

San Pedro Bay Historical Society Newsletter

WINTER-SPRING 2020

FEBRUARY

A Fresh New Look

Over the years our former website grew outdated and technically unworkable. Now, thanks to new board member Gina Bellous, we have a whole new look. Gina, a graphic designer with website expertise, has added visual interest to the individual webpages and made everything more user friendly. For instance, the website now automatically sizes for use on a cell phone, and the events section avoids the need to repeatedly click through various dates and months. Visual interest has been added to the individual webpages, and the varied fonts contribute to a dynamic look. The areas that require touch-ups and information updates are being worked on as we go. We hope you'll visit the website to see the improvements for yourselves.

If Your Membership Renewal Envelope is Returned . . .

Please do the following: Cross out the bar code at the bottom and cross out your return address before placing it in the mail again. Conversations with the Post Office have not led to a satisfactory explanation of why a number of renewal envelopes find their way back to the sender instead of coming to the Society's post office box.

Yard Sale & Gift Shop Donations

Items in good salable condition for the gift shop and our yearly yard sale may be dropped off at the Muller House on open Sundays, and pick-ups can be arranged by emailing sanpedrohistory.com. We cannot accept most clothing items or books, and all electrical and mechanical equipment must be in working condition. A sale date is being scheduled for later in the year.

Two Great Talks Start the Year

We were fortunate to have culinary historian Richard Foss speak on Prohibition, January 12, almost exactly one hundred years since the enactment of the 18th Amendment. The talk was thoroughly fascinating, filled with observations on the reach of alcohol into medicinal products and everyday items. Richard reminded us how heartily our founding fathers drank and of the wide-spread belief in the health benefits of alcohol at a time when water sources and milk were often contaminated. He also provided a deeper analysis of the cultural forces that advanced the cause of Prohibition, the clever strategies



Photo: Roy H. Dallas

Loading boxes of vinegar aboard the Union Steam Ship Company's S. S. *Wairuna* c. 1952. Lumber covers the forward deck.

to evade restrictions, and some of the lingering effects after the repeal of the amendment in 1932. For instance, the rise of speakeasies made it acceptable for men and women to drink together in public; California wine making took forty years to recover, and many regional beer styles vanished, although some are being recreated.

February 1, Jim MacLellan, formerly Director of Trade Development at the Port, presented a comparison of trade through the San Pedro Bay during the first decades of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. San Pedrans usually know something about the local importance of fish and perhaps lumber, but in Jim's talk we learned how imports of silk, rubber, copra, and jute and exports of oil, cotton, borax, steel, and scrap paper have connected us to the rest of the world. Each item, and there were others covered in the talk, provides insights into the historical and economic context of the times. Our major markets today are the same as one hundred years ago—China, Mexico, Canada, Japan, and the European Union countries (pre-Brexit); however, except for Canada the order of importance has changed.

Jim also touched on local manufacturing and distribution centers such as the former Ford assembly plant on Terminal Island, the massive Union Terminal Annex on Alameda in downtown Los Angeles, once connected to the Port by the Union Pacific but now undergoing adaptive reuse, and the Borax Terminal, still in existence, which predates the founding of the Port in 1907 and still pays no wharfage fees.

San Pedro Bay Historical Society

P.O. Box 1568

San Pedro, CA 90733-1568



San Pedro Bay Historical Society's Archives

6th Floor of the

John S. Gibson, Jr. Municipal Building

638 S. Beacon Street, San Pedro, CA 90731

Phone: (310) 548-3208

Open Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:00-4:00

The first Saturday of the month, 11:00-2:00

The Muller House Museum

1542 S. Beacon Street

San Pedro, CA 90731

Phone: (310) 831-1788

Open the first two Sundays of the month

1:00 to 4:00

The last house tour starts at 3:30

Visit the Muller House Gift Shop for SPBHS publications,
china, glassware, and the unexpected.

www.sanpedrobayhistoricalsociety.com

Contact us at sanpedrohistory@gmail.com



See the Spring
Calendar of Events
& Programs
Inside!

SPBHS Spring Calendar



March 1, Sunday, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

San Pedro's 132nd Birthday

Celebrated at the Muller House

Have a slice of birthday cake, take a trivia quiz, or test your skills of observation in a scavenger hunt for historical artifacts and facts at the house. Docent-led tours will also be conducted. This is a perfect occasion to bring your out-of-town guests or introduce a youngster to San Pedro's history.

March 7, Saturday

Arbor Day Tree Planting & Environmental Community Fair

Banning Museum, 401 E. M Street, Wilmington

A multi-agency and multi-organization effort to celebrate Arbor Day with tree planting, a community fair featuring food, music, hands-on educational exhibits, and family activities. Enjoy this nearby event and pick up tips for how San Pedro's own urban forest can be tended and expanded. Please visit <https://www.cityplants.org> for more information. You may also register at this site to volunteer in the planting effort. Volunteer registration in person begins at 8:30 a.m., and the fair activities are scheduled to take place following the tree planting.

March 29, Sunday, 1:00 to 3:00

Talk by Dr. Geraldine Knatz

"Port of Los Angeles: Conflict, Commerce and Fight for Control"

Improved Order of Red Men Wigwam, 543 Shepard Street, San Pedro

Dr. Knatz is Professor of Practice of Policy and Engineering, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy and USC Viterbi School of Engineering. Her research on port history is made all the richer by years of first-hand experience, having formerly served as executive director of the Port of Los Angeles and managing director of the Port of Long Beach.

Dr. Knatz's will sign copies of her new book, *Port of Los Angeles: Conflict, Commerce and Fight for Control*, and there will also be copies for sale.

April 4, Saturday, 11:00 to 2:00

Open House at the Archives, 638 S. Beacon Street, 6th Floor

Bring photo i.d. to present to the guard in the main foyer on the 2nd floor. To avoid stairs, use the Harbor Blvd. entrance and ring buzzer. Stop at the second floor to present your i.d. before proceeding to the 6th floor.

May 3, Sunday, 1:30 at the Muller House Museum

Textile Talk by Julie Sawyer Rogan

"A Brief History of Feedsacks — an Early Example of Upcycling!"

Julie shares information on how such a simple item like a feedsack is tied to the economy and cultural conditions from the 1800s to the 1960s. Food staples in the early 1800s were originally transported in tins, barrels, and wooden boxes, which were heavy and led to spoilage. When the sewing machine was invented, it was discovered that canvas bags were much more economical. Fast forward to the 1920s and 1930s, fabric bags holding animal feed and cooking staples exploded in a brilliant marketing campaign focused on the thrifty wives of struggling farmers. Even in times of dire poverty, women sought to create pretty things to beautify their homes and dress their families. Julie will have plenty of feedsack items to display.