

Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2016

ICE HOUSE: FROM MURKY PAST TO BRIGHT FUTURE

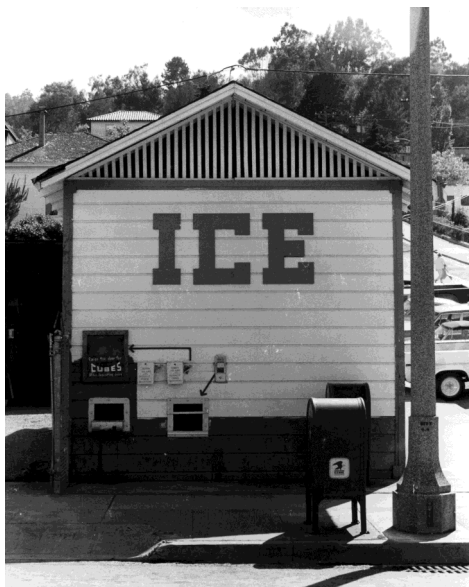
The Ice House Visitors Center and Historic Exhibit has been a downtown landmark since 1999, hosting more than 30,000 visitors a year. But the origins of the structure remain a bit of a mystery.

Spoiler Alert:

For years, we've been describing the Ice House as a former Northwestern Pacific Railroad refrigerator car, or "cold storage hold," but it turns out that no evidence exists to support this theory. In fact, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society is unfamiliar with the "cold

hold" terminology. When the Ice House was declared a historic landmark in 1998, David Hodgson, then chair of the Historic Landmarks Board, estimated that the building dates back to the late 1800's, judging by its architectural features such as insulation made of stripped redwood bark. Architect Michael Rex, who owned the building for several years, agrees, based on the use of square nails, which date to the Victorian era. Rex, who remodeled the old ice vending facility from its original shoebox design, also points out that it would have been too wide to ride on the Northwest Pacific's narrow-gauge tracks.

Ed Couderc, whose family owned the structure for a quarter of a century, recalls that old photos show an ice storage house or cooler at the foot of Princess Street, in the mid-1920s. He says the structure "has also been placed on Pine Street below Caledonia in the 1930s."



The Ice House was a coin-operated vending facility for many years.

Long-term resident Margaret Jewett told the Historical Society that Jack Douglas, who sold coal and wood out of the building that would become the Marin Theatre, also operated the Ice House. When the theatre was built in 1942, Douglas moved both businesses next door to her family home at 309 Caledonia. Until the Ice House was moved again, to the corner of Caledonia and Litho, Douglas "got his electricity for the refrigeration from our house," Margaret recalled. "We ran the line through the kitchen window and plugged it in to the wall outlet."

The structure was acquired by the Couderc family in 1952. Even after refrigerators had become ubiquitous in Sausalito homes, the coin-operated facility continued to dispense blocks and cubes of ice, primarily for boaters and fishermen, until the compressor failed in 1976.

At that time the Coudercs padlocked the building, and it was used for storage for 12 years.

Searching for a home to start his architecture practice, over lunch, Michael asked Ed what he intended to do with the old building. When he replied, "tear it down,"

Michael offered to save him the cost of demolition; he would take it off his hands for a buck, an idea suggested by the Historical Society's Phil Frank. A handshake and a Bill of Sale drawn up on a napkin closed the deal.

Rex remodeled the building, enclosing the loading dock for a

reception area, installing windows, removing the original flat roof and extending the walls up to the height of the gable shaped roof, which had been installed over the ice box as a rain cover, and adding the monitor along the ridge to bring in natural light. The original blue and white color scheme was preserved.

Rex leased the land under the building from the Couderc family, but they even-



*Architect's office with a staff of 7 in the Ice House.
Photo courtesy of Michael Rex*

Continued on next page

As Historical Society Vice President Dana Whitson wrote in Marin Scope last January, "After a public discussion on alternate uses for the building, the City Council voted to move the



Phil Frank drew this cartoon for a fund-raising campaign to move the Ice House downtown.

Ice House to its final home, a City-owned site at the corner of Bay Street and Bridgeway in downtown Sausalito, to replace a temporary SHS History Exhibit and Visitor Center opened during the City's 1993 centennial at the former Village Faire (now the Casa Madrona Hotel and Poggio Restaurant.)

Under the leadership of Phil Frank, the Historical Society raised funds for the relocation and conversion of the building into the Museum and Visitor Center in 1999. Rex volunteered to prepare the necessary plans for the new site and the Rotary Club of Sausalito provided much of the labor. In the

early hours one morning in March, 1999, the Ice House rolled down Bridgeway to its new home where the Historical Society has continuously operated the facility for the City ever since.

The City and Historical Society always intended to improve the site around the Ice House once funds became available, according to Dana: "The plan for the plaza began to take shape following Phil Frank's death, as his friends and fellow citizens sought to use funds donated in his memory to build a project that Phil would have loved. In 2010, the Sausalito Foundation raised over \$32,000 to build the Plaza." But the project lagged when Sausalito Foundation founder Bea Seidler -- one of the



The Ice House moving to its new home downtown

founding Ice House docents -- became ill and passed away. In late 2014, the remaining Foundation board enlisted the Sausalito Historical Society to help finish the Plaza. For an update on this project, see below.

-- Larry Clinton



ICE HOUSE PLAZA PROJECT PROGRESSES

The Ice House Plaza will serve multiple purposes: a place for the public to linger while enjoying the downtown historic district; an outdoor classroom for the Historical Society's acclaimed local history curricula for Sausalito Marin City School District third grade students; and a venue for docent talks. Native plants will create a "learning landscape" for the 3rd graders to study plants used by the Miwoks and also for home gardeners to learn about attractive, drought-tolerant plants suitable for Sausalito.



Sausalito landscape architecture firm SWA's rendering of the new Plaza

The new design acknowledges the site's history on the former passenger rail line with the addition of allegorical train tracks outlined in tile on the plaza, crossed by redwood benches symbolizing railroad ties. The City and Historical Society have applied for a State grant for future interpretive exhibits, including replicas of

historic Sausalito artifacts imbedded into the concrete benches to encourage exploration by children.

The Sausalito Rotary Club has pledged 25% of the proceeds of their April 22 Gala to the Ice House Plaza renovation. The Gala, themed "Sausalito Speak-easy," will feature live music by West Coast Cool plus an Auction and Raffle. Join us to enjoy this special evening, while supporting the Plaza and the other worthy projects of the Sausalito Rotary Club. For more information, go to www.sausalitorotary.com or www.sausalitohistoricalsociety.org.

The Historical Society and the Sausalito Foundation continue to accept donations for this important improvement to our downtown historic district. Contributions may be mailed to the Sausalito Foundation, Ice House Fund, P.O. Box 567, Sausalito, CA 94966.

— Dana Whitson

LOCAL HISTORY COMES ALIVE FOR THIRD GRADERS

Again this year, the Sausalito Historical Society is bringing history to life for third grade students in the Sausalito and Marin City School District. Interactive history lessons include classroom visits from costumed docents who tell their “personal” stories about early years in Sausalito.

Students learn how to research local history at the Historical Society, where they view old maps, documents, artwork and artifacts.

Recently, each class visited the City Hall and role-played as the City Council, city staff and concerned citizens.

The Historical Society also leads school field trips to the Ice House Museum, the downtown historic district and Marinship. The students test their skills as history detectives by identifying old buildings and searching for artifacts. Volunteer docents are always welcome on these school programs. The following photo shows one of our newest docents, Nancy Osborn, enjoying taking students from Bayside/MLK Academy on a tour of the Ice House historic exhibit.



Mike Moyle, Dana Whitson and Jerry Taylor appearing before Willow Creek students.



Photo by Susan Frank

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I think about the two years I have served you, I am most struck by the breadth and depth of the relationships the Historical Society has with the people and institutions in our town.

Because the Ice House Plaza Project has dominated our “discretionary” time in the SHS, I first think of the Sausalito Foundation who incubated the Plaza idea, and the initial benefactors, those Friends of Phil Frank; and then of the City, our beneficent property landlord. Then I think of the residents, friends and professionals who have donated their time to evolving the Plaza from a dream to a concept to drawings and designs that are (hopefully) about to be approved.

I’ve enjoyed delivering our Plaza message to the Sausalito Woman’s Club, Rotary and Lions, and I’m very pleased to say that each has responded with generous lead donations.

Beyond the Plaza, we’ve been involved in a lot of collaborative events. We’ve just presented author Frances Dinkelpiel at the Ondine. On April 1st and 2nd, we’ll partner with Abbot Chambers and the Sausalito Library to shed light on the development of Caledonia Street. Soon we’ll participate in another Portuguese Festa de Espirito Santo. We’re developing plans for the fall, and for 2017, that will bring fun and memories.

In January, the Friends of the Library and the SHS partnered with the Woman’s Club to celebrate “I’m Ink Therefore I Am.” Last fall, our patrons Gil Purcell and Roxanne Sheridan opened their historic home, “The Pines,” so we could celebrate our 40th Anniversary in a grand manner (in a grand manor). We hosted Laura Ackley’s presentation of *Technology at the 1915 PPIE* at Christ Episcopal Church. We marched in the 4th of July Parade with the Cal Band, and with the Palace of Fine Arts replica built by the Lions. Along with the Bay Model, we co-sponsored Betsy Stroman’s book launch about Jean Varda; and we inspected the Matthew Turner with *Call of the Sea*.

I’m fond of saying that I wear many hats in this town. We all do. Each of those organizations above has overlapping memberships with us and each other. I think this is amazing and wonderful.

Look, I’m the president, but I’m just one member of the SHS Board. None of those things above happen without these friends. The lead director on the Plaza design is Dana Whitson. Susan Frank and Bill Kirsch continue to put in many, many hours on that project.

Continued on next page

THANKS TO PREMIUM LEVEL MEMBERS

Historical Society memberships start at just \$15 a year. But more and more members are choosing premium levels of membership, with additional benefits. We extend our deep appreciation for the following premium level members for 2016:

Business/Sponsor Level

Diane Alper
Duncan Clark
Shelby and Peter Van Meter

Patron Level

Pam and Roger Abendroth
Eric Torney

Benefactor Level

Roxanne Sheridan

For more information about these premium membership levels, call 415-289-4117 or go to <http://www.sausalitohistoricalsociety.org/membership>.

Dana also coordinates Ice House operations; Susan chairs our Schools programs; Bill is the Exhibit Chairman. Jim Muldoon is kept busy as Event Chairman. Sharon Seymour handles correspondence, does all the organizational paperwork, and responds to research requests. Jim Meyer has succeeded Teddie Hathaway as Treasurer, he's tracking Ice House merchandise sales and is updating the website. Mary Ann Griller publicizes our events and edits our contributions to the Sausalito magazine; Steefenie Wicks writes many of our weekly columns in the Scope; Bob Woodrum contributes his talent to the beautiful awards given to the students in the Schools Program. Former president Larry Clinton writes and coordinates this newsletter and our weekly Scope columns. Mike Moyle is a treasured resource.

Thanks for your continued support and participation.
See you soon,

—Jerry Taylor

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE HISTORY OF CALEDONIA STREET: GOLFERS, GANGSTERS AND GARAGES

Society Member Mike Moyle will give an illustrated talk on the history of Caledonia St. 7:00 PM Friday evening, April 1, at the Sausalito Library. Afterward, there will be a complimentary reception in the Society's Exhibition Room, kicking off a new show covering the history of Caledonia Street and some "Then and Now" comparisons.

The following day, between 11:00AM and 1:00PM, members of the Historical Society will be stationed along the entire length of Caledonia Street and available to answer questions about the street's history. Printed walking guides will be available in the SHS exhibit room (with parking at City Hall) and from docents on Caledonia Street identified by distinctive sashes. The new Caledonia Street exhibit will also be open during that period. Come walk the street, stop in at the stores and restaurants, visit the Society, and learn more about the history of this important part of Sausalito.



This 1920s gas station stood at Johnson and Caledonia, now the site of Sausalito Optometry.

WHERE'S WALDO?

FIND OUT APRIL 6

Larry Clinton and Mike Moyle will reprise their audio-visual tour through Sausalito's history from the early days through World War II. They will focus on significant parts of the community that no longer exist, including the Northwestern



Pacific railroad line, Pine Point

(dynamited during World War II), the American Distilling Company (destroyed by fire in the 1960's), and the Waldo community (supplanted during World War II by the housing project for Marinship workers).

Location: Creekside Room, Mill Valley Public Library

375 Throckmorton Avenue

4/6/2016 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Cost: Free

Advance registration is highly recommended. Call:
415-389-4292 x3.

The Mason Distillery in the 1920s when it was southern Marin's major industry.

MORE UPCOMING EVENTS

REMEMBERING EVAN CONNELL

Friends of Evan Connell will share memories of the Sausalito author and editor at the Sausalito Library on Friday, April 15 at 7:00 p.m. Connell is best known for two novels, “Mrs. Bridge” and “Mr. Bridge,” considered among the finest of twentieth century American literature. As a contributor and later co-editor of locally-based Contact Magazine, Connell was part of a group of writers and editors who met regularly from the late '50s through the early '60s at the No Name Bar. Sitting at a table reserved by No Name owner Neil Davis, Evan was a commanding though often silent figure in the company of habitual talkers. The program will feature readings from Connell’s works and reminiscences from Davis plus SHS members Bill Kirsch and Rick Seymour.



Poster for the movie made from Connell's two most famous novels.

ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 28

The SHS Annual Meeting will be held at 7 PM Thursday, April 28 in the Edgewater Seniors Room on the ground floor of City Hall. Vice President Dana Whitson will update membership on the Ice House Plaza improvement project, and new directors will be elected. Admission is free, and refreshments will be served.

NEW WATERFRONT WALKING TOUR

The panels that were installed along the waterfront for the Society's 2013 Sausalito Sets Sail project will be replaced in late April by new panels, highlighting the early days of railroads and ferryboats. Stop by the Ice House for more information, and to start this informative walking tour.



Panels like this will feature Sausalito's early trains and ferries.

SHS IN THE MEDIA

The Sausalito MarinScope publishes a weekly column contributed by the SHS. Articles cover the rich history of our city and interviews with the people who have made that history – or who are making it now. The columns are written by Society members and we are always looking for new contributors. Articles going back to 2008 can be found on at www.sausalitohistoricalsociety.org.

Sausalito's Community Magazine is published quarterly by the Parks and Recreation Dept. The SHS contributes announcements of upcoming events and activities, plus our three SHS exhibit locations.

You might think that Radio Sausalito is just about jazz — and good jazz it is — but there is another side to the station: History! Sausalito's Secret History plays several times each day and is hosted by SHS past president Larry Clinton.

These brief bits of history will whet your appetite to learn more. Listen to Radio Sausalito live at 1610 AM, or on the web at radiosausalito.org. Podcasts of individual Secret History spots can be heard at <http://radiosausalito.org/category/sausalitos-secret-history>.

Also on the radio site is Dock of the Bay: Stories of Sausalito. These short-form podcasts were produced in late 2014 and early 2015. Anyone interested in re-starting the broadcasting of interesting and unique podcasts about Sausalito, please contact Jonathan Westerling at [Radio Sausalito jonathan@radiosausalito.org](mailto:jonathan@radiosausalito.org) or the SHS.

Under the direction of Jim Meyer, the Historical Society website (www.sausalithistoricalsociety.org) is now more user friendly. You can now search the site for key words, people and places. Check out our Virtual Exhibit on the boatyards of Sausalito, with photographs and information from the SHS archives.

New departments include Historic Images and a bulletin board showing upcoming events sponsored by the SHS and other area historical groups. Learn more about our ongoing Schools Program, and how you can help introduce local third graders to Sausalito's colorful past. Get reacquainted with our Ice House Visitors Center and Museum, and our Marinship exhibit at the Bay Model.

You can order books and other Sausalito merchandise through the website, pay for your membership or make a donation to support one of our many projects and programs. All on line via a secure transaction!



FREE EXHIBITS

The Society staffs and manages the **Ice House** Visitor Center and Museum featuring a permanent display of local history. There is also a gift area featuring works by local artists and a selection of gift items relating to Sausalito and its history. The Ice House is open from 11:30am-4pm on Tuesday through Sunday, and is located at 780 Bridgeway (across from Casa Madrona).

The Historical Society's **Exhibit Room and Phil Frank History and Research Room** are located on the top floor of City Hall. You will encounter an exhibit of the history of Caledonia Street, plus an opportunity to do research through our archives. The Exhibit and Research Rooms are open from 10am-1pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays, or by appointment. Dedicated docents are available to assist and guide your research.

Step back to a dramatic time in Sausalito by touring the historic World War II **Marinship Exhibit at the Bay Model**. This display of photographs, paintings and actual artifacts from the WWII ships and yard was developed by the staff of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the SHS. The Marinship Exhibit is open from 9am-4pm on Tuesday through Saturday and is located in the Bay Model Visitors Center at 2100 Bridgeway.

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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