TV was used to show the DVDs on such documentation as Ruth Alexander's interview. We now have accumulated many more documents that we would like our guests to see. **IF** you have upgraded your large TV or are planning to do so, we will gratefully accept your donation of your old TV.

### FOR SALE

For all you Princess Diana devotees, we have collection plates of the Diana series that were donated for our auction last year. We did not receive an acceptable bid on them. There are ten plates in the series. Just call the museum and make an appointment to view them. We will accept the best offer.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our greatest need at the present time is for docents. You are the one who will determine when and how often you will work as a docent or tour leader. Training will be on January 24<sup>th</sup>. It begins at 9:00 a.m. and will take three hours through which you will receive invaluable information about Benicia and its history.

We are also recruiting gift shop personnel, assistance for students' Hands On activities and anticipating enlisting phone volunteers. If you are interested in helping in any of these capacities, email Louise Martin at [BHMVolunteers@SBCGlobal.net](mailto:BHMVolunteers@SBCGlobal.net) or leave a message at 707-746-7271.

## TEN GUN SALUTE

Harry Wassmann is Mr. Benicia History personified. We treasure our museum, its interesting artifacts, all the progress we have made. We are proud to give to the community the museum which is becoming the "best little museum in California and beyond". But if we have made progress, it is only because we have been able to build on the strong foundation that was laid by the early founders of the museum. Harry was instrumental in finding and preserving artifacts, in convincing city authorities of the importance of preserving Benicia History and of finding others to help carry out the plans that are now being realized. Happy 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Harry!

