

# Capitola Sunset

FALL 2019

CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

NEWS, EVENTS & INFORMATION

*"Providing a future for our past"*

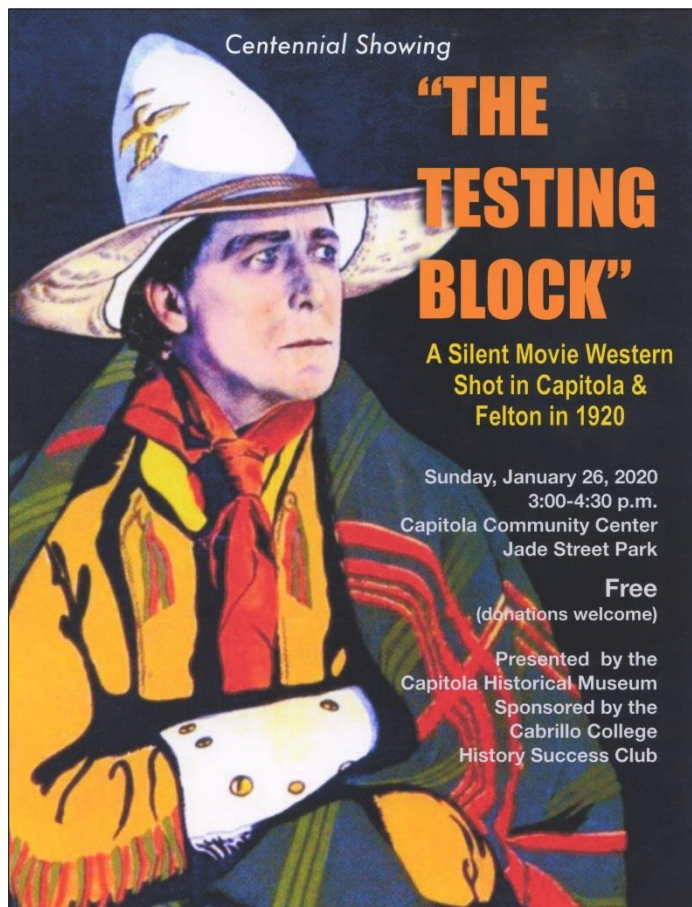
## "The Testing Block" Returns

The year 2020 will mark the centennial of the first motion picture shot in Capitola: *The Testing Block*. It was a silent movie and starred William S. Hart as Sierra Bill and Eva Novak as Nelly Gray. Hart was a pioneer of the western movie genre and made nearly eighty films between 1914 and 1925. In his heyday, he was just as famous as contemporaries Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks.

The movie crew spent much of March 1920, in Santa Cruz County, also shooting scenes near Felton and Ben Lomond. In Capitola, a fake frontier town was built near the wharf, mostly consisting of false-fronts. Some of the adjacent Italian Fishing Village also appears in the movie. According to newspaper accounts, large crowds came to watch the filming.

The movie takes place during the California Gold Rush and is typical western fare with a fight scene, chases, a robbery, guns, a jailbreak, etc. Hart's character starts out as an outlaw, but he marries a musician, Nelly Gray, becoming a father and goes straight. An evil member of his former outlaw gang, however, conspires to drive the couple apart through deceit so he can have a chance to marry the beautiful Nelly. Does Sierra Bill get her back? Well, you'll just have come and watch the movie!

The Museum will be holding a special centennial showing from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, January 26, 2020, at the Capitola Community Center in Jade Street Park. There will be popcorn and other refreshments and a short introductory lecture by Curator Frank Perry, who will tell about the making of the movie and the importance of Santa Cruz County during the silent film era. This promises to be a really fun event and a great opportunity to step back in time and experience movie-going one hundred years ago.



*The Testing Block* was last shown in Capitola in 1978. It was shown in conjunction with the release of the book, *Soquel Landing to Capitola-By-The-Sea*, by Sandy Lydon and Carolyn Swift and the opening of a new savings and loan on 41st Avenue. The 2020 showing is made possible by the Cabrillo College History Success Club, which was able to secure a copy of the film from the Library of Congress.

**COMING SOON TO A COMMUNITY CENTER NEAR YOU!**

**"THE TESTING BLOCK" WILL BE SHOWN AT THE CAPITOLA COMMUNITY CENTER AT JADE STREET PARK ON JANUARY 26, 2020. SHOW TIME IS 3:00-4:30 P.M. ADMISSION IS FREE.**

**Don't miss your chance to see this movie with scenes that were shot in Capitola 100 years ago!**

# Capitola Art and Wine Festival Makes History

By Niels Kisling

*What the people need is a way to make them smile.*

*It ain't so hard to do if you know how.*

*Gotta get a message, get it on through.*

*~ Doobie Brothers, 1972*

The Capitola Museum took it to the streets for the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Art and Wine Festival. Thanks to the Capitola/Soquel Chamber of Commerce, we got to set up our display under the historic Canary Islands Palm Tree. The people came and the people smiled—it's not so hard to do if you know how.

It is our passion to make history fun, educational, interesting and interactive. This year we tested festival goers by presenting two aerial images of Capitola—one from the 1960s and the other from the late 1940s. Telling the public that we 'had the day off,' we encouraged them to provide clues in order to narrow down the date of which each image was taken.



Board member Emmy Mitchell-Lynn and Ron Kustek make history interesting for festival goers in the Capitola Museum interpretive exhibit under the historical Canary Islands Date Palm. And, for all the old-timers, yes, we had Prince Albert in the can!

Larry Laurent, our Assistant to the City Manager, provided the most important clue to the image from the 1940s. He noted that the Capitola Theater was not in the picture. That narrows the image down to pre-1948 when the theater opened. This was particularly interesting since March 1949 was written on the back. This goes to show that history is often subject to further interpretation.

Two framed Brown Bulb Ranch Seed Packet Posters were offered for a drawing held on Sunday. Thank you to everyone who supported the drawing. Our lucky winners were Nadine Burke and Sandra Wallace. Congratulations to both of our winners!



Your Capitola Museum Junior Board Member, Joshua Henshaw, presents one of the framed seed packet posters to our drawing winner, Nadine Burke while her husband Ron looks on.

Taking the museum to the streets is not possible without the help of our precious volunteers. Your Junior Board Member, Joshua Henshaw, spent most of his weekend taking time off from his schoolwork to staff the exhibit. Board Members Emmy Mitchel-Lynn (with Ron Kustek), Dave Peyton and Pam Greeninger spent hours promoting history and putting a positive spin on the museum. Curator, Frank Perry, the ultimate authority on Capitola History, spent time at the exhibit on Sunday.

The message is clear. People are passionate about Capitola History and when you take it to the streets, they want to be involved with a passion, and it makes them smile.

## Where Do Museum Visitors Come From?

Gleanings from the Guest Register at the museum indicate that, so far this year, the Museum has welcomed visitors from several continents and many states.

This year's list of countries seems especially diverse: Switzerland, China, Germany, Canada, England, France, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brazil, Japan, Lebanon, Russia, Czech Republic, Thailand, Mexico, Philippines, Ireland, Spain, Bangladesh, Singapore, and Scotland.

California was the most common state represented, but there were also visitors from Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah, and Texas. Some visitors came all the way from Maryland, Vermont, New York, Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Mississippi.

Since Capitola's founding in 1874, the town has attracted many summertime visitors from the warm inland valleys, seeking to cool off with ocean breezes. This trend continues. California towns represented include San Jose, Gilroy, Hollister, Modesto, Fresno, Turlock, Stockton, and Sacramento. We also had southern California visitors from Torrance, Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Anaheim.



## Celebrating 100 Years

By Minna Hertel

Former Capitola Museum Board Member Emil Edgren recently celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at Severino's in Aptos. It was a surprise party of family and friends organized by his son, Bob Edgren. Around the room Bob arranged a selection of Emil's photographs and paintings as a tribute to Emil's life's works.



When you turn 100 you can have your cake and eat it too! Emil and Lucille Edgren enjoy the celebration at Severino's recognizing his 100 years. Bob Edgren organized the surprise event.

The guests were given a copy of Emil's book, *3:01 P.M. Pacific War Time*, a story as told to Gale W. Geurin of Emil's life in the Army Signal Corps and how he became the Official Photographer to the US Army in World War II. The main focus in the book is his photographs taken on May 8, 1945. That day, in the Plaza de la Concorde in Paris, Emil heard General de Gaulle's voice come over the loud speakers of the opera house announcing the war in Europe was over. The cover photo on the book shows a clock with the exact time of de Gaulle's announcement; "The war in Europe is ended. Germany has surrendered. Viva la France."

Emil was discharged from the Army and upon returning to San Francisco he married his sweetheart, Lucille, who at the age of 98 still sits by his side. In the following years Emil enjoyed a distinguished career as an award-winning photographer and photo journalist. There are many great stories in his past like; chatting with Marilyn Monroe on her wedding day to Joe DiMaggio, drinking wine with Robert Mitchum on his yacht, and capturing on film the Beatles arrival for their last concert in San Francisco.

In the early 1960s Emil, Lucille and their two sons lived in San Jose with a dream to have a summer home near the beach. They chose Santa Cruz County as the place to realize that dream. The real estate agent they hired told them the best investment property was in Capitola, especially on 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue. During an early visit to the area they saw cows grazing on the land, very few homes.

They were shown a home in the Capitola Venetian where Bob Edgren, a small boy at the time, remembers standing on the wall and looking down into the waters of Soquel Creek with no beach in sight. The sand was gone, robbed by the new jetty at the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor five miles to the west. Eventually the City of Capitola recovered the beach by building a spine jetty and importing sand, but the Edgren family ended up buying a place in Santa Cruz.

After retiring from the *San Jose Mercury* in 1980, they moved to a home in the Jewel Box where they lived for 12 years before moving to another home on Monterey Avenue in Capitola Village. Emil became involved in the art community serving on the early Capitola Art's Commission. He also became a board member of the Capitola Historical Museum. In 1983 Emil Edgren was voted Man of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce for his contribution to the community—specifically for his outstanding photographs of the Rispin Mansion taken for the Capitola Museum.



CAPITOLA 1877: This painting by Emil Edgren depicts Capitola in the early days when we first became a West Coast seaside resort. This painting can be seen on display in the beach cottage outside of the Capitola Museum.

Emil's work during World War II can be viewed at:

[www.EmilEdgren.com](http://www.EmilEdgren.com)



The cake speaks for all of us who volunteer for the Capitola Historical Museum. Thank you, Emil, for all your cultural contributions and for capturing Capitola's rich history on film!



# Capitola Beach Festival Shines Bright

By Dave Peyton

The second annual Capitola Beach Festival certainly lived up to its theme, Light up Capitola, when seven photon festooned floats plied Soquel Creek as night settled in on the first day of the two-day festival. After a moderate turnout last year, this year's lighted nautical parade, accompanied by water marshals in lighted kayaks, pleased a crowd of thousands with a spectacular floating light show featuring iconic views of Capitola and symbols of the beach scene. Teams representing some of Capitola's restaurants and businesses engaged in friendly competition under the watchful eyes of judges looking for best use of design, lights, theme, etc., with the winner having bragging rights until next year.



Dressed up as Killer Bees, water parade marshals buzzed around Soquel Creek in lighted kayaks adding to the festivity and lighting up the night. Image contributed by Paul and Terry Gregory.

Searching for a special event that would replace the retired Begonia Festival, festival organizers sought to offer another family focused festival with new partnerships and enhanced community and business support. Entering into a partnership with the Wharf to Wharf organization led to the Little Wharf 3-Miler fun run, and in its second year, nearly 4,000 runners and walkers participated in the opening event of the festival.

With the nautical parade featuring lighted decorations in place of begonias and now beginning at dark, the organizers decided on a late afternoon music concert to keep people around town until the evening parade started. Two village businesses agreed to sponsor the concert with the suggestion that the organizers seek local favorite, Extra Large, who agreed to perform. At that time, the band had not yet formally announced their retirement. Organizers were pleasantly surprised when the band confirmed that they would play their final concert at the Capitola Beach Festival. A large crowd gathered early at the Esplanade Park stage and cheered madly throughout the two hour concert. At the conclusion, as the band left in a limousine, many concert goers were seen making their way toward the creek to await the lighted nautical parade.

The weekend festival also featured a number of popular events held over from the former Begonia Festival. Events such as the early morning fishing derby and row boat races on Soquel Creek are always family favorites no matter who catches the biggest fish or rows the fastest. The sand sculpture contest had to contend with a high tide, but all contestants agreed that no matter the conditions it was a great day to play in the sand. Bill Lewis, AKA Santa Cruz Sand and an active festival committee member created one of his own sculptures to kick off the event and provide a backdrop for special "Capitola" souvenir photos.



Image contributed by Paul and Terry Gregory

Activities finishing off the festival weekend included the always competitive Horseshoe Tournament where a mother and daughter team nearly beat the entire field this year. Shouts of "wait till next year" could be heard at the tournament's conclusion. Over 100 children spent the morning creating works of art with chalk on the village sea wall. Visitors were able to view the work of the chalk artists throughout the day. Some master pieces were even seen on the pants of those who unwittingly sat on the sea wall and carried a little of the chalk art away with them!



"Pescado Grande" won first place in the small group category. It was created by Tony & Nico Palandran and Dave, Colton & Clayton Huntley. Image contributed by Paul and Terry Gregory.

Planning has already begun on next year's Capitola Beach Festival that will be held on September 26-27. Anyone interested in helping put on next year's festival is encouraged to contact the committee at [capitolabeachfestival.com](http://capitolabeachfestival.com).

## Welcome Dean Walker—Newest Museum Board Member



Dean reports that his birthday on July 25<sup>th</sup> was overall a very good day for him. One of the reasons was that the Capitola City Council followed the recommendation of the Museum's Board of Trustees and voted to appoint him Board Member for a three year term. Dean is a local resident and retired internal medicine physician,

whose entire practice career was here in Santa Cruz County. Besides being a clinician, he held a number of medical administrative positions, including being on the boards of the Santa Cruz Medical Foundation (now PAMF) and Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center. He also worked as a legal consultant on medical litigation cases. Dean and his wife Melisa, who taught at Mountain School and is on the board of Porter Memorial Library, raised two children in Soquel.

Descendant of an Oakland family, Dean sees his interest in history as being especially stimulated by a personal family history in the county. His family has owned property in the San Lorenzo Valley since his great-grandfather built a second home there in the early 1900's. He says he's acutely aware of how critical it is to retain what we know about the past. "So much of what we consider to be firm knowledge about people and events, when it's not well documented, can be lost in a generation or two. I know that first hand, especially through my genealogy work. Thank goodness for what has been preserved to date, and for the internet!"

Dean views historians as key to how society shapes its identity—who we are, how we got to where we are, and where we can expect to head in the future. In that regard, he feels fortunate to be joining a board composed of individuals who are passionate about their city and its history. He also cited the benefit of having an outstanding museum curator. He relayed having traveled extensively in the US, Mexico, Central America, Europe, overland across Asia, and having lived in Japan for a year. He said "It's really not surprising to find a lot of positive, dedicated people who want to represent Capitola and support our quality of life locally. I think the environment of the Central Coast and the charm of Capitola in particular is truly hard to match anywhere."

## Capitola Memories Project adds Worth Brown, Jim Hobbs, Beth Porter, Bruce Arthur

Since 2014, the Capitola Historical Museum has recorded a number of "oral histories" as part of the Capitola Memories Project. Each is done on video, and the goal is to preserve memories from a diversity of people who lived in, worked in, or visited Capitola and environs in years past. Emphasis has been on the 1940s through 1980s.

The collection of videos is available online for free via the Museum's YouTube channel. To find the site, just google "Capitola Historical Museum Youtube Channel." Go to the page and click on "videos" to see a full list, which includes some other Capitola videos from the Museum's collection.

There have been several additions over the past few months. Worth Brown explains the begonia business and talks about growing up in Capitola. Jim Hobbs tells of his long family history in the area and his childhood memories of Soquel and Capitola. Beth Porter and Bruce Arthur, both Museum volunteers, enthusiastically share their childhood memories from the 1950s and 1960s. Bruce also served on the Capitola City Council from 1998 to 2006.

### October 17, 2019

Why does October 17 sound familiar? It's the day the earth shook. The day of the Loma Prieta Earthquake that affected the lives of many Santa Cruz County and Bay Area resident's lives.

To commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Loma Prieta Earthquake, Capitola Museum Curator, Frank Perry held a talk before a packed house on October 17, 2019 at the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History.



About 60 people showed up for Frank Perry's earthquake lecture on October 17. It was a sold-out crowd and literally standing room only. The event was co-sponsored by the Capitola Historical Museum and the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History.



## New Brochure Will Help Researchers

From time to time visitors come to the Museum wanting to know how to research the history of their house or how to find out about an ancestor who lived in the area. The Museum's new brochure, *Digging into Capitola History*, summarizes some of the principal resources used by historians. "It's designed to cover some of the basics for beginners," says Curator Frank Perry. The brochure is free and available at the Museum.



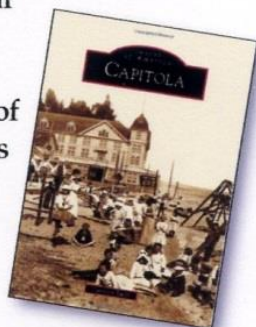
## *Digging into* **Capitola History**

### A Short Guide

Prepared by the  
Capitola Historical Museum, 2019

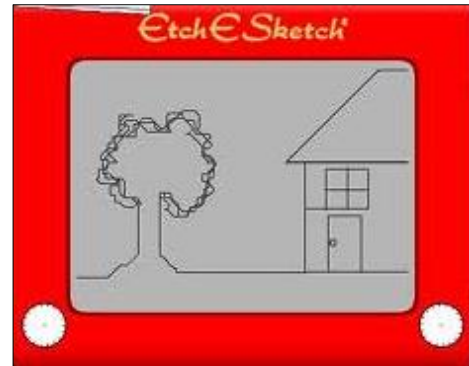
Capitola is a small town with a big history. Founded in 1874, is the oldest seaside resort on the California Coast. It became an incorporated city in 1949 and today has a population of about 10,000. Besides tourism, other industries have included fishing, flowers, poultry, sugar, and fruit. In the early days, redwood lumber from the nearby hills was shipped at Capitola.

At the Capitola Historical Museum, visitors frequently ask how to research people, places, or events from Capitola's past. This short guide summarizes some of the principal resources useful in historical research. These are mostly general resources. This list does not include resources of a specialized nature, such as biographies of individuals or resources on specific industries.



## Holiday Toy Exhibit

Due to the popularity of last year's doll exhibit, the Museum will feature a special display of vintage toys and games between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Most will be from the early to middle 1900s.



The Capitola Museum has recently received generous donations from:

John & Jennifer Anderson	Steve & Diana Burbank
Toni Castro	Jan Jensen
Marvin Jensen	Sally & Brian Legakis
Joan Gilbert Martin	Katharine Minott
Paul & Judy Parsons	David A. Peyton
Susan and Nels Westman	

Diane Cooley in honor of Carolyn Swift (still alive)  
David and Marcia Biancalana in memory of Dr. & Mrs.  
Ben Biancalana

Recently, the following artifacts were generously donated to the Capitola Museum:  
Nancy Twohig Ley: Photographs and Letters relating to local movie-making  
Pam Greeninger: Two historic Capitola T-shirts  
City of Capitola: Photos of City Hall construction in 1976  
Margaret Kinstler: Begonia Festival award plaques

Capitola Sunset is published by:

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Museum Hours: Thursday through Sunday 12-4 P.M.

Curator: Frank Perry.

Board Members: Niels Kisling (President), David Peyton (Vice President), Pam Greeninger (Secretary), Brian Legakis (Treasurer), Emmy Mitchell-Lynn, Dean Walker and Gordon van Zuiden.  
Museum Youth Board Member: Joshua Henshaw.