



# CAMEL TRACKS

BENICIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM AT THE CAMEL BARN

Volume 17. Issue 2

 Summer 2017

## “WE WERE THERE...” THE LEGACY OF WWI



The Benicia Historical Museum installed a special, temporary “pop-up” exhibit on Thursday, April 6, 2017, the 100th anniversary of America’s entry into World War I (1914-1918).

This exhibit commemorates those Benicia residents who lost their lives in the “Great War.” It should also be recognized as an opportunity for visitors, especially students, to learn about the particular horrors of trench warfare, a prominent feature of the military theatres of operation affecting millions of soldiers in Europe at the time. In addition, the exhibit also incorporates material on the flu epidemic of 1918, which played a deadly role during World War I. Exhibit artifacts include helmets, uniforms, weaponry, and items used by soldiers in the trenches.

## *Peppino D’Agostino In Concert!*

**Friday, June 16th, 2017  
8:00 PM, doors open at 7:00 PM  
No-Host Bar  
Tickets \$35**

**Tickets available at: Museum Office, Museum Gift Shop, [BrownPaperTickets.com](http://BrownPaperTickets.com), Bookshop Benicia**



The internationally award winning acoustic guitarist returns to Benicia for a night of timeless music! Featuring special guest Adam Rafferty!

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Like us on Facebook: Benicia Historical Museum at the Camel Barns



**TOURS**

Educational tours with hands-on activities for children



Arranged tours for adult, senior and family groups



**RENTAL AREAS**

Captain Charles P. Stone Hall



Spenger Memorial Garden



For information please visit our website [www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org)

**Busy, Busy BHM!**

*by Executive Director Elizabeth d'Huart*

As usual, it's crazy busy here at the Museum, so what follows is a quick overview of some of the highlights of activities since our last SPRING – JANUARY newsletter:

**FEBRUARY** always finds the Museum hosting the Benicia Public Library/First Tuesday Group - Love Poetry Contest Awards (2/19/17), for which we always supply a tribute exhibit commemorating the tragic love story between Conception Arguello and Nikolai Rezanov, a natural and fascinating adjunct to this Benicia Valentine's Day event. Commemorated by the Museum since 2003 and celebrated ever since here in one form or another, this historical drama has supplied literary inspiration for many including an ever-expanding pool of contest entries, attracting poets from all over the Bay area and beyond. We were also glad to see the return of the "Black Irish" Celtic group for their concert here on February 25<sup>th</sup> featuring old favorites and original compositions that help to tell the stories of



Benicia Poet Laureate Johanna Ely (left), with Love Poetry Contest winner Lawrence DiCostanzo (holding trophy) and second & third place poets Sandra Anfang & Charles McCauley



The Black Irish Band in Concert

those who left the "old country" to work in the mines and on the railroads.

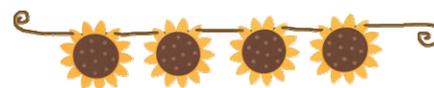
**MARCH** came in like a lion, bringing torrential rains but also several new filming projects, including a Museum-centric documentary about the history of Benicia which employs staff and board members in a Ken Burns' style interview format discussion. The film, which is sponsored and facilitated by Turnkey Technologies, will wrap up in the Autumn when it will then have its debut and become available to view at the Museum and online. This important documentary will play a vital part in continuing to inform Museum visitors about the many contributions Benicia has made – and continues to make – to the history of California and to the nation. Other filming news: the Museum Powder Magazine was chosen as a location by a small, independent company which required a "Renaissance" interior for a program, one in an ongoing series they are producing using a variety of venues. We hope to be able to provide a link to this segment, as and when it is completed, for others to see – we always ask for location credits as this is another and exciting way to promote these wonderful buildings!

**APRIL 17<sup>th</sup>** also saw the broadcast of the "Strange Inheritance" program on Fox Business News titled "Eight Tons of Art" that featured footage filmed in our gallery area showcasing the life and work of Benicia's tile muralist Guillermo Wagner Granizo – we are so proud to have played a part in promoting this artist and hope you have had an opportunity to enjoy this beautiful exhibit.

April also found our electrical genius, board member Larry Lauber, representing the Museum at the MiniMaker Faire at the Benicia Middle School on April 2. Although I found the intense, technical conversations between Larry and members of the public beyond the boundaries of my own electrical knowledge, I was pleased to see adults and children fascinated by the old telegraph Larry had up and running at our Museum booth, which also elucidated the workings of the Museum LED upgrade to our lighting supplied through funding from the City of Benicia and the Sustainability Commission.



Board Member Larry Lauber highlights the Arc of Technology at the MiniMaker Faire.



On April the 6<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the United States entry into World War I, we opened our small, temporary exhibit titled “We Were There - WWI”. Please come to see this excellent, capsule display! It is yet another example of the quality educational units we are installing presently and a great teaching/learning opportunity for students and adults alike.

As **MAY** begins, we enter the Museum’s busiest month for school tours and increased seniors tours, as well as an annual uptick in out-of-state visitors. Our wonderful Museum docents and tour guides supply the large number of volunteers necessary to facilitate groups of up to 60 or more children, teachers and parents through exhibits in three buildings, including the Powder Magazine, plus running the hands-on reenactment activities stations. This month may also find the program “Mysteries at the Museum” filming a segment about the Camel Corps in our exhibits and outside — watch this space for updates!

**JUNE** will bring us the talented home-town boy and now world-famous musician Peppino D’Agostino in concert on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and **JULY** will see the inauguration of a new, temporary exhibit unit titled “Drop by Drop”, a water-themed history exhibit in collaboration with ArtsBenicia. We hope to see our friends and patrons here over the next weeks and months – no Summer doldrums here!!



## Calendar of Events

### Peppino D’Agostino in concert with special guest Adam Rafferty

- ☀ **Friday, June 16**
- ☀ **8:00 PM, doors open at 7:00 PM**
- ☀ **Open seating**
- ☀ **Tickets \$35**
- ☀ **No-host bar**

### Main Street “Torchlight Parade”

- ☀ **Monday, July 3**
- ☀ **6:30 PM**
- ☀ **Museum parade entry with veterans and re-enactor participants in vintage military vehicles**

### “Drop by Drop” exhibit opening and reception

- ☀ **Wednesday, July 26**
- ☀ **5:30 PM – 7:30 PM**
- ☀ **No-host bar**
- ☀ **In partnership with ArtsBenicia**
- ☀ **Local history of our community water story with original artwork by Benicia artists**

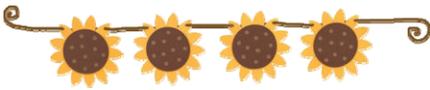
### New “pop-up” exhibit: “We Were There – World War I”

- ☀ **Current through September 2017**
- ☀ **In honor of Benicia’s WWI veterans, a history “cheat sheet” overview presentation of WWI with a focus on trench warfare and Benicia’s participation**
- ☀ **Photographs, documents, artifacts**

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

#### Annual Benicia Historical Museum Membership Potluck

- ☀ **Sunday, September 24 (rescheduling of former Winter Annual Potluck event)**
- ☀ **4:30 PM – 6:30 PM**
- ☀ **Indoor and outdoor event (weather permitting) in Spenger Garden and supper in Hall**
- ☀ **Full bar, meat entrees, condiments, rolls and desserts supplied by Museum**
- ☀ **Guests with last names A-L to bring a hot dish of vegetables or casserole; guests with last names M -Z to bring a cold salad or fruit dish**



## Scrumptious Gastronomy at “Spenger’s Grotto”

*by Executive Director Elizabeth d’Huart*

I can’t imagine a more delightful place to dine than “Spenger’s Grotto Restaurant” as was... although I would quibble with the name of the restaurant (not actually located in an underground cavern; no mention that it is a boat tied up at water’s edge, etc.). I certainly wouldn’t argue with its menu, however; a seafood lover’s dream: oysters, clams, crab, lobster, shrimp, prawns, abalone, scallops, bass, barracuda, cod, swordfish, salmon, halibut, sole, trout, and sand dabs; plus salads, meats and poultry – even frogs legs! A full bar of wine, beer, and mixed drinks ...no wonder Benicia residents and visiting family members,



Postcard of Spenger’s Fish Grotto, 1940’s.

day trippers, and soldiers from the Arsenal all thronged to this popular eatery. Once a working ferryboat, the “Encinal” was built in 1887 in San Francisco and carried narrow gauge freight trains between San Francisco and Alameda Point and, later, worked the route from San Fran to the Oakland Estuary carrying trucks, and foot passengers. The name “encinal” is a Spanish word that denotes “a forest of evergreen oak” (Merriam-Webster dictionary – did you know that downtown Oakland once contained the largest coastal oak forest in the world?). When the ferry became outdated and was replaced it was repurposed as a restaurant moored first at San Rafael and then subsequently towed to its Benicia Carquinez Strait location in 1943 – the City’s State Park recreation area parking lot served the restaurant as well. From any angle - maritime history, heritage tourism, or fine dining - the loss of the “Encinal” ferry/“Spenger’s Grotto” must still be felt by those lucky enough to have traveled with her or who enjoyed her last reincarnation as a fine dining destination.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Louis Alfeld, *President*
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- Susan Sullivan, *Secretary*
- Sam Chohan, *Treasurer*
- Dee Case
- John Halliday
- Larry Lauber
- Elizabeth Murphy
- Reginald Page
- Mike Caplin

### MUSEUM STAFF

- Elizabeth d’Huart, *Executive Director*
- Maureen Williams, *Office Manager*
- Katelyn Burmark, *Special Projects*
- Steve Courtial, *Complex Caretaker*
- George Hobrecker, *Rental Caretaker*

### VOLUNTEER STAFF

- Harry Wassmann, *Curator Emeritus*
- Beverly Phelan, *Curator*
- Roberta Garrett, *Registrar*
- Jim Garrett, *Multitask Volunteer*
- Bob Kvasnicka, *Registrar*
- Fred Paine, *Computer Consultant*
- Susan Sullivan, *Education Chair*

### MUSEUM INTERN

- Kiersten Rabehl

### MUSEUM DOCENTS

- Louis Alfeld
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- Sam Chohan
- Mike Caplin
- Cathy Christo
- Jim Lessenger
- Elizabeth Murphy
- Reg Page
- Craig Parrot
- Lorraine Patten
- Bob Rozett
- Rick Stierwalt
- Sam Sullivan
- Susan Sullivan
- Bill Venturrelli

### MUSEUM EXHIBIT HOURS

- Wednesday through Sunday
- 1:00pm to 4:00pm
- Call or visit Website for Holiday Hours

### OFFICE HOURS

- Tuesday through Friday
- 9:00am to 2:00pm
- Call for holiday hours.

### ADMISSION:

- Adult: \$5.00
- Student: \$3.00
- Senior: \$3.00
- Children 5 to 12: \$2.00
- Children under 5: free
- Members: free
- Military with ID: free

Free first Wednesday of every month

## Volunteer Internship Position – Museum Associate

Currently, the Museum has openings for the position of “Museum Associate”. Museum Associates assist visitors in the museum during regular exhibit hours, and may have opportunities to assist with research and education programs.

College students in continuing education courses in History, Political science, or Museum Studies are invited to apply. Must be over 18 with reliable transportation.

For more information, please go to the Museum website at [www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org/](http://www.beniciahistoricalmuseum.org/)



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