

# Capitola Sunset

SUMMER 2015

CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

NEWS, EVENTS & INFORMATION

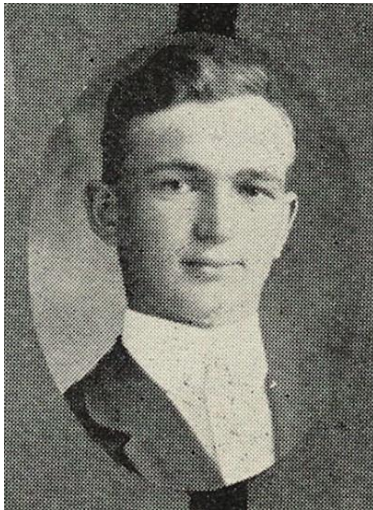
*"Providing a Future for Our Past"*

## Capitola's Forgotten Begonia Grower

By Frank Perry

Three businesses are usually thought of as the mainstays of Capitola's historic begonia industry: Brown Bulb Ranch, Antonelli Brothers, and Vetterle & Reinelt. But there was another begonia grower, quite important in the 1920s, who few people know about today: Rene Rochex.

Rene Louis Rochex was born in Minnesota in 1898. The family eventually settled near Capitola, and Rochex graduated from Santa Cruz High in 1918. He worked briefly in Bay Area shipyards during World War 1, but returned to Capitola after the war and began growing begonias and gloxinias on his mother's acreage near



what is now Clares Street. His sister, Clotilde, who was two years younger, helped in the early development of the business. She studied law at U.C. Berkeley and was later co-owner of Stoffey's Flowers in Salinas.

According to a 1930 newspaper account, Rochex shipped 100,000 begonia bulbs to other parts of the nation that January, plus 20,000 gloxinia bulbs. He was considered one of the prominent bulb growers and nurserymen of the region. The begonia lath houses alone blanketed one-and-a-half acres.

Rochex was well-known in Capitola social circles, being acquainted with the Hoopers, Hencheys, Woodhouses, and others. For a while he dated a stenographer with Rispin's Bay Head Land Company. In 1932 he married Rose Ann Cody, a school teacher at Mission Hill, and the couple later settled in Salinas.

Rochex was very active in community affairs. In 1925 he helped get 41st Avenue put through between East Cliff and Soquel Drives. In later years, when he and his wife lived in Watsonville, he belonged to several civic groups, served on the Santa Cruz County Grand Jury, and was president of a local pioneer society. Rochex died in 1974 and is buried in Salinas.

(Rene Rochex's yearbook photo from 1918 appears as a courtesy of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History)



## Community Room Beautification



"We think history is beautiful, but it gets better when Frank Perry lends his touch and creates wonderful history panels like the ones seen here that he recently installed in the Community Room at Capitola City Hall," says Museum Trustee Niels Kisling. Take a look and you will agree. Among other places you can see images from Capitola's History (outside the museum) include the stair well and parking lot at city hall, Capitola Self Storage (near Nob Hill), Erik's Deli on 41<sup>st</sup>, Gayle's Bakery, and Village Host Pizza on Bay Avenue.

## New Exhibit: Yes, we have Postcards!

By Niels Kisling

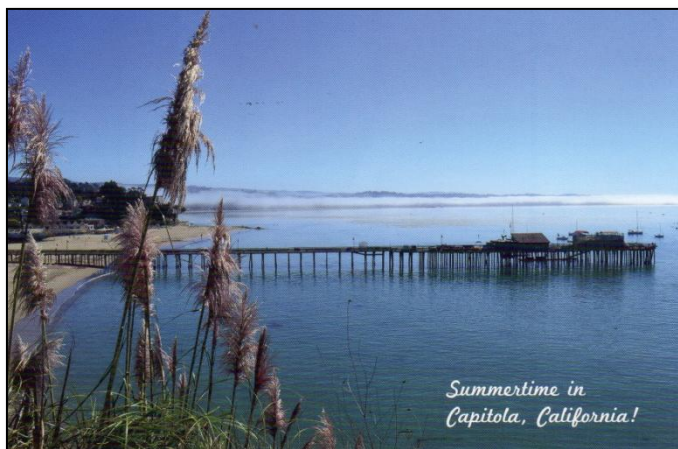
Our current exhibit, *Postmarked Capitola—A History Through Postcards*, is off to an exciting start. We are just a few months into the exhibit and our visitor count is high. The grand opening in March was well-attended and it appears as if this exhibit will be experienced by more people than ever.

The museum recently created and published two new postcards to complement the exhibit. We also reissued a third postcard first published by the well-known Charles Weidner, circa 1910. This postcard is a beautiful image of the historic Grand Hotel Capitola. All three collectables are available for the small suggested donation of \$1.00.

Check out these new additions to the mix of assorted postcards from Capitola. They are on display at the front desk and available for a small suggested donation during the museum's open hours.



The Grand Hotel Capitola was built in the 1890s where Esplanade Park is today. It featured 160 rooms, a restaurant, clubhouse, electric lights and telephone service. The hotel offered changing rooms and basic conveniences to all visitors. Designed by architect Edward Van Cleek, the stately landmark burned in 1929.



The view of Capitola Village from above Hooper's Beach includes Capitola Wharf, the Venetians and the lagoon. Coastal fog, nature's air conditioner, can be seen in the background. Visitors have been coming to Capitola since the mid-1870s to experience the beach, great views and the temperate climate.



It began as the Capitola Water Follies organized by Peggy Matthews in 1952. This year the Capitola Begonia Festival will celebrate 63 years when the City of Capitola hosts the event over Labor Day Weekend.

The suggested donation for the new postcards is just \$1.00, but for a \$2.00 donation, we will throw in a stamp and mail them for you!

### Mark Your Calendars and BYOH

You can bring your own hat, or for a small donation, you can get one from us. On Sunday, September 6, your Capitola Museum will once again be hosting their companion event to the Annual Capitola Begonia Festival. This event is called 'Begonias-to-Go' and it's FREE! Your museum will be set up in Esplanade Park with hundreds of begonia blossoms available to decorate your favorite hat, stroller, child or pet. Don't miss the fun!

The event is sponsored by Greenwaste and none of this would be possible if it weren't for the cooperation of Golden State Bulb Growers who donate the blossoms. The local Boy Scouts help us pick the Begonia Blossoms the day before our event.



## Remembering Jim Reding

Capitola Museum was the venue on May 2 when Barbara Reding and the Reding Family hosted a reception in Jim's honor. In addition to the display inside the front door honoring Jim, Barbara and the family exhibited many family treasures chosen to depict the service Jim provided to Capitola and to his country.



Close family friends shared memories and exchanged stories & smiles while looking through old-time Reding Family scrapbooks that were laid out during the remembrance.

The museum will continue to honor Jim Reding and his service to Capitola by displaying a few service plaques and treasured family memorabilia in 'Jim's corner' throughout this year.



### Repotting

Fran Albrecht was a museum volunteer for over 20 years. Working 'behind the scenes,' museum visitors never saw her at the front desk greeting visitors. But, Fran was actually highly visible and very much front-and-center as she provided the museum grounds with our wonderful landscape. Fran is not through with her 'day job,' *Cottage Gardens and Miniatures*, it's just time to let someone else volunteer as the museum landscaper. Museum Volunteer Bill Patterson has graciously stepped in to take over for Fran.

*Thank you Fran Albrecht and thank you Bill!*

## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Car Show Roars Into Town

Several NASCAR race cars set the stage for the opening of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Capitola Rod and Custom Car Show put on by the Capitola/Soquel Chamber of Commerce. Turning heads and scattering pets & small children, the cars came thundering down Capitola Avenue past city hall, the museum and fire station, to signal the start of the weekend event.

The Capitola Museum held extra hours during the event and we had many more visitors than on a typical weekend in June. Thank you Bill Patterson, Marcia Biancalana, Stephanie Tetter, Mary Jane McGranahan and Bob Anderson for taking weekend shifts during the car show!



## Volunteers Volunteer Responses

The Capitola Historical Museum sent out a volunteer survey in May 2015, for the purpose of determining what kinds of enrichment activities the volunteers might be interested in.

Most volunteers would like a bit more historical information to share with visitors. They would like to see a quarterly activity, class or program to help supplement their museum experience.

The Museum has appointed board member Stephanie Kirby to be the Volunteer Enrichment Coordinator. She will plan activities to this end. The first venture will be in the fall, sometime in October. The details will be available a month beforehand and will be mailed or e-mailed to each volunteer. The Museum hopes this approach to enhancing volunteer expertise will be educational, stimulating and interesting. And fun!

## Volunteer Spotlight: Dave Peyton

Dave Peyton retired and moved to Pleasure Point in 2008. He hit the ground running and has not slowed down since—in fact he has accelerated. Dave was selected as Volunteer of the Year in 2011, serving for the Capitola/Soquel Chamber of Commerce. He now serves in five official volunteer roles and only Dave knows where he volunteers additionally in unofficial capacities.



Dave's grandmother had a successful real estate career in the 1940s and she ended up owning many homes in Capitola. That's where Dave's earliest memories of Capitola were formed. He volunteers on the Capitola Begonia Festival Committee, and family lore has it that Dave attended the first Begonia Festival in the early 1950s.

He remembers that as a kid, his grandma used the Venetian blinds in her Prospect Avenue home to signal him and his siblings when it was time to come home from the beach below. They had a code worked out that became, in a way, Peyton family semaphore.

Fresh out of college, Dave began working full time in municipal recreation. This field became his passion and he applied himself to it for another 30 years, working for the City of San Jose.

About volunteering in Capitola, Dave says, "When I retired, I promised myself I would only seek volunteer work with people who have a passion to give back to the community." While raising the level of the quality of life here in Capitola, Dave has found people with common interests and shared visions.

Dave divides his volunteer service among the Capitola/Soquel Chamber of Commerce, Capitola Public Safety and Community Service Foundation (they put on the annual Capitola Rod and Classic Car Show), the Capitola Begonia Festival (served for three years), and the Capitola Art and Wine Festival, where Dave has volunteered for the last five years.

The Capitola Museum is lucky to have recently popped up on his radar screen to become his fifth volunteer position. It's a credit to the volunteers and to the museum leadership that Dave identified the museum as a worthy partner. We are happy to say that Dave Peyton is a worthy partner for the museum too. Volunteerism must be a two way street for all to reap the rewards and benefit from the experience.

## Recently Donated Artifacts

**Shelly and Mike Robelotto:** photo of Hooper residence, 1920s

**Barbara Reding:** scrapbook and two historic photos of Capitola

**Ron Strite:** old newspapers and photos

**John Pilge:** DVDs

**Adrienne Perry:** two postcards of Capitola

**Stan Stevens:** historic photos of Capitola

**Minna Hertel:** Capitola postcards and old Begonia Festival pins

**Derek Van Alstine:** deer hunt photo with Frank Reanier

**Soquel Pioneers:** three books on local history



High-wheeling through Capitola. The roads may have been dirt, but the sidewalks were redwood in this 1880s view of Monterey Avenue. Note the high-wheel bicycle. (Photo courtesy of Barbara Reding)

## Capitola Museum has recently received generous donations from:

Stephan Biggs	Steve and Diane Burbank
CVRA and Paradise Grill	Robert Deacon
Ron and Diane Graves	Lani Hall
Marvin Jensen	Kathleen King
Betty Mello	Karl Mertz
Jed and Helen Myall	Paul and Judy Parsons
Dave Peyton	Barbara Reding
Larry and Linda Smith	Carolyn and Steve Swift

Capitola Sunset is published by the Capitola Historical Museum  
410 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Website: [www.capitolamuseum.org](http://www.capitolamuseum.org)  
E-Mail: [capitolamuseum@gmail.com](mailto:capitolamuseum@gmail.com)  
Volunteer blog: [capitolamuseumblog.weebly.com](http://capitolamuseumblog.weebly.com)  
Telephone: 831-464-0322

Museum Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday 12-4 P.M.

Curator: Frank Perry

Board of Trustees: Linda Smith (President), Bob Anderson (Vice President), Stephanie Kirby (Secretary), Niels Kising, Kristen Petersen (Treasurer), David Shoaf, & Carolyn Swift (serving for Gordon van Zuiden who is on leave for 2015)