

The Branch Line

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

Summer 2023

Totally Trains Returns for the Eleventh Year! June 24 - August 27, 2023



The Museum of The San Ramon Valley takes great pleasure in announcing that Totally Trains will return again this summer. It will be its' 11th year. This would not be possible if it were not for the numerous hours contributed by a small dedicated core of volunteers and the financial support of the visitors and members of the Museum.

The majority of the popular items will be returning. The freight room will feature the large (20 by 9ft) layout. Visitors will observe multiple trains traveling over bridges, a trestle and through a mountain and a canyon before stopping in the town of Danville. The secondary layout will have one or two new working accessories.

This year the baggage room will feature a mail car. Children will be able to sort mail and packages just as the mailmen did in the past on the trains. As part of the exhibit will be a large collection of Plasticville buildings, and model trains of the past. This will be the first year that the "Engage by Cell" codes will be utilized for the exhibit. If you haven't seen the exhibit before, come and see what you have been missing. If you have seen it before, come and see what is new.



By popular demand the "Family Pass" will be returning. This will entitle a family unlimited entry for the exhibit for only \$20. The Exhibit opens June 24th and closes Aug. 27th. The Museum's summer hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 to 1pm and Sundays from 12 to 3pm.

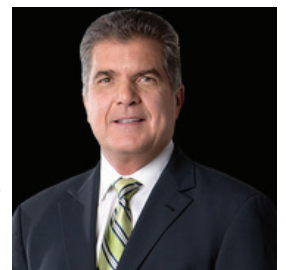
Tassajara One-Room School Gala & Online Auction Returns! Saturday, July 15, 2023, 5-8pm

The 6th Annual "Back to School Under the Stars" Gala event is scheduled for Saturday, July 15. We invite you to join us to enjoy the festivities at the One Room Schoolhouse under the majestic black oak trees. This year we are pleased to welcome our guest Master of Ceremonies, San Ramon Valley resident and KTVU Fox 2 Sports Anchor/Reporter, Joe Fonzi.



Tassajara School, Class of 1946

The Museum is honored to recognize the Class of 1946, the final year classes were conducted at the One Room Schoolhouse. They participated in an educational process that concluded in the San Ramon Valley. The Class of '46 is an important piece of the historical tapestry of the Valley, so it is timely and proper to celebrate them.



Joe Fonzi, Gala 2023 MC

The gala provides the opportunity for Museum supporters to meet with old friends and make new ones at a Social/Dinner/Beverage event including entertainment and a Museum trivia game. The event is also an opportunity to participate in the online auction as well as the raffle, which is only available at the event. The online only Museum supporters have the opportunity to choose among the myriad of items being auctioned with the proceeds going directly to the Museum. It is the perfect "Everybody Wins" scenario.

We look forward to a special event this year, whether you choose to join us at the One Room Schoolhouse or choose to support the Museum solely through the auction. For more information, visit www.MuseumSRV.org.

Use the QR codes to purchase tickets to the Gala and to preview online auction items, starting on July 5th.



Gala Tickets



Online Auction

Visit History and the Iron Horse Trail

Over a million people use the Iron Horse Regional Trail each year as it follows the Southern Pacific San Ramon Branch Line (SRBL) right-of-way. Not only do visitors enjoy a walk with friends or long distance run or bicycle commute but they have the chance to learn some history along the way. In the San Ramon Valley alone, there are four interpretive signs or historical plaques in place.

Let's trace some of that history. The SRBL opened through the valley in 1891 with one Contra Costa Gazette article praising the Alamo ranches: "...it is worth going a long journey to see. The trees are trimmed to a model with mathematical precision, and their luxuriant growth would attest the careful cultivation of the ground, were it not evident from ocular inspection. Not a suspicion of weed is to be notice anywhere, and the finely pulverized ground is as smooth as a floor."

The rails ended at San Ramon (around today's Fostoria Way) that year, then were extended to the Radum area of Pleasanton in 1909. What a boon it was to the rural area -- especially in rainy winter weather -- as it carried grains, hay, beets, cattle, fruit, nuts and passengers.

Significant dates for the railroad include July 4, 1906, when a group picnic park on the Meese Ranch (today's Greenbrook) opened for business. Ramona Park had planned to open April 26th but the San Francisco quake and fire hit on April 18th. The July opening event sent all the profits to the refugees. In 1934 passenger service ended, during World War II troops were transported and, in 1978, the entire line was abandoned. The rails were removed in 1978 and 1979.

Hemme Station Park in Alamo has some handsome wayside signs which visitors enjoy, placed by the County and Alamo MAC. Stories about prominent rancher August Hemme who helped persuade Southern Pacific leaders to build the SRBL are provided. At one point there was a SP freight depot with warehouses in this area which was first called Hemme and later labelled Alamo.



The Southern Pacific's "decorative model" Danville depot, 1910

The two-story Danville Southern Pacific depot (now the Museum of the San Ramon Valley) has a historical plaque on a brick pedestal placed by the San Ramon Valley Historical Society. It provides basic information about the line, Danville and the depot. The train's arrival greatly benefited Danville because of the depot's proximity to the village.

In 1996, the depot was moved 600 feet from its original site (Lunardi's today) and restored by the Museum board and many volunteers. It is still on the large station land. The three other two-story combination depots in gold and brown were located in Concord, Walnut Creek and San Ramon. Third graders find one of their Passport destinations at

the depot where they learn about this mode of transportation.

A new plaque featuring the San Ramon two-story depot and other buildings on the large station land was just dedicated by the SRV Historical Society in March of this year. Since the line ended in this location (north of today's Fostoria Way) for nearly 20 years, there was an engine house and a gallows turn-around in that spot. Bill Ferreira said that a bell would ring in the morning and people would come to turn the engine around, pushing the long handle on the turn-around.

(continued on page 4)



The San Ramon engine house and gallows turnaround, circa 1900



Happenings Around the Museum

The Third Thursday Virtual Programs

The April edition of *Danville Alamo Today* had a great article on the Museum's free virtual programs. This popular program started in 2020 and continues to grow as mentioned in the article. Thanks to our friends at *Danville Alamo Today*!





This year we have heard about the eastern part of County Costa County from long-time resident and college professor, Carol Jensen. Then the Museum's curator, Beverly Lane, told the history and story of the East Bay Regional Parks. As we closed out the successful "Stir Crazy Quilts" exhibit Dolores Miller, a noted textile artist, shared with us the rise and story of textiles as art.



Future programs this year will include topics on how geology shaped the city of Oakland, the history of BART from long-time spokesperson Mike Healey, the maritime history of Tiburon and Belverde, and the story of the famous escape from Alcatraz. It is fair to say we have a rather eclectic offering of programs, but all are driven by informing and entertaining our listeners. Please let us know if there are topics of interest for future programs.

If your schedule doesn't permit you to join us on the third Thursday of the month at 11:30, all of our fascinating programs are available for viewing on the Museum's website.

Calendar of Museum Activities

Date	Event	Location
May 23, 1:30pm	Quilting Demonstration - potholders	Museum of the San Ramon Valley
May 31	"Stir Crazy Quilts" exhibit ends	Museum of the San Ramon Valley
Jun. 1, 11:30am	One Room School Volunteer Luncheon	Museum of the San Ramon Valley
Jun. 3, 3:30pm	"Indigenous Native American Cultural History of the Diablo Valley" program	Museum of the San Ramon Valley
Jun. 15, 11:30am	"How Geology Shaped the City of Oakland" virtual program	MuseumSRV.org
Jun. 24	Model Trains Opens	Museum of the San Ramon Valley
Jul. 5	"Back to School Under the Stars" online auction preview begins https://msrv2023.ggo.bid/bidding/package-browse	MuseumSRV.org 
Jul. 10-16	"Back to School Under the Stars" online auction	MuseumSRV.org
Jul. 15, 5pm	"Back to School Under the Stars" Gala Tickets: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/back-to-school-under-the-stars-tickets-594809510257	Tassajara One Room School 

Shops & Hops Craft Beer Stroll a Success!

It was a great evening! On Thursday, April 27th the Museum held its annual craft beer stroll through historic downtown Danville. "Shops and Hops" 2023 drew over 300 happy craft beer tasters and shoppers. There were a dozen pouring stations and a dozen shops participating in the event. Ticket holders received a strolling map and a tasting glass. Then, they were on their own to explore the shops, chat with shop owners, taste small bites, try the craft beers and talk with the brewers.

The evening was warm and comfortable, particularly welcome after the stormy winter and spring. It was a good fundraiser for the museum and will help to support the museum's educational exhibits and programs. Many people remarked as to the great fun they had strolling with their friends and that they will certainly be back next year.

Thanks to all the volunteers, shop owners, brewers and ticket holders. Many thanks to our sponsoring breweries - Danville Brewery, Bear Republic Brewery, Drake's Brewing Co., Daddysoda Brewing Co., Canyon Lakes Brewery, Trumer Pils, Deschutes Brewery, John and Anne Kubas, and the Town of Danville. We all look forward to "Shops and Hops" 2024!



Visit History and the Iron Horse Trail continued...

The Gazette article pointed out "The site of the prospective depot is inconvenient for the people here. At present it is reached in a roundabout way through a private road. There is talk of opening a public road direct to the depot, and this should be done immediately" to reach the original San Ramon village.

The final plaque is an interesting one near the golf course in San Ramon. It commemorates the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and remembers the thousands of Chinese workers who built it. Sponsored by San Ramon, the County and the Asian Pacific Public Affairs Association, it reminds visitors of the impact railroads had on the West and western settlers.

After the rails were removed, there were many debates over what should happen on the right of way. Contra Costa County stepped up to purchase the land and cities along the way agreed to keep it clear of development. While some wanted to install light transit cars or called for a new BART line, the idea to have a Class 1 paved trail -- free from motorized vehicles -- was broadly championed. The East Bay Regional Park District included a visionary trail on the right-of-way in its 1980 Master Plan and, combined with some vigorous citizen support, the Iron Horse Trail was created. The District manages the trail with an easement from the County. It is now over 35 miles, goes to several BART stations and extends to Concord and into Pleasanton with bridges over Ygnacio Valley Rd. and Treat Blvd. An Iron Horse Trail bridge over Dublin Blvd. is currently being constructed and plans are complete for a trail bridge over Bollinger Canyon Road.

Trail advocates were warned that such a trail could take some time and that was certainly true. It was recognized as an American Millennium Trail in 2000 and a poster child for the Rails to Trails movement. When visiting the Iron Horse Trail, be sure to check out these history signs as you enjoy our glorious spring weather.

Sources: Irma M. Dotson's *San Ramon Branch of the Southern Pacific*, *Contra Costa Gazette* June 10, 1891

From the Museum Store

We have a new flock of our Woolly Wonders Sheep at the Museum Store. These cute and cuddly critters are the perfect gift for that special someone or yourself. The store recently sold one to a patron who told us she had to have one as her last name was Wool! The sheep are just one of our many plush toys from foxes to bears, racoons and others.



Starting on June 24, Model Trains will be running through the Depot. The Museum Store is on track to have an assortment of toy trains, engineer's hats, train whistles and other train related items for the kid in all of us.



Summer vacation is coming and we offer a wide assortment of games to help avoid that yell we've all heard: "There's nothing to do". Come in and check our games for all ages.

Keep the Museum in mind for the great selection of books and maps on the San Ramon Valley and Mt. Diablo. The Museum Store is a great way to buy these special gifts, support the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, and to shop local.



Guys in the Caboose - Bob and Mike



Have you ever wondered about the two "railroad men" in the caboose? Some have suggested traditional railroad names for them. However, these mannequins already have identifications-they were created to look like Museum volunteers Mike Giorsetto and Bob Petrie.

Retirees when the museum was moved and restored, these two men faithfully worked on all sorts of restoration projects. In particular, they scrapped and cleaned up the historic glass windows and became known as "the strippers." When the depot opened in 1999, they arrived every Wednesday morning and offered their services to curator Irma Dotson, doing just about anything.

Led by Barbara Hubinger, the caboose exhibit was designed to reflect what conductors and other railroad staff would do when not actively running the train. The committee decided to purchase high-end mannequins for the space and sent Bob and Mike's photographs (and some drawings) to the manufacturer. The faces are supposed to reflect these images.



Being a Docent: Teaching at its Finest!

by Vivienne Wong



There is something special about docents who teach the First Peoples Program at the Museum. Docents work from a 3-page outline of First Peoples facts. Their students are the 4th graders who attend the Museum's two hour program about California's earliest settlers. Yet, time and again, I have witnessed docents present their facts in a unique way in order to connect students to abstract ideas and distant historical times.

Take John who is trying to teach the significance of trade among the First Peoples. He asks the students, "Raise your hand if you like hamburgers?" Surprised and puzzled, children raise their hands. "Ah," he says, "That is trade. You give money and you receive the hamburger. You give something and you get something." Smiling, the 4th graders understand the value of trade. They are ready for more.

Take Stan who uses his acting skills to mimic animal sounds. "Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a First Peoples' village. Listen." Then he begins a series of calls, whistles, growls, and rustling of laurel branches. "Listen for the owl," he says. "Can you hear the wolf? Was that the growl of a bear?" Finally he says, "And that steady knocking that you are hearing. It's your mother. She's grinding acorns to make acorn mush for your meal. Open your eyes and welcome to a new day in an Indian village." With this auditory segment he begins the program.



Or when teaching about hunting, we tell children that Indians tracked animals by their paw prints. For modern day society that no longer hunts, this is an remote concept that makes faint impression on the children. One day Jane asked a new question, "What else do Indians use to track the animals?" When no one could answer, she said, "By their poop!" Instant visceral reaction and immediate comprehension. Children were still talking about it at the end of the program. Later Jane explained, "I'm a Cub Scout leader. Poop, or its more technical name scat, always gets their attention."

Docents bring their personalities and their imagination to teaching. What I have found is that this keeps the program interesting as docents learn and copy from each other. While some skills such as animal noises can only be done by those gifted with that talent, other techniques are easily passed on. As our docents admit, each docent presents in their own style. The program is continually evolving. The end result is teaching at its finest.

Volunteers Wanted: If YOU are interested in joining the First Peoples Program, contact Vivienne Wong, (925) 309 9019 or viv8wong@gmail.com to learn more.

Volunteer Corner - Thank you

Over the past few months, two of our longtime volunteers have decided to retire.

I'd like to recognize Alice Brydon for her dedication to the job of Docent Coordinator. Alice has been active with the Museum since its early days and spent close to 10 years in her current position. We will miss you Alice. Thank you for all the hours spent finding, training and retaining Docents, to say nothing of taking care of the Docent Calendar. It will be hard to replace you.

Our second retiree, Claudette LaBreche, was the Greeter Coordinator for a number of years. During that time she produced the monthly Greeter calendar with patience, always trying to make sure volunteers were placed on the days they wanted. We miss you, Claudette. I'm happy to let you know we have a wonderful student volunteer tackling the nuances of the Greeter Calendar.

Best wishes from all the Museum Volunteers and Members.





The Branch Line

The Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

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Visit www.museumsrv.org

Email: info@museumsrv.org

MUSEUM HOURS

SUMMER HOURS June 24th-August 27th:

Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Sunday 12:00 - 3:00 pm



THANK YOU



RECENT DONATIONS TO THE MUSEUM

Antique farm toys

Russell family information

Kodak camera, WW II memorabilia

Council memorabilia

Historical Society scrapbooks

Olsson family documents, clips

Cam Ewing

Frances Ann Edmonston

Rich Rosenthal

S. Donley Ritchey

Scott Ferreira (from Rose)

Betty Dunlap

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