

# The Branch Line

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

Summer 2021

## Totally Trains Returns! June - August, 2021



We are happy to announce that Model trains will be returning for its ninth year starting on June 19. The main layout will feature a village scene with models of Danville and San Ramon's present and past buildings.

The newest addition is the Danville Presbyterian Church which stood on Front Street from 1876 to 1932. Various figures will help create different scenes. You will see trains running over bridges, trestles and through a mountain.

Hopefully restrictions due to the virus will lessen and the popular secondary layout with various Lionel working accessories can be included.

A number of personal train collections will be exhibited along with information about the history of model trains.

Over the years the Model Train exhibit has attracted visitors of all ages.

We have noticed that many visitors return more than once. In order to accommodate the returnees, the Museum will again offer a Totally Trains' Family Pass. For \$15 you and your family can visit the exhibit as many times as you like.

So, "All Aboard for some fun".



## Health of the Museum by Executive Director, Dan Dunn

After a year of compliance with regulations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Museum finally re-opened in mid-March. We came back strong with a quick version of the ever popular model train exhibit. In the month that trains was open, we sold almost 50 train passes which are valid when "Trains" returns for the summer. The store also did well with sales approaching \$800 in one particular week.

Currently, the exhibit in the Freight Room is titled "Big Cool Stuff". This exhibit features objects from the museum collection that are big or cool or big and cool.

Our virtual speaker series held on the third Thursday of each month is popular and continues to grow audiences. We are approaching our one year anniversary of beginning this series. Each month draws new viewers and brings in donations to the museum. Please check out the museum website for upcoming programs and to view programs that you may have missed.

As I write this, our mid-year appeal letter is about to be mailed. We continue to pursue grants and our upcoming Gala should be fun.

So, while we are doing what we can, we still have challenges recovering from our forced closure. We are only able to be open 3-4 days a week due to a shortage of greeters. We are not alone in this challenge. In speaking with some of my museum colleagues, they too are operating on a shortened schedule with limited staff and volunteers. We are hoping that more volunteers will help us get back to a normal operating schedule.

While we are still not able to operate at a full schedule and there is some doubt about our Indian Life and One Room School programs being able to have students return in the fall, we have cut costs where we can and have been active in looking for financial resources.

While we have been making strong progress towards being fully operational, there is much more work to be done. We encourage you to get involved - volunteer, participate in programs, and donate - so we can continue to offer relevant, diverse programs and be a nation-wide leader amongst regional museums.

## Big Cool Stuff Visits Museum April 24-June 6, 2021



Selections from the Museum's collections (Big Cool Stuff) are on exhibit for six weeks from late April to early June. Some old favorites are featured along with items which had slumbered in storage for many years. People enjoy trying the rotary dial on the telephone switchboard, pondering the dental equipment loaned by Dr. Bob Sada, reading some old Valley Pioneers and looking at the "chicks" spilling out from the poultry brooder once used on the Freitas Ranch

east of Danville.

Many thanks to the volunteers who put it all together: Committee: Beverly Lane, Jennifer Prindiville, Jan and Arni Habiger, Vivienne Wong, Kathy Baumgartner, Ginny Ferreira, Bob Sada, Ross Smith, Roxie Lindsay, Richard Bower, Carmen Curtis, Jerry Warren, Don Wood. House stalwarts: Michael Slattengren, Mark Harrington, Rich Mangum, Greg Lane, John Keenan, Bob Miranda, Ryan Prindiville. And thanks again to staff: Dan Dunn and Donna Grier.



## The Third Thursday Virtual Programs

It is hard to believe, but with our June program we will have been presenting these free virtual programs for one year! I can only say WOW, what a year it has been.

The first virtual program we offered was a pivot we had to make when our annual Diablo Members Brunch was canceled due to the state-wide shelter in place. An unplanned start to what has turned out to be a great new program.

We have heard about the Alamo Cemetery, The Secrets of San Ramon, John Muir, The History of Camp Parks and Adolph Sutro to name a few. Our attendance has been quite good averaging 100+ attendees per program. We are proud to note that our attendees have come from many states and we have even attracted an international audience!

Your support is greatly appreciated and needed as our programs are free, but we do ask for donations. Thanks to many for your generosity.

All of our programs are recorded for later viewing. If you missed any, just go to our web site and click on the link to watch the program at your convenience. This feature had been popular with some programs getting views in the thousands!!

Thanks to all who attended virtually. To those who have yet to attend one of these programs, please sign up and give it a try. We offer great programs for audiences of all ages to enjoy.

Lastly, if there is a topic you would like us to cover please let us know as we are always on the lookout for new and interesting programs to present.

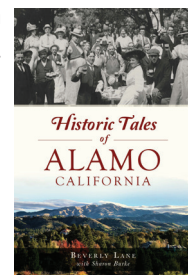
### From the Museum Store



We're so happy to be open again and ready to welcome visitors and shoppers with a selection of toys, homemade jams, bonnets and aprons, framed photographs of the San Ramon Valley and a wide range of books on local history, nature and wildlife.

We're especially proud to offer two beautiful coffee table books just right and specially priced for Father's Day: Beauty and the Beast, California Wildflowers and Climate Change and Mount Diablo, The Extraordinary Life and Landscape of a California Treasure.

New from the History Press, a book on Alamo's history will be available at the Museum for \$22.00 in early June. Beverly Lane, with Sharon Burke, have co-authored Historic Tales of Alamo, California. Included are stories about the airplane dog-fights Howard Hughes staged over Alamo's foothills, Mona Lisa on the hillside, a new post office photograph and incorporation battles.



## Fundraising During Hard Times



The Museum is weathering our way through the COVID storm and continues to try to find help with funds where we can. Here are some of our fundraising efforts from this spring.

We have applied for and received two loans from the Federal government's Payroll Protection Program. Our first round loan was for \$14,902 in May of 2020. This loan has just been forgiven. Our second PPP loan was for \$18,680 in February of this year. We are in the process of asking for its forgiveness.

The Kiwanis Club of the San Ramon Valley granted the Museum \$1,000 for our Local History Teaching program which includes our popular Passport Program.

Our mid-year appeal letter will go out next week.

We were just notified that a grant that we applied for from the state's COVID 19 Relief Grant program has been approved for \$15,000.

We continue to receive donations from our increasingly popular Third Thursday Virtual Speaker Series and we are hoping that when our members renew they will move up a renewal category to help out the Museum. Also, talk to your friends about becoming members of the Museum.

It is good to see us open again, even at a reduced schedule and admissions and store sales are back.

Our Tassajara One-Room School Gala is scheduled for August.

These are all good things but some of the foundations that have helped in the past have cut back on their giving or redirected their giving to health and human services during these hard times.

### Is Your Museum Membership Current?



Join the Museum!

Your membership goes directly to support:

- The historic exhibits of the San Ramon Valley
- The Tassajara One Room School program for 3rd graders
- The Indian Life program for 4th graders
- Historic walking tours

The annual membership fee is \$50.00.

Because the museum depends on generous community support to preserve, perpetuate, and promote our valley's historical and cultural heritage, contributions of the following amounts include a one year membership:

Basic	\$50 - \$99
Patron	\$100 - \$249
Supporter	\$250 - \$499
Benefactor	\$500 - \$999
Visionary	\$1,000 or more
1891 Society	\$1891 or more

Memberships of \$100 or more will receive access to the North American Reciprocal Museum program. This program provides free admission during regular museum hours, member discounts at museum shops, and discounts on concert/lecture tickets. The North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association is one of the largest reciprocal membership programs in the world! NARM has 800 arts, cultural, and historical institutions along with botanical gardens, children's museums, science and technology centers and more that offer their individual NARM qualified members reciprocal benefits. Visit [narmassociation.org](http://narmassociation.org) for more information.

To join or renew your membership, visit the museum's website [MuseumSRV.org](http://MuseumSRV.org). Go to Support, then Membership, and click on Join Today.



## Mark Your Calendars! One-Room Tassajara School Gala August 14, 2021



You do not want to miss it! The Museum of the San Ramon Valley's Gala for 2021. The Museum of the San Ramon Valley will hold its annual Gala on August 14th, starting at 5pm. Museum members, event sponsors, and special guests will receive a formal invitation.

Last year's event was very successful and a lot of fun. So we have decided to not let a good thing go. We will have a virtual event with lots of surprises and things to see and do.

Our online auction will feature some popular return prizes and some new and exciting things to win.

So mark your calendars and stay tuned

### Volunteer Corner

We have an immediate need for Volunteer Greeters, Docents, and possibly Indian Life teachers. The descriptions of both Volunteer Opportunities are below. If you only have time to volunteer once a month, we'd love to have you! Each volunteer day is 3 hours. Contact Lynne Call ([lynne223@yahoo.com](mailto:lynne223@yahoo.com)) if you are interested--join us, meet great people, learn about the history of the valley (there's a lot more than you think) and have some fun!

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	COMMITMENT
Greeter	Greet visitors and collect entry fees, manage store sales. Knowledgeable about the history of the building and the Museum, the current exhibit and encourage people to visit the Waiting Room area.	Regularly scheduled. Suggested commitment two times a month. Orientation and training provided.
Docent	FREIGHT ROOM –Main exhibit area. Greet and interact with visitors, describing the current exhibit, and the artifacts in the permanent exhibits. Guide guests through the historical frieze.	Regularly scheduled. Suggested commitment two times a month. Orientation and training provided.



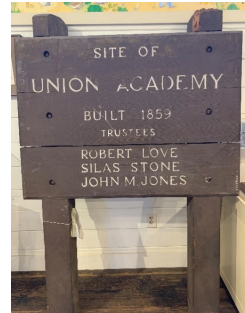
# Union Academy: the First Contra Costa County High School

## SRV Historical Society Plaque #20

June 19-August 22, 2021

Determined pioneers organized the County's first high school in the San Ramon Valley in 1859. Named the Union Academy, it was a private high school located midway between Alamo and Danville and served both day and boarding students. A wooden Historical Society sign on Danville Blvd. across from El Portal recalls the school's location, an Eagle project for Alex Nicholson dedicated in 2007.

The original Union Academy sign was placed in the 1930s by the Danville Improvement Club. When the wooden base rotted out about 1995, the sign was stashed at the small barn in Hap Magee Ranch Park and was considered to be lost. Some people thought it had been tossed into the nearby Rutherford Creek. The redwood sign turned up later and was displayed at the Museum in the Big Cool Stuff exhibit.



This high school was initiated by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church Synod in 1857 when it appointed three county residents to select a County high school location. The Cumberland church was in the forefront of school-founding movements in the West. Ministers often were commissioned by East Coast missionary societies to establish and teach in these new high schools.

In Contra Costa, the search committee members were from Martinez, Lafayette and the San Ramon Valley. They looked for a site, but in the end, each wanted the high school in his own community. Responding to this impasse, the Synod appointed a committee of five non-residents to select the location which chose the centrally located community of Pacheco. According to the Contra Costa Gazette of July 11, 1868, "this selection did not suit the parties in the San Ramon neighborhood (and) they took up the matter on their own account, erected the building and placed the school in charge of Rev. David McClure."

Alamo's Mary Jones recalled that "leading residents organized the Contra Costa Educational Association," with Silas Stone, John M. Jones and Robert Love on the first Board of Trustees. Stock was sold by the Association to support the new school, and August Hemme sold 2 ½ acres of his large ranch to the Trustees. The land was listed as worth \$200 in the 1860 Deed Book, but the philanthropic Hemme may have sold it for less. The cornerstone was laid on Oct. 19, 1859. It was a two-story building with windows and a basement. The largest building in the San Ramon Valley, it also hosted meetings, graduations and church services. It cost \$32 a month for a high school student to board and they came from all over the County.

The school opened in the spring of 1860 and its courses, trustees, purposes and fees were featured prominently on the front page of the Contra Costa Gazette. Primary and intermediate departments were also available. The academic curriculum was based on that of the San Francisco School Department and included Greek and Latin. For an extra charge, there was instruction in music (with use of instrument), drawing and painting. Vocal music and calisthenics formed a part of the daily exercises for which there was no extra fee.

The director, Rev. McClure, was very modern in his approach. The May 5 Gazette stated that McClure was aiming for the "symmetrical development and discipline of the various powers of the mind, the formation of good physical constitution, ease and grace of manners, kindness and courtesy in social intercourse – having special reference to the best practical preparation for the duties of this life, and also to that moral and religious culture which shall fit them for the life to come."

John Swett, California's superintendent of public instruction in 1862, had nothing but praise for the school: It is "pleasantly situated, with a succession of rolling hills in the background, the fertile valley around, and Mount Diablo, with its tawny hills in the distance... Success to all such civilizing influences as Mr. McClure's Seminary."

Each June, the school had graduation exercises which included examinations of the scholars. The Gazette on June 23, 1860, said the "young masters acquitted themselves in a highly creditable and satisfactory manner" before an audience of 400 people. The program included: "Music and Declamation, Delivery of Pieces, Tableaux, Calisthenics and a Party Song." Students also published a monthly newspaper called "The Waifs".

The academy was a prime example of the importance of education to families in rural California and in the San Ramon Valley. Most in the community supported it through thick and thin, although some local farmers ranchers objected to music as part of the instruction.

Student James D. (Jimmy) Smith, wrote about the monthly Academy parties. "They played games, danced the Virginia Reel, Money Musk and Cotillions with McClure playing the violin and instructing us in the intricacies of the different steps. At the conclusion of the dance we were furnished a light repast. We were then asked to kneel and our teacher would offer a prayer, after which we were dismissed." "Did we love our teacher? I'll testify we did."

On July 6, 1868, after the school had closed for the summer, the Academy burned to the ground. No one was hurt, but the satisfaction and convenience of having their own high school came to an end for Valley settlers. It took 42 years before the next high school was founded, the San Ramon Valley Union High School.

Article By Beverly Lane 2021

Sources: Contra Costa Gazette, July 11, 1868; Virgie V. Jones' Remembering Alamo; J. D. Smith, "Coming of Gringo to Contra Costa". Contra Costa Gazette, Oct. 23, 1925





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Branch Line**

The Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

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## MUSEUM HOURS

### REGULAR HOURS

Tuesday - Friday 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Sunday 12:00 - 3:00 pm



# THANK YOU



## RECENT DONATIONS TO THE MUSEUM

2009 Alamo Incorporation Information Ed Best

Documents from 1970s on housing developments Carol Doty

1985 high school reunion photo with names

Claudia Mauzy Nemir

Derby hat and spats

Jerry Warren

Danville Grange documents

Ross Smith