

Capitola Sunset

Fall
2025

410 Capitola Avenue

News, Events & Information

Summer Festivals Wrap-Up

The Capitola Historical Museum was pleased to be a participant once again in both the Capitola Art & Wine Festival and the Capitola Beach Festival.

The Capitola Art & Wine Festival—A big “Thank You” to our Museum Volunteers and Museum Board Trustees for helping to set up and man the display table at the Art & Wine Festival. Another, grateful “Thank You” to our Museum Volunteers who manned the Art & Wine Festival’s expanded museum hours. This year we set up panels so we could display even more historic images of Capitola. In response to popular demand, this year we created three new sale posters of historic Capitola. Our bookstore sales and annual raffle of two mounted, historic Capitola photos, garnered the museum nearly \$900 in donations. Great Job!

The Capitola Beach Festival — A huge “Thank You” again to all the Museum Volunteers and Museum Board Trustees who helped make our museum float this year—a massive undertaking! Thanks to the float builders: Board President Brian Legakis, Board Vice President Roger Wyant, Board Trustee Toni Alldredge and her husband Gary, Board Trustee Enrique Dolmo, Volunteer Barbara Winston, Volunteer Dee Jimenez and her extended family— Float riders Volunteer Truman Lawson, Youth Board Representative Juliette Thompson, Museum Curator Deborah Osterberg and Captain/Board President Brian Legakis. Though exhausting, we had great fun, a feeling of accomplishment, and were happy to share with the community Capitola's wonderful history through our float.

Upcoming 2026 Exhibition — Opening mid-March 2026

Multiple Personalities—The Stories Behind Capitola’s Historic Buildings



Capitola in the Roaring 20s—
The Hawaiian Gardens Nightclub—
Best Non-Profit Float, featuring one of
Leo Sievert’s colorful “Hawaiian
Gardens” advertising signs which he
painted on buildings around the county



The admission free —
Capitola Historical Museum
at 410 Capitola Avenue,
between the railroad trestle
and Capitola City Hall

Throughout 2025, the
museum will be open every
Friday through Sunday from
noon until 4:00 p.m. thru
December 30, 2025

Museum closed January to
mid-March 2026

831-464-0322

capitolamuseum@gmail.com

Past
museum
newsletters



Congratulations to the
Nautical Parade winners:
1st Place—The Cork &
Fork, 2nd Place—The
Jewel Box, and 3rd
Place—Joyism Team.

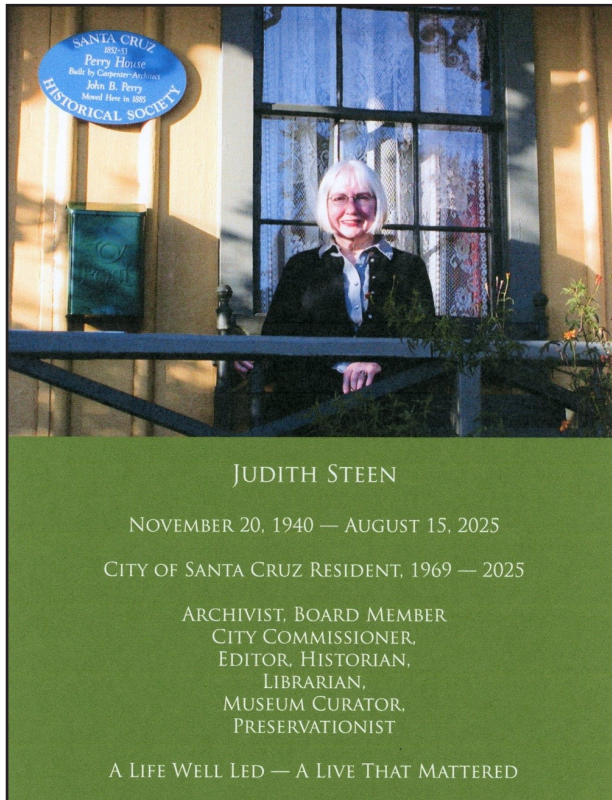


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UPCOMING EVENTS

10th Annual Capitola
Plein Air competition
Art Exhibition & Sale—
November 9th from 11 am
to 4 pm at New Brighton
Middle School.

In Memoriam: Judy Steen by Carolyn Swift



When I hired on as Capitola Museum's curator in July 1993, I had no idea how to create an exhibit. What I offered was writing experience, a love of history, and a solid collection of Capitola photos. Happily, my good friend Judy Steen, reference librarian and manager of acquisition and inter-library loan at UCSC's McHenry Library, had just retired. She was also an eager collector of paintings, antiques, and textiles and actively involved with several museums. She knew the way to go.

Right away, Judy said, "How do you feel about a new exhibit?" (My brain went numb.) At that point, the museum's signature draw was the large 1889 Cipriano Dodero painting that founder Phil Walker purchased from the Castro-Lodge family in the mid-70s. Nifty interpretive panels dedicated to the natural history of Soquel Creek, created by Frank Perry, ran along the main wall. Otherwise, exhibit space was quite rustic in theme, featuring fossils, a cattle horn clipper, vintage hay baling tongs, branding irons, and some

cracked pottery. Museum captions, hand lettered on the back of Rolodex cards, were the trademark signs of a tiny budget.

Judy convinced me to go with her to the Oakland Museum of California. There we realized that while we could never touch local history on that scale, we could maybe fake it. The birthday of Frederick Hihn (the man chiefly responsible for Capitola's existence) was on the horizon. Acting fast, we could do research, photocopy fresh images, whip up a pile of captions, borrow all manner of stuff from other museums, work for days like whirling dervishes, and open doors by August 16. We did it, and people came. Stan Stevens, keeper of the Hihn Archive, brought a gorgeous plant. A respected museum director pronounced the show "curatorially interesting." Gayle Ortiz donated a cake for the reception. I went home and discovered rubber cement in my hair.

We were so excited that we did three exhibits that first year. Judy ruffled through her textiles and draperies to create inviting backdrops. She selected antiques with direct links to the historical pictures, giving them a dimension that pulled viewers into each scene. When eBay arrived a bit later, we both jumped aboard. Judy quickly became expert at nabbing all things Santa Cruz County.

Soon the museum had enough to build more sophisticated (and therefore only once-a-year) exhibits with costumes, artifacts, and props to tell the complete story of Capitola's founding and expansion. For 17 exhibits over as many years, Judy worked with me every day for months before and after every show. Her mantra, "keep like things together," rang in my ears every time we packed and unpacked.

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Donations

A BIG THANK YOU to those who gave generous donations to the museum in the 3rd quarter of 2025:

Financial Donations:

Steven & Diane Burbank
Ted Burke
Shr-lyn Cline
Calvin B. Cornwell
The City of Cupertino

Marvin Jensen
Joan Martin
Karen & Don Masters
Michael P. & Patricia McDonald
Joseph Ortiz
Judy Parsons

Dave Peyton
Barbara Reding
Larry Smith & Valenda Rigsby-Smith
Linda Wilshusen
Mary Elsa Wyant
Ying Sq

Highlights from recent artifact acquisitions:

The Museum's collection of Campo del Mar porcelain has grown. Ronald Fritzsche recently donated his sister's set of this vivid Capitola made fine porcelain, consisting of 7 saucers, 6 cups, a creamer and sugar with tray. The factory, operated by Waldemar F. Dietrich between 1945 and 1952 was located on California Street in Capitola Village. Our extensive collection of Campo del Mar will be part of an upcoming annual exhibition (perhaps in 2027).

This outstanding wax doll of Marie Antoniette, crafted by Lewis Sorensen, was donated by Carolyn Swift. The doll was once part of the Judy Steen collection.

Sorensen operated Lewis Sorensen's House of Wax in Capitola from 1956-1957 inside the Saba restaurant on the Esplanade. Look for Marie in an upcoming Capitola Library exhibit on the life and career of master doll maker Lewis Sorensen.



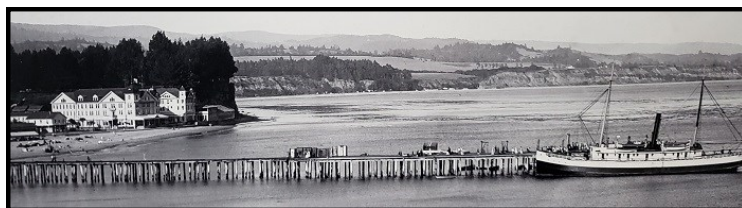
Museum Curator Deborah Osterberg spotted this rare Campo del Mar ashtray on eBay. Your generous donations allowed the Museum to purchase the ashtray for the collection.

How You Can Help

MUSEUM DONATIONS—Inside each quarterly newsletter we mail out, we provide a donation envelope. Our ongoing museum projects include continued work developing our new Native plant garden, building an exhibit case for the Capitola Wharf model, and the purchase of museum quality storage cabinets and containers and emergency supplies for our artifacts and archives. Tax deductible donations to the Capitola Historical Museum may be made anytime. This year the Museum began using the *Autobooks* app for book sales and donations. When you click this QR code it takes you to the *Autobooks* website where you may choose to donate either via ApplePay or with a credit card (VISA, Mastercard, Discover or American Express)



Thank You for Your Donation!



This view, circa 1900, of the Grand Hotel Capitola and a steamship docking at Capitola Wharf is one of three new 11" x 17" historic Capitola posters now available at the Museum for a suggested donation of \$10.

(image cropped to fit)

Best Wishes Juliette—Museum Board Youth Representative

Juliette Thompson served as the Youth Representative on the Capitola Historical Museum Board of Trustees from 2023 to 2025. Archeology has become Juliette's primary educational focus and was the driving force that propelled her to become a volunteer at the Capitola Historical Museum. After homeschooling and online courses through Oxford University, this year Juliette graduated from high school. Before she heads to college, she is taking a gap year. Her first adventure is traveling in Australia this winter. She looks forward to studying archeology as a career.

As Youth Representative, Juliette attended the monthly Museum Board meetings (at 5:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month) as well as participated in numerous special museum events in Capitola and around the county. She also volunteered with the Museum Curator to create exhibitions and worked on a project to inventory and reorganize museum storage. Juliette not only helped in the construction of two of the museum's Beach Festival Nautical Parade floats, but also dressed in period costumes as a float passenger.

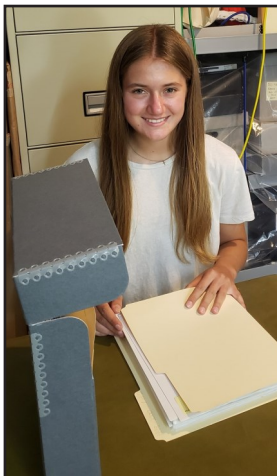


The Museum is seeking a new **Youth Representative for the Museum Board of Trustees**.

Youth applicants must live within the Soquel Union Elementary School District and attend either Soquel, Aptos, or Harbor High School or be a local high school home schooler. This is a great opportunity for youth to participate in local government. Youth members are non-voting and have one-year terms (members can reapply for additional terms). If under age 18, must be accompanied by an adult at meetings.

For further information call 831-464-0322.

Applications available at this link:



Above left to right: Juliette helping inventory the museum collection; manning the museum display at the 2024 Santa Cruz County History Fair at Santa Cruz Mission State Park; portraying a flapper on the museum's 2025 Nautical Parade float; and playing the ukelele along with members of the Capitola Ukulele Players on the museum's 2024 Nautical Parade float. Right: Juliette helping with the museum's display (along with Museum Board Trustee Enrique Dolmo and Museum Curator Deborah Osterberg) at the 2023 Santa Cruz County History Fair in Felton.



In Memoriam: Elizabeth Mitchell-Lynn

The Capitola Historical Museum honors the memory of Elizabeth “Lizzie” Mitchell, who passed away on July 30, 2025, at the age of 73 after a short battle with leukemia. Lizzie was the mother of former Museum Board President Emmy Mitchell-Lynn, whose work with the museum was inspired by her mother’s encouragement and lifelong example of community service.

Born on August 23, 1951, in Austin, Texas, Lizzie developed an early appreciation for history and civic life through her family’s involvement in politics. An eager learner and avid traveler, she explored the world with enthusiasm and found joy in connecting with people and cultures wherever she went. She valued independence, conversation, perspective, and fun, and built lasting friendships across decades and continents. She settled in Soquel in 1994, where she and her daughter shared a beautiful life together.

An exceptionally generous person, service was at the heart of Lizzie’s life. She founded Big Brothers Big Sisters of Spokane, Washington, and volunteered for more than twenty years with the American Red Cross, providing disaster relief and mental health support, including to families in New York after 9/11. She was a proud member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Junior League. She also gave her time closer to home, whether helping in her daughter’s classroom or serving on boards and committees of many local organizations. These are only a few examples of the many ways she showed up for others throughout her life.

Lizzie had a genuine appreciation for the place she lived and the stories tied to it. She loved learning about the history of her Soquel property, once part of Rancho Soquel, and believed in the importance of remembering where we come from. She loved history not just for the facts but for the human side of it: the choices, flaws, and moments of grace that make up a life. Her curiosity, humor, fierceness, and passion for service continue to live on through her daughter and in the memories of those who knew her.

New Interpretive Signage on Capitola Wharf



The Capitola Historical Museum helped create the Capitola Wharf timeline sign (the first one on your left as you walk onto the wharf) and contributed an early view of Capitola from the wharf for the Wharf introduction sign.

In addition to the historic timeline sign, there are several other panels relating stories of sea life in the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. The signage is the result of a partnership with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

We at the Museum are proud that on the new signage we could highlight the story of local Indigenous People - the Aptos, Cajastaca (Kai-ya-stah-ka), and Uypi Peoples and include a portion of the painting entitled, *The First People of Capitola*, by local artist Ann Thiermann. *Come check them out!*

Meet New Museum Board Trustee—Camilla “Cami” Corvin



My career in the legal field began in Santa Cruz County in 1975, Where I developed a lifelong dedication to law, justice, and public service. Over the decades, I worked in both private and public sectors, culminating in my service with the United States District Court, Northern Division, where I supported six federal judges as a paralegal. After retiring from the court, I opened my own small business, Corvin’s Legal Services, where I continue to serve the community through notary, legal document preparation, and paralegal support.

I remain deeply involved in community life through my role as Vice President of the Board of Directors for Think Local First Santa Cruz, which supports locally owned businesses, and as a Trustee of the Capitola Historical Museum, where I help preserve and share the stories of our region.

Beyond professional and volunteer service, I am a staunch advocate for causes close to my heart, including animal rights and welfare as well as housing advocacy for senior citizens. With family roots in Capitola and Santa Cruz County dating back to 1923, I feel fortunate to continue contributing to the vitality of this community—whether through service, advocacy, or simply staying connected with neighbors and local traditions.

Whales in Capitola? by Brian Legakis, Capitola Historical Museum Board President



While cycling to the Capitola Museum today I spotted the clear outline of a Humpback whale not 75 yards off the shore at New Brighton State Beach. Humpbacks have been seen along Seacliff Beach for months. My identification was confirmed by a museum visitor that afternoon and again on my way home along Park Avenue. Who needs a whale watching boat tour? Whales in Capitola. Look over the cliffs above Soquel Cove for yourself and enjoy this natural sensation in your own back yard.

Being a Museum Volunteer by Trustee Cami Corvin

For me, serving as a Trustee of the Capitola Historical Museum is more than a role—it’s a continuation of a lifelong connection to this community and its history. My family has lived in Capitola and Santa Cruz County since 1923, and some of my earliest memories are of listening to my elders’ stories about the people, places, and traditions that shaped both Capitola and the wider county. Today, those voices are gone, but being part of the Museum gives me a way to stay connected. Each time I volunteer, I find myself immersed in the same sense of discovery and storytelling that captivated me as a child.

One of the most rewarding aspects of volunteering at the Museum has been interacting with visitors. People walk through our doors with genuine curiosity and eagerness to learn about Capitola’s history. It is a joy to witness their excitement as they connect the exhibits to their own lives and memories. At the same time, I am learning right alongside them, deepening my understanding of the city’s past, its people, and its unique place on the California coast.

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Being a Museum Volunteer — *Continued from Page 6*

Equally meaningful are the conversations I have with longtime locals who stop by. They often share personal stories and memories that add rich texture to what we preserve in the Museum. For me, these exchanges feel like gifts, reminders of the oral histories I once heard in my own family. They help keep alive the voices of earlier generations, and they reinforce the importance of capturing and honoring the stories of those who came before us.

Volunteering at the Museum has also shown me how history connects across generations. Visitors range from schoolchildren seeing Capitola's story for the first time, to lifelong residents retracing their family's footprints. Being part of those conversations helps build bridges, not just between past and present, but between neighbors, families, and visitors from afar. It's a powerful reminder that history is not static; it is lived, shared, and carried forward by all of us.

Just as important as preserving artifacts and stories is the role of community involvement. The Capitola Historical Museum cannot thrive without volunteers. It depends on people who give their time, energy, and heart to welcome visitors, share knowledge, and help preserve history. Every docent shift, every story shared, and every connection made ensures that future generations will have access to the stories and traditions that make Capitola unique.

I believe it is vital for community members to step forward and volunteer. When people contribute their time, whether by greeting visitors, helping with exhibits, or simply listening to locals share their memories, they are keeping history alive in a very real way. Volunteering doesn't just enrich the Museum; it strengthens our community by weaving bonds between past and present, and between neighbors and newcomers alike. The Museum is at its best when it is supported by many hands and many voices working together.

Serving as a Trustee has already been an incredible journey, and I look forward to continuing this work. The Capitola Historical Museum is not only a place to preserve artifacts, but also a living hub where stories are told, traditions are remembered, and connections are made. Every time I greet a visitor, learn a new detail about Capitola's past, or listen to a local's memories, I am reminded of why this work matters.

My hope is that through my service, I can help keep Capitola's history alive and accessible for generations to come. Just as I once listened to the stories of my elders, I want today's children and future residents to hear, see, and feel the history of this place we call home. Preserving our collective memory is a responsibility I take to heart, and it is an honor to serve alongside others who share this passion.

Become a Museum Volunteer

Our community's museum can only operate with the dedicated service of our Museum Volunteers. Volunteers help man the museum in two hour shifts and assist with special events, exhibitions, and help better organize the museum collections. To join the ranks of our Museum Volunteers, you may fill out a volunteer application at the above link. For further information about being a volunteer at the museum, you may call the Museum Curator at 831-464-0322.



Join the Museum Board

The Museum is currently seeking applications for one **Museum Trustee** vacancy. The Trustee would serve a three year volunteer term on the Museum Board.

The Capitola Historical Museum's purpose is to promote, through the establishment and maintenance of a museum and allied projects, a program that will bring a better understanding and appreciation by the Capitola community of its history, architecture, culture, technology, and its creative and natural environments.



Access applications at this link:

MUSEUM CURATOR

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of Trustees

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Brian Legakis

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Roger Wyant

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Gordon van Zuiden

Enrique Dolmo

Toni Alldredge Event Coordinator

Cami Corvin

Trustee Vacancy

Youth Representative *Vacancy*

Newsletter published by the
Capitola Historical Museum

From the start, Judy checked over everything going into print, from Chamber of Commerce magazine photo features to articles for local papers. She edited the Capitola Context Statement, two Arcadia books on the histories of Capitola and Soquel, and numerous reports requested by city planning. She knew her manuals of style, too.

If I had to pick my favorite, it would be one of the earliest exhibits, "Pin Cushions to Politics: Women in Nineteenth Century Santa Cruz County." Here were stories of the self-reliant women who stood out during the first decades of California statehood. The show reflected the shared interest we discovered when Judy and I met in 1979. Together we had researched, edited, and agonized over publication of *Georgiana, Feminist Reformer of the West, the Journal of Georgiana Bruce Kirby, 1852-1860*. Later, on her own, Judy began compiling an annotated list of notable women of Santa Cruz County, a work she continued to refine until her last days.

I'd just started an exhibit to be called "It's About Time," when Judy said she was done. When the show opened in 2011, she still came by, and asked her husband, Joe Michalak, to read the captions to her. And at that moment, I realized the growing impact of Judy's loss of vision. She could still see, though, for many years and continued with Joe to work on historic preservation projects, helping to write and edit house histories and project proposals.

Judy died at home on August 15th after a fifteen-month battle with cancer. She was 84.

The Capitola Historical Museum is pleased to announce that the Museum Board of Trustees voted that the 2026 exhibition, entitled *Multiple Personalities—The Stories Behind Capitola's Historic Buildings*, will be presented in honor of Judy Steen.



Above: Photos of authentic bathing costumes Judy Steen displayed in exhibitions she worked on with Carolyn Swift in order to enrich the visitor experience at the Capitola Historical Museum.