



Two Events in October for LHS Supporters

Lafayette Historical Society's Speaker Series

History of the Lafayette Cemetery

Wednesday, October 26, 2011 ~ 3:00 p.m.

Speakers: **Mary McCosker**, co-author "Images of America ~ Lafayette"
and **Nancy Flood**, Alamo-Lafayette Cemetery District Board Member

Arts and Science Room (Mezzanine Level)

Lafayette Library and Learning Center • *Limited seating*

Donation requested – **\$10** LHS Members; **\$15** for Non-Members

~and~

A Special Walking Tour with Lafayette Historical Society

The Lafayette Cemetery

Sunday, October 30, 2011 ~ 1:30 p.m

Tour Leader: *Mary McCosker*, co-author of "Images of America—Lafayette"
Meet at the Lafayette Cemetery

Donation Requested: **\$10** members - **\$15** non-members

(Please note: The cemetery grounds are on a slope, with uneven ground and walking can be difficult. Sturdy shoes are recommended as most areas are not paved.)

Who's Who in the Lafayette Cemetery? Learn about this and more at our October events.
Complete details on page 3.

President's Message

Even though life quiets down in Lafayette during the summer months, your Historical Society has been busy presenting and planning programs for local historical buffs.

On **July 21**, **Clive Worsley**, *Artistic Director of Town Hall Theater Company*, took attendees on a backstage tour of Town Hall, with history of the building and information about upcoming theater programs. On *Wednesday, October 26*, there will be a program at the Library about the history of the **Lafayette Cemetery**, followed by a tour of the cemetery grounds on *Sunday, October 30*. Information about those events is in this newsletter. Contact the **Historical Society** for details and reservations. **The Historical Society** is grateful to the *Directors of the Alamo-Lafayette Cemetery* for sharing its facility with us.

We hope we saw you at the **Art & Wine Festival** last month. We are very grateful to **Mechanics Bank** who donated the booth that we shared with the **Library Foundation** near **Chow Restaurant**. *Old Betsy* was happy to see you as well!

Featured in this issue are two more of our wonderful LHS volunteers: **George Wasson** is a member of the Board as well as *Old Betsy's* keeper. George takes *Old Betsy* out of her space in the Library garage to various events in Lamorinda. **Julie Sullivan** is a writer and editor extraordinaire (*author of **Voices of Lafayette***) who shares her talents with our group via the newsletter and society press releases. Thanks to **George and Julie** for sharing their time and talents with LHS.

Finally please check the latest historical display upstairs in the Library: ***Old Time Summers in Lafayette***...thanks to **Laura Torkelson** and **Effie Herrick** for the excellent display. Plans are now being made for the next display which will highlight the **100th anniversary** of the **Lafayette Improvement Association**.



Enjoying the swimming hole

—Mary McCosker



Who's Who in the Lafayette Cemetery? ~ *Join Us at One of Two Events This Month and Find Out!*

Lafayette's Cemetery has been a landmark for many years.

When 13-year old **Henrietta Hodges** died of tuberculosis in **1854**, there was no cemetery to properly bury the young girl. **Medford Gorham** permitted her burial on a portion of his land which was adjacent to her parents' homestead. "It was a pleasing grassy knoll with good drainage and a vista of lovely valleys and hills and hillsides."

"The route of a road to commence at the road leading from Martinez to the Redwoods at or near the Grave Yard" was the official description given to the main thoroughfare that is now the interchange near Mt. Diablo Blvd and Pleasant Hill Road on January 8, **1856!**

John Standish died in **1867** and is buried in the cemetery. He is a direct descendent of **Myles Standish**, the Mayflower pilgrim.

Lafayette Cemetery became official on **October 15, 1874**, when **Medford Gorham** sold four and a half acres of his land for \$100 to the newly formed *Cemetery Corporation of Lafayette*. By that time many other settlers had been laid to rest there.

Mary McCosker and **Nancy Flood** will share these stories and much more about the history of the Lafayette Cemetery and the development of the *Alamo-Lafayette Cemetery District* on **Wednesday, October 26** at 3:00 p.m. in the *Arts & Science Room* in the Lafayette Library & Learning Center.

Join us on **Sunday, October 30** at 1:30 p.m. when **Mary McCosker** takes us on our *first ever walking tour of the cemetery!* She will point out the gravesites of the well known settlers of our area.

Donations requested for the events are **\$10** for LHS members and **\$15** for non-members. Receive a **\$5 discount** if you attend both events.

Seating is limited for the talk on **October 30** and the cemetery grounds can be *difficult to navigate because of the unpaved uneven grounds*. We encourage you to send an email with your reservation or questions to lafayette.history@comcast.net or call the *History Room*, or call 925-283-1848.

—**Judie Peterson**



From Twelve Pupils In A One-Room School

Now that students everywhere are back in school, it's a good time to take a backward glimpse at school life in Lafayette over the last century. The earliest record of Lafayette schools dates from **1852**, when what was probably the first schoolhouse in Contra Costa County was erected here. It was a small, one room structure near the intersection of Second Street and Golden Gate Way. It isn't known if classes were held that first year, but the following year 25 year old **Benjamin Shreve**, who had been a schoolmaster in Kentucky and happened to be passing through town, was persuaded to stay. Shreve taught 12 children during the winter of **1853-54** and went on to become one of Lafayette's most prominent citizens.

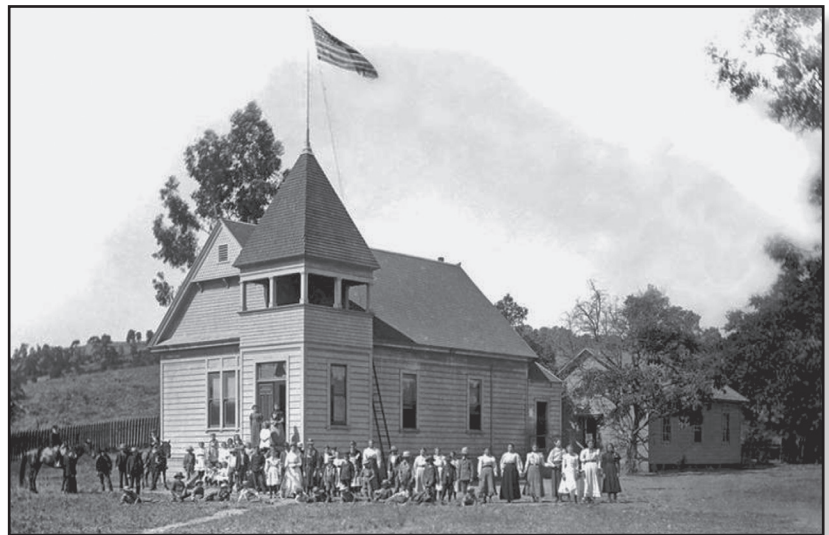
A series of male schoolmasters presided at what was called **School Number One** through the **1850's**. The first woman teacher on record was **Elizabeth Jewitt** in **1862**. By **1865** the school had an enrollment of 43 pupils in five classes. School was held for four months that year, and the **Lafayette School District** was the fifth largest of the county's 26 districts.

By **1868** the school year averaged five months. A tax levy passed in **1868** raised \$1,000 to build a new grammar school. Votes were 16 for and 3 against. This building opened in **1871** with 34 students. It was located on Moraga Road, where the *Methodist Church* stands today. By **1879**, school hours were 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and school was held for nine months.

In **1893** a third school building was erected with funds from a \$2,000 levy. Both buildings were used until **1923**, when the second schoolhouse was transformed into a post office, library and telephone exchange. The **Lafayette Improvement Association** relocated the building to face Mt. Diablo Boulevard. It was later sold, and in the **1950's** housed the *Shillalah Café* and is now the *Red Wagon Children's' Clothing Store*.

During the **1890's** and early **1900's** enrollment at Lafayette School averaged 70 students, with a principal and one teacher. In the late **1800's** there was no nearby high school and elementary schools often included the first year of high school.

In **1927** the fourth **Lafayette Grammar School** was erected across Moraga Road at School Street. After the building was completed, the **Lafayette School District** trustees sold the third school house and property to the *Methodist Church* for \$2,000, to be used as a sanctuary and parsonage. Although the building was later remodeled and expanded, an original school bell still remains in the bell tower.



This was the third school house built in Lafayette (1893). The second school house (1871) is visible behind it.

Acalanes Union High School District (which today includes four high schools and serves Canyon, Orinda, Moraga and parts of Walnut Creek as well as Lafayette) was created in **1939**. In that year land was purchased for **Acalanes High School**. Prior to the completion of **Acalanes High School** in **1940**, students from Lafayette attended **Mt. Diablo High School** in Concord.

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Today, the Lafayette School District includes four elementary schools, *Burton Valley*, *Lafayette*, *Happy Valley* and *Springhill*, as well as *M. H. Stanley Middle School*, with a combined enrollment of approximately 3,000 students.

The LHS History Room in the *Lafayette Library and Learning Center* has dozens of photos of all the historic Lafayette schools and the children who attended them. Would your children enjoy seeing the way children dressed, and what schools were like not so long ago? Bring them in when you're at the Library. The History Room is open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. For more information call 925-283-1848 or visit www.lafayettehistory.org.

–Julie Sullivan (as published in August *Lafayette Today*)

Lafayette Improvement Association Celebrates 100 Years

The Lafayette Improvement Association, organized as the *Lafayette Improvement Club*, will celebrate its **100th anniversary** on **November 11**. The following article appeared in the *Lafayette Sun* on **October 8, 1942** and lists many of the early accomplishments of the organization:

Newcomers & Oldtimers

The Lafayette Improvement Club Needs Your Support. We, the Directors, Believe It Deserves Your Support.

In a non-incorporated town such as ours there are no elected officials whose business it is to carry on the welfare of the community as a whole. It, therefore, becomes the responsibility of each of us to join with his neighbors to see that our community provides the proper environment for our homes and children. Individually it is difficult to obtain action but when backed by an organized group of responsible people results can be expected.

The Improvement Club was founded about thirty years ago by a group of farseeing men who realized the potentialities of our town. Many of the women have stood shoulder to shoulder with the men in the past and are ready to do the same now. These founders desired that there be a forum where, by free and open discussion, the needs of the community could best be served. the **Improvement Club** is your “**TOWN HALL**” and its discussions are the very essence of democracy and local self-government.

The Improvement Club has fully justified its existence over the past years. Such public improvements as: The Low-level Tunnel; the water system; the zoning ordinances; the library; and the bus transportation are typical of the projects which it has sponsored to successful fruition in the past. Its work is known and respected throughout the county. But it is not enough that we should rest upon our laurels. There still remains much to be done particularly in these trying times and in the next few years ahead of us. If you own property or live in Lafayette you must have ideas for the betterment of this community. Let us hear from you or better still, come to our meetings and talk it over with your neighbors. You will be surprised what new values you will find through knowing your neighbors and working with them for the common good.

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Meet Our Board and Volunteers



George, Old Betsy and kids at Burton Valley School - 1979

George was born in New York State in 1923. Both his mother and father were engineers for *General Electric Company*. He grew up in what is now Havertown, Pennsylvania in suburban Philadelphia. He graduated from high school in 1941 and entered Purdue University.

George was drafted into the Navy in 1943. After several months he ended up in Radio Material School, Treasure Island, San Francisco. He was assigned to the *USS Wasatch AGC 9* and eventually was a 1st class Petty Officer Radio Technician.

George returned to Purdue and graduated in 1948 with a BS in Electrical Engineering. He accepted a job in Detroit and enrolled at the University of Detroit in the afternoon law school. He graduated and passed the Michigan Bar exam in 1952. In 1954 he became a Registered Patent Attorney to practice in the US Patent Office.

While in law school he met **June Murphy** and they were married in 1952. They have three children; a son and daughter born in Michigan and a daughter born in California.

Delighted to return to California, George accepted a job in 1957 with California Research Corp. (*Standard Oil of California, Chevron Corp.*) and moved to Lafayette in 1957. He passed the California Bar that year. He retired from Chevron in 1983 as a Senior Patent Attorney and started a small practice of Intellectual Property Law. During a

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Julie Sullivan, a native of Ohio, holds a BS degree cum laude in Education from Ohio State University with majors in English and Journalism. In her first career she was a teacher, an editor, a corporate communications representative and a free lance writer.

She married her husband, **Bill**, in 1971. They have a son and a daughter and four adorable (*what else?*) grandchildren. The family relocated to Concord, California in 1984 when the children were in elementary school. Julie opted out of the career track, but discovered she still needed the stimulation of the working world. She dived into the pool of part-time employment, finding some jobs intriguing and others disastrous. These included tax preparer, legal assistant and office administrator. In 1997 she found her dream job part time job, working for **Bill Eames** (owner of the former *Bill's Drugs*) in Lafayette. It drew upon many facets of her background as she planned conventions, wrote Eames family histories, and edited family memoirs along with normal office tasks.



Julie Sullivan

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Association Celebrates 100 Years

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The article goes on to tell about the next meeting and lists the members of the *Board of Directors*. At the time, **Jack Pedder** was the president of the group and many other familiar names appear as officers and directors.

LHS will be displaying information, photos and ephemera from it's archives honoring the Lafayette Improvement Association's 100th anniversary in the *Library and Learning Center* during the month of November.

–Nancy Flood

Meet Our Board and Volunteers

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George Wasson

conversation with a friend he was introduced to the Lafayette Improvement Association (LIA) and later joined the board sometime and served as president. When Lafayette was considering incorporation in 1968, he became active in that effort and was a candidate (one of 20) for *City Council*.

In 1974 he again was a candidate and was elected to *City Council*, serving as *mayor* in 1976. During this time, Lafayette acquired the city's historic first motorized fire engine, known as *Old Betsy*. When someone asked who would drive it, George volunteered.

Lou Repetto, long active in the community (who passed away several years ago), asked George to join the newly formed Lafayette Historical Society. After serving as president, he became the unofficial custodian of *Old Betsy*. Although *Old Betsy* is owned by the city, LHS is charged with its maintenance and restoration. After many years in George's garage and lots of effort by the citizens of Lafayette, *Old Betsy* was restored and has her own area in the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. George still gets to drive her when needed but is actively looking for others to share the pleasure.

Julie Sullivan

In 2005, Eames approached Julie with the biggest project yet, compiling a series of oral histories of the businesses and people that built Lafayette. After five years of interviewing, writing and learning extensively about the wonderful city of Lafayette and its people, Julie completed *Voices of Lafayette* in 2009. Eames donated the proceeds of the book, which is in its second printing, to the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Writing *Voices* inspired Julie to write her own illustrated family history, which she presented to her son and daughter and their families as a Christmas gift several years ago. She now offers her professional services on a free lance basis to others who need help planning, writing or publishing their family histories.

Julie continues to work for Eames occasionally and also volunteers for Friends of Ygnacio Valley Library in Walnut Creek, where she creates a monthly silent auction. In 2010 LHS contacted Julie about helping with the oral history project and writing their monthly column in *Lafayette Today*, and she is happily embroiled in Lafayette history once again.

2011-2012 Board of Directors

President:Mary McCosker

Vice President:Marechal Duncan

Treasurer:Paul Sheehan

Recording Secretary:Nancy Flood

Corresponding Secretary:Oliver Hamlin

John Otto

Judie Peterson

Tom Titmus

Laura Torkelson

George Wasson

Contact Us:.....History Room – 283-1848

– or – lafayette.history@comcast.net



Lafayette Historical Society Membership Application

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City-Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Categories and Annual Dues

(Please check one)

- ☐ Student Membership \$10.00
- ☐ Individual Membership \$25.00
- ☐ Family Membership \$50.00
- ☐ Sponsor Membership \$500.00

Please indicate areas of special interest

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Base Entry of Photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research-Genealogy | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo Collection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephoning | <input type="checkbox"/> News Clippings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Displays | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Engine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Histories | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking Tours-Outreach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History Room | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Please mail this application to:

Lafayette Historical Society

P.O. Box 133

Lafayette, CA 94549