

San Pedro Bay Historical Society

WINTER 2023

FEBRUARY

On the Waterfront in February: Captain Charles Farr & the Bethel Sailors' Rest

Journalist Gretchen W. Goldsmith will present a talk based on her extensive research about Captain Charles Farr, a dockworker from England who ventured to early San Pedro and built the Bethel Sailors' Rest atop the hull of *Warrior I*, a derelict Banning tugboat. The repurposed tug, 92 feet long, was hauled out in East San Pedro, which was then a section of Terminal Island. There the vessel served as a place of ministry and social service for seafarers, fishermen, and others.



Farr continued his dockside ministry until 1920 and then settled in Tujunga, building there a boat-shaped home from the local stone, considered one of the most unusual among California stone houses. In his day, Farr's efforts were widely reported in the newspapers. Goldsmith's book, *Captain Charles Farr and the Tugboat Warrior: The Story of the Bethel Mission of San Pedro Bay* is available online. Everyone is welcome to attend the talk!

Date & Time: **Saturday, February 25 at 11:00 a.m.**
Location: **San Pedro Regional Library**, corner of 9th and Gaffey streets.

San Pedro's 135th Birthday to Be Celebrated at the Muller House Museum

Back in 1888, March 1 to be exact, San Pedro was signed into existence as a "city of the 6th class," under the state classification system of the time. What happened later, the 1909 consolidation with Los Angeles, is another matter! You're invited to celebrate San Pedro's 135th birthday at the Muller House Museum. Come see new displays, take a tour, enjoy cupcakes, cookies, and beverages. There will be activities for children.

Date & Time: Sunday, **March 5, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.**
Address: **1542 S. Beacon Street, San Pedro**

What's Next for the Pepper Tree Plaza Monuments & a Lost Drinking Fountain

When the idea of rebranding Pepper Tree Plaza and transforming it into an Italian piazza was first aired, the SPBHS urged the Council Office to retain the plaza monuments and the name "Pepper Tree Plaza." The name of this small park on the north side of the Municipal Building has historical significance. It derives from the Pepper Tree Saloon that once occupied the site in San Pedro's early days. Standing alongside the saloon was a massive pepper tree. It's possible to pick out that tree in old photos of the era. (See next page.) The name further connects the site to the late 1800s, when San Pedro was an independent city and its articles of incorporation were signed into effect on that spot or nearby.

Plans for remaking the plaza nevertheless forged ahead. At the October 20 groundbreaking of last year, a spokesperson for the Little Italy of Los Angeles Association, which will oversee the work and manage the site, gave reassurances that the monuments would somehow be incorporated into what is now named "Piazza Miramare."

Among the monuments are a San Pedro centennial time capsule to be opened in 2088, a twenty-five year time capsule to be opened in 2038, bronze ILWU commemorative plaques, and the old cast-iron Beacon Street drinking fountain, not exactly a monument but a piece of San Pedro history originally bequeathed by the Women's Christian Temperance Union in about 1906. The massive urn with sea-themed ornamentation, a relic from the Matson Terminal, has already been removed for installation on the Wilmington waterfront. We hope that all of these objects will be preserved with care while awaiting reinstallation.

Reading up on the Beacon St. drinking fountain led to something of a mystery. There was once another drinking fountain, of which no visible trace remains. It was made of marble and dedicated by San Pedro newsboys to the memory of the enterprising Luke Kelly (b. 1866), who built the Globe Theatre, owning for a time the Admiral Saloon, and the Criterion Café on Front Street, now Harbor Blvd. *Continued on next page*

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Known for his amiability and generosity, Kelly, pictured at right in a volunteer fireman's uniform, endeared himself to the newsboys. The newspapers tell that he would find them extra jobs when they weren't getting by, treat them to beach days in Redondo, and to barbecues at his house on "Saloon Keepers" row, the 200 block of 9th Street.



In late 1916, driving home with his wife from Long Beach through a dense fog on Anaheim St., Kelly seems to have swerved suddenly, sending the car into a ditch where it overturned. Only his wife survived the crash. The newsboys pooled their pennies and nickels the next year to purchase the drinking fountain, which was installed on Palos Verdes Street, just south of 6th. There the fountain remained for many years, falling into disrepair and being deemed by the city as a health hazard.

Enter the 30-Year Club. Something of a precursor to the SPBHS, the club was formed in 1937, requiring of its members 30 years of residence in San Pedro. Getting wind of the Health Department's threat to remove the fountain, the club took action. Under the supervision of club member Clyde (Lucky) Foot, it was relocated to Plaza Park in 1951 and rededicated in a ceremony attended by Mabel Joan Kelly, Luke's widow, then residing in Grass Valley. Some of the original newsboys attended the ceremony, and their family names would be immediately recognizable by many today.

But what became of the Luke Kelly drinking fountain? The *News-Pilot* describes its spot in Plaza Park as just south of the Chamber of Commerce; at the time, the Chamber occupied the old Carnegie Library building, demolished more than five decades back. The online newspaper trail goes cold after the 1951 ceremony, and a slog through Recreation and Parks records, if even accessible, might be the only way of learning the fate of this 400-pound marble monument, which testified to the San Pedro newsboys' sentiments for Luke Kelly. Unless one of you knows!

LA Harbor International Film Festival March 2 - 5 at the Warner Grand Theatre

In its 20th year, LAHIFF offers a line-up of some great film entertainment and documentaries as well as a Thursday morning "Read the Book, See the Movie" event for school children. The festival is one of the last chances to enjoy a few hours at our own art deco movie palace, the Warner Grand, prior to its closing for an estimated two years of renovation. Find the complete scheduling on the festival website:

www.laharborfilmfest.com. Stephanie Mardesich is the festival founder and director.

A quick mention here of the film line-up:

Jungle Book (the school children's feature)

Young Frankenstein

Shorts: *NewFilmmakers LA – Emerging Filmmakers Showcase*

White Christmas (Irving Berlin musical, 35mm print)

Nailed it: The Vietnamese & the Nail Industry (a documentary filmed partly in RPV and Watts)

Port Town (Producer, Jack Barich)

Stories of the Los Angeles Harbor Area: For Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow The Movie
(Producers, Stephanie Mardesich and Jack Barich).

Admission is cash only at box office. SPBHS members, seniors, and students pay the discounted price of \$8.00. Discounts are also available for other affiliated organizations.



The white arrow points to the pepper tree next to the Pepper Tree Saloon. Photo from about 1907, SPBHS Archives.

Mona Dallas Reddick – Writing, Photos, Production

Mailing – Mary Jo Walker, John Mattson, & Archives Volunteers

Printing – Priority One, San Pedro

For information about SPBHS membership, visit our website:

sanpedrobayhistoricalsociety.com or email sanpedrohistory@gmail.com.

News from the Muller House Museum

The rainy weather and cool temperatures created an opportunity to begin landscaping the slope underneath the Muller House. With a generous grant from the Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council, we purchased planting supplies and the first installment of California native plants from the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy Nursery. Other natives were donated by Allen Franz, who volunteers with the Conservancy.

On two separate Sundays, artemisias, a variegated ceanothus, black and purple sages, deerweed, toyons, cherries (similar to the Catalina cherry), laurel sumac, and a lemonade berry went into the ground. In hopes of some spring color, we also planted a few California poppies and lupine seedlings. Still to come are several rock roses and plumbago (not native but also not thirsty) plus a few more ceanothus. Then we wait to see how the plants adapt and contemplate the next steps. To attract the interest of passersby and simply to identify for ourselves the various plants, John Smith installed metal markers bearing the names of the major plants.

Helping on this first leg of the planting project were Allen Franz, Linda Howat, James Moebus, Krystyna Oakes, Toni O'Donnell, Bob Reddick, Mona Dallas Reddick, John Smith, and Chuck Short. Everyone did extraordinary work, improvising ways to handle the terrain and get water to each plant. Special thanks to John and James for taking care of an expired opossum.



A beautiful but breezy day for planting. Docent Krystyna Oakes about to wrangle seedlings into their new home.

Called to other endeavors, docent Terry Bergman resigned in December. Her gracious demeanor and readiness to pitch in will be missed. We extend our warm thanks for her service at the Muller House Museum and wish her all the best!

Volunteering

There are several ongoing projects at the Muller House Museum as well as docenting and greeting visitors on the first two Sundays of the month. Consider volunteering for one four-hour afternoon a month or helping on an as-needed basis. Later in the year, we're planning an event to honor all SPBHS volunteers and invite others who might be interested. To request more information about helping us at the museum, please leave a phone message at (310) 344-0713 or send an email to: sanpedrohistory@gmail.com.

We'd Love to Have Your Stuff!



The annual **Yard & Boutique Sale** at the Muller House Museum is one of the ways we raise money to fund the upkeep of the museum and operate the archives. Donations of items in good, saleable condition are now being accepted. They can be dropped off at the museum on the first and second Sunday of the month between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m., and in some cases a pick up can be arranged. Messages can be left at the archives (310) 548-3208. Please speak slowly if leaving a voicemail.

Small pieces of furniture, jewelry, china, household and decorative items, better or vintage linens, newer coffee-table type books, San Pedro memorabilia are appreciated. We're unable to handle large furniture items, TVs, VHS tapes, most clothing, old phonograph records or old books.



Historical Society Membership

Membership dues make up over a quarter of the Society's regular income. Thank you to those who have just joined and all who have renewed. Help us continue preserving San Pedro history! Introduce your friends and neighbors to the Society—invite them to our events and encourage them to join. Dues remain extremely low.

A Recent Passing

Earlier this year, word came that SPBHS member Pilar Ara had passed away. Pilar volunteered for many years at the Muller House Museum, helping on Sundays, at the yard sale and catering events. She was preceded in death by her husband, John, also an incredible volunteer.

Landmark Plaques Program

A landmark plaque is a permanent emblem installed in a visible place to commemorate buildings and sites of importance in San Pedro history. Recognition includes local architecture and the homes of noteworthy San Pedro residents.



The Society is increasing its outreach to businesses and homeowners to encourage their participation in the Landmark Plaques Program. Several building owners are in the process of signing up. If you feel that your home or building will contribute to the awareness of San Pedro history, please contact one of us at the email addresses below.

Criteria for a Proposed Plaque Installation:

- Verifiable information for the historical importance of a building, home or site.
- A preponderance of original architectural features remains.
- Restoration has brought back the original look.
- The structure is an exemplar of an architectural style that has added to San Pedro's eclectic character.
- Individuals proposed for recognition must have resided in or used the structure for a minimum of five years. (Living individuals are not eligible for recognition under this program.)

In the next mailing, watch for a copy of the program brochure. In the meantime, an excerpt from the back page is printed here:

"Core elements in the mission of the SPBHS are preservation and education about local history. Embedded in this mission is the conviction that a community is strengthened when its history is not forgotten, when the ties to the past are appreciated."

George Woytovich: servubiz@aol.com

Mona Dallas Reddick: mdalred@gmail.com

Doors Open Peninsula 2023

The Palos Verdes Library District's Local History Center is coordinating a peninsula-wide event set for **June 17** from about 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Many well-known and lesser-known places on the PV Peninsula will open their doors or sites to visitors at no charge. The event features a passport rally. Participating locations will apply their unique rubber stamp to your event "passport" when you visit. The Muller House Museum is participating from 12:00 to 4:30. A sampling of other sites includes: Wayfarers Chapel, Alta Vicente Reserve, Peter Weber Equestrian Center, Mirlo Gate Lodge, the LA 55 Nike Missile Site, Neighborhood Church, and Palos Verdes Golf Club. Additional sites are being added.

Identification Challenge from the Large Negative File of the Archives



Who agrees this truck advertising a Moose Dance at La Casa Grande on 10th & Meyler is parked on Harbor Blvd. at the rear of the Carnegie Library building?



Once there were trees! Under magnification, a Richfield service station sign is just visible at the far center left. The 1934 City Directory lists two Richfield locations that are possibilities: 14th St. just below Pacific, looking west, and 689 W. 7th St. So which is it – 14th or 7th St.?