

The Branch Line

Newsletter of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

Spring 2023

STIR CRAZY QUILTS: QUILTING DURING THE PANDEMIC FEB. 1-MAY 31, 2023



What do quilters do when stuck at home during a pandemic? Quilt!

A new exhibit will open February 1, 2023, which displays quilts created in the past three years. Titled "Stir Crazy: Quilting During the Pandemic", forty very different quilts will be enjoyed by visitors to the Museum of the San Ramon Valley from February 1 to May 31, 2023.

These quilts, which range in styles and techniques, offer a glimpse into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of quilters during one of the most challenging times in recent history. From the depictions of social distancing and mask-wearing to the more abstract representations of the emotions brought on by the pandemic, these quilts are a testament to the resilience and creativity of the human spirit.

During regular hours on the fourth Tuesday of February through May, admission is free for special quilt presentations. In addition, exhibit quilt creators will be on hand on some special days to talk to visitors about quilting and tell stories about their Covid quilts.

Most quilts came from "stashes" of fabrics which quilters have in their homes especially since, for a time, specialty quilt stores were closed. One quilt is made up of clothes the quilter "impulse bought" and then cut up for her quilt. Another creation provides a photo of Dr. Fauci in one corner.

Some of the quilts will be included in new smartphone technology called Engage by Cell allowing visitors to hear the quilters share their quilt stories, providing a modern way to learn about a traditional craft.

The quilt committee is Carmen Curtis, Barbara Mahan, Beverly Lane, Dianne Barnett, Maryann Maiorana with support from Donna Grier and Dan Dunn, collections and house volunteers.



Winter and Spring Calendar of Events



Feb. 1-May 31 *Stir Crazy Quilts* exhibit opens

Feb. 15 Museum annual meeting, 7pm Town Meeting Hall, 201 Front Street, Danville
- Review of the Year, Financial Report, Election of new Trustees

Feb. 16 Virtual Program: The History of Eastern Contra Costa County, 11:30am

Mar. 16 Virtual Program, 11:30am

Apr. 20 Virtual Program, 11:30am

Apr. 27 Shops and Hops Craft Beer Stroll, 6-9pm Downtown Danville

Activity at the Museum

From the Museum Store

The Tassajara School is open!

The Museum Store is ready to help parents get their students ready to attend The Tassajara One Room School.

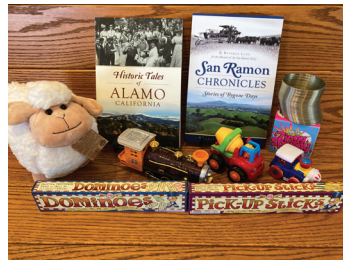
Having the right outfit has never been easier. We offer our 100% cotton bonnets and aprons, handmade by museum volunteers. Each set is unique and your student will stand out from the crowd of mass-produced sets bought online.

We also offer suspenders for those students wearing pants. Shop local and support the Museum at the same time!



The Museum Store continues to offer you a complete selection of books on the San Ramon Valley as well as a great selection of toys and games.

What a wonderful way to support your local history museum and get the ideal item for your student or family member.



Save the Date!

Back to School Under the Stars Gala

Saturday, July 15, 2023 @ 5pm

The 6th Annual "Back to School Under the Stars" Gala is scheduled for Saturday, July 15, 2023 at 5:00pm at the Tassajara One Room School House! Our signature Silent Auction will continue again and the gala committee is working to bring added ambiance this year to highlight the history of the San Ramon Valley.

We are grateful to our sponsors and supporters who made last year's Gala a success, allowing the Museum to not only continue our current work and programming, but expand our offerings to include monthly virtual educational/historical programs for all.

Please call the Museum at 837-3750 for sponsorship opportunities or if you would like to donate funds or auction items. Stay tuned for ticket sales and online auction details! We'll see you on July 15th!



The Third Thursday Virtual Program

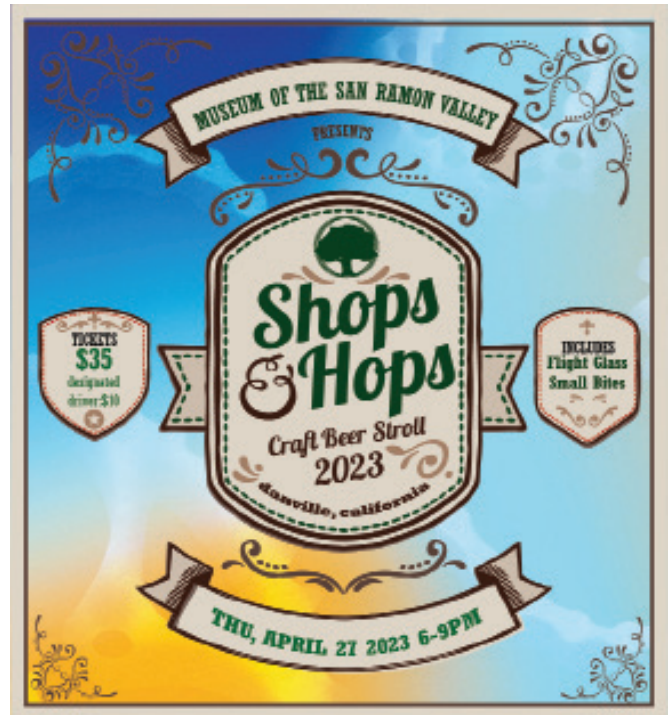
The past 2+ years we have had programs covering topics as diverse as the Old Mint in San Francisco, the story of Canyon, CA and the Alamo Pioneer Cemetery to name three.

As we continue to develop our virtual program offerings, we would like to invite our members to suggest topics that they would like to see covered. These topics do not always need to be from the San Ramon Valley.

One of the key goals of the virtual program has always been to inform and entertain. To achieve this goal we are always looking for fresh and original ideas that can help shape our program.

Please take a moment and let us know what you would like to see in the coming year.

To members who have been attending, thank you. If your schedule does not allow you to attend the live program, take a moment to go to the website and watch the program. To view our past programs go to our website museumsrv.org. At the site you will see Events and Programs click and Past Programs will display.



Enjoy a fun-filled evening of craft beer sampling and shopping during the Danville Shops & Hops Craft Beer Stroll benefitting the educational and community programs at the Museum. Downtown merchant pouring locations will offer small bites while area breweries pour their crafted creations.

Only 350 tickets will be sold starting in March. Buy yours before they sell out!



2022 CUMULATIVE GIVING OF \$100 AND OVER

The Museum would like to thank our generous supporters, especially during these trying times, for their efforts to ensure that the Museum is able to continue to preserve and present the history of the San Ramon Valley.

\$100.00 - \$249.00

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\$250.00 - \$499.00

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\$500.00 - \$999.00

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1891 Society (\$1,000.00+)

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Volunteers Make It Happen

Why Do I Volunteer?

When I retired ten years ago, I really didn't have a "plan". After working for most of my adult life, I soon grew restless having so little to do. My grandbabies were in school, many of my friends still worked and I was BORED!

After some research, and remembering the times I'd brought my children to the "Trains" exhibit, I contacted the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. I wasn't ready to commit a lot of time and found I could work one 3 hour shift a month as a Greeter, so I jumped in!

Little did I know how much I would learn about the rich history of the valley where I had lived for close to 40 years, how many wonderful people I'd meet and work with, and how rewarding the work would be.

So, now I find myself the chair of the Volunteer Committee, answering queries about volunteering with MSRV, working with corporate outreach groups, planning training sessions and a lot of other things. I've learned that this is a very special place for our community, not only for the building's historic qualities, but for the people who volunteer here in every capacity you can imagine.

If you are newly retired or the kids are all in school and you are looking for a Volunteer Opportunity, please contact me. You can send in an interest form through our website or leave a message at the museum office. I will get back to you as soon as I can.

I promise, it will be a learning adventure with great people.

- Lynne Call, Volunteer Coordinator

This was the type of student that exasperates some adults. His hand shot up at every chance and he had lots to say. Like the children of the First Peoples we were studying, the kids were learning by doing. They tried weaving, grinding acorns, throwing spears, drilling shell coins and finding out about animals through their paw prints and by touching their fur. At each station, the energetic student's mind was visibly racing.

In the final moments of our program that morning as the class prepared to depart, I offered him my ear and he gave the gift every teacher craves. He looked up at me and blurted excitedly, "The more I learn, the more questions I have!" and then dashed out the door.

Most of us become First Peoples Program docents for moments like that. We, too, aim to claim the mantle of life-long learners, who want to know more, keep finding out more, and then figure out effective ways to share it.

Like so many of the Museum's programs, the First Peoples Schools Program offers many chances to learn and share discoveries with curious students. Emerging from COVID restrictions, the program has rebounded and 2022 welcomed 33 classrooms. We visited with 848 students and dozens of parent chaperones, every one of them impacted in some meaningful way by their morning at the museum.

This was also a great year for the Program as we brought five new docent teachers on board, which is critical to the Program's continued success. That includes one dedicated soul, Ed Angle, who showed up nearly every day and provided more assistance than can even be recounted!

Will you be part of next year's First Peoples Program docent recruits? The rewards are many and the commitment is comfortably manageable. The program's lessons and evolving content are particularly poignant at this time in American history when we are publicly revisiting our past, and how it has traditionally been taught. We are excited for next year's 4th grade experience and hope you'll consider joining our wonderful team of docent teachers.

- Barb Kusha, First Peoples Program Volunteer

One-Room School is Back in Session!

School in the year 1888 is back in session at the Tassajara One Room School, 1650 Finley Road in the Tassajara Valley. Training for volunteer docents, assistants, and superintendents took place on January 9 at Oak Hill Park and the first third grade classes arrived on January 20.

The volunteer committee for this popular program is: Marilyn Holcomb, Sue Thomas, Jill Larson, Shirley Osmer, Rosanne Fissore, Renee Spitz, Joan Kurtz, and Gail Kamerer. Donna Grier keeps the calendar for the program which includes 81 classes from 23 schools in 2023.

The school and yard, which are little gems, have been cleaned and refreshed by Richard Bower, Michael Slattengren, Ross Smith, Lynne Call, Carol Jeha, Ed Angle and local high school students with Dan Dunn providing stalwart support.

Aprons, bonnets, and suspenders may be purchased at the Museum store. Passports for third graders were also recently distributed, produced for the students by the SRV Unified School District with Gail Kamerer taking the lead. When students come to the Museum they focus on transportation, prehistory and cattle ranching which appear in their Passports.

Obituary:

The Museum Loses a Founder, Betty Dunlap



On October 2, 2022 Betty Humburg Overholtzer Dunlap passed away at age 96. After she retired from the Orinda School District in the eighties, she worked with the new Museum of the San Ramon Valley as a Trustee and early Board President. She was a member of the committee which researched local history museums and a keeper of history. Descended from both the Stone and Humburg families who came to Alamo in the 1850s, she made sure Alamo history appeared accurately in writing the *Guide to*

Historic Places and in the documentation of many of our exhibits.

Betty and Paul Dunlap supported the Museum in a myriad of ways including producing graphic designs by Paul, helping with the programs and exhibits and organizing and installing the blockbuster exhibit "Beasts in Your Backyard". Her dedication, intelligence and sense of humor are remembered by all who knew her.



Rain, Rain Go Away, Come Again Another Day

by Beverly Lane

California's rainy season has left us soggy and more than grateful for sunny days. However, historians would ask you to recall the Megastorms of 1861 and 1862.

A 43-day storm which began in December of 1861 turned the Central Valley and Southern California into inland seas and killed thousands of people, according to a Scientific American article in 2013. Sixty-six inches of rain fell in Los Angeles that year. The Sierras had snow levels from 10 to 15 feet followed by warm rainfall sending water into rivers in unprecedented levels. The water rose to 30 feet in some areas, covering the new telegraph poles which stretched from Sacramento to New York. All of Sacramento was entirely under 10 feet of brown water that January with Gov. Leland Stanford getting to his inauguration in a row boat.

The authors pointed out that "California's legislature, unable to function, moved to San Francisco until Sacramento dried out – six months later. By then, the state was bankrupt." And a Contra County Gazette writer let loose to write "Certainly not less than one-third of the surface of California has been visited as if by a blighting plague, a desolating earthquake or a devouring fire."

William Brewer, who was surveying California, noted that in January of 1862: "thousands of farms are entirely under water – cattle starving and drowning. All the roads in the middle of the state are impassable; so all mails are cut off." One quarter of the state's 800,000 cattle drowned in the flood.



Sacramento's K Street in 1862

Cal Professor B. Lynn Ingram wrote "The entire population of Alamo, at the foot of Mt. Diablo 50 miles east of San Francisco, was forced to flee rising flood waters. People abandoned their homes in the middle of the night. Some found refuge, others drowned. The San Ramon Valley was one sheet of water from hill to hill as far as the eye could see. The destructive force of the floods was awesome: houses, otherwise intact and complete with their contents, were carried away in the rapids; horses, cattle, and barns were swept downstream for miles."

A *Contra Costa Gazette* article on Dec. 3, 1861 stated that in Alamo, "it came suddenly and without any warning at about three in the morning... Many of the people fled as fast as possible and took refuge in the Academy and Wolfe's brick store. August Hemme lost a large barn, a fine carriage and some outbuildings and fences. And George Engelmayer had 1500 sacks of wheat destroyed."

In one of his farm diaries, San Ramon's George McCamley wrote (January 2, 1862): "rained all day and all night. Creek very high, the whole county flooded." The *Gazette* stated that "The bridges have been swept away or rendered impassable from one end of the county to the other," which included the bridge over San Ramon Creek just south of McCamley's property.

What a mess it was. California agricultural historians pointed out that these floods marked a transformation from the state's Age of Grazing to the Age of Grains since so many cattle were lost. The County's wheat and hay production in the next decades was tremendous, with much of the local firm, flavorful grain sent to the Liverpool Corn Exchange on ships out of Martinez. Local hay was a staple crop sold for horse consumption in San Francisco liveries, Presidio cavalry and draft horses.

Our winter season is still not over and the rainfall is impressive. As scientists study the 1861-62 storms, they have sediment studies which indicate such Megastorms have happened in California about every 200 years. This is truly devastating to contemplate. At least for now, we can only hope the remaining valley barns stay in place in 2023.

Sources

William H. Brewer, *Up and Down California in 1860-1864*; B. Lynn Ingram "California Megaflood: Lessons from a Forgotten Disaster", *Scientific American*, Jan. 1, 2013; Ralph Cozine, "Agriculture: For a Century the Business of the Valley"; John and Tena Gallagher research; George McCamley's farm diary for 1862. *CCC Gazette*: Dec. 3, 1861, Jan. 18, 1862

The Museum Introduces Cell Phone Guided Tours



guide by cell

The museum is excited to announce that we recently invested in a new smartphone technology called Engage by Cell. We will begin using Engage by Cell with the Stir Crazy Quilts: Quilting During the Pandemic exhibit. Visitors will have the opportunity to use their cell phones to access audio and visual information about some of the quilts. This new capability allows our visitors to have a more interactive and personal experience as they visit the exhibit. We have personally curated the audio and video content to make for a much more meaningful and deeper understanding of the quilts.

By offering this capability we are working to continually improve to enhance the visitor's experience. This guide by cell capability is available to all visitors and is included in the cost of admission. The museum encourages all to bring their cell phones and take advantage of this great new capability.



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The Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

Spring 2023



The Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

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