

Capitola Sunset

Summer 2016

CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

NEWS, EVENTS & INFORMATION

Special 50th Birthday Edition! Providing a future for our past.

Celebrating Our Golden Anniversary

By Frank Perry, Museum Curator

Wow, it is hard to believe that our museum is turning fifty!

Of the twenty-three museums and visitor centers in the county, the Capitola Historical Museum is one of the oldest. The Museum first opened on Saturday, July 9, 1966, in a tiny converted storeroom behind the Chamber of Commerce at 115 Capitola Avenue. City council candidate Phillip Walker had promised that, if elected, he would start a museum. Walker kept his promise, and, with a dedicated pool of volunteers, started what he jokingly called “the one-room Smithsonian.”



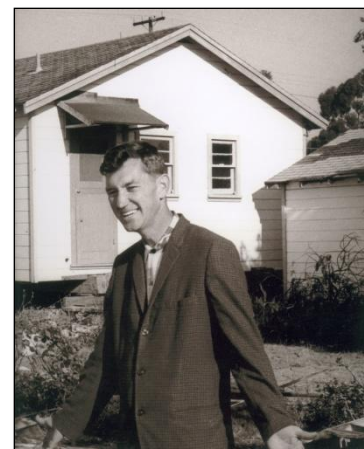
The present Museum building is a former Live Oak dwelling that was purchased by Walker for \$25 and moved to city property in late 1967. Volunteers remodeled and painted it to look like a schoolhouse to attract attention. It opened in March, 1968.

Although small, its early history is surprisingly complex, with many different people and organizations involved. There were lots of ideas and challenges, but lots of enthusiasm too. During the 1980s, the Museum again shared space with the Chamber of Commerce. Annual attendance was typically about 4,000, or half that of today.

Several individuals served as curator/director during the early years, including Phil Walker, Lew Deasy, Dan Hurt, and John Macdonald. Gradually, the city began to play a greater role in the operation of the Museum, hiring Mary Vaage as curator (on a contract basis) from 1990-1993. Carolyn Swift took over the job in 1993 and was the first curator to be a city employee. Over the next twenty years Carolyn helped give the Museum continuity and energy to make it the vigorous and active resource for the community that it is today.

It is difficult to know just how many people have visited the Museum over the past five decades, but it would be several hundred thousand.

Capitola Museum Founder, Phil Walker, is seen here with a big smile on his face. The museum building is in the background. Pictured on Thompson Ave., the building is all jacked up, just like Phil, and ready to make the journey to Capitola Village.
LEFT: Capitola Museum in the 1980s.



The Museum’s motto, “Providing a Future for Our Past,” will no doubt continue to serve it well. Judging from the past, there will be no shortage of wonderful old photos to be discovered, historical enigmas to be solved, and fascinating stories to share with visitors.

Capitola Historical Museum
Established 1966
July 9th
Providing a future for our past—
Celebrating 50 Years
It's a party and you are invited!

Pop-Up Museum is Your Museum

By Niels Kisling

What is a Pop Up Museum? MAH, the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz, may define it best when they say, "A Pop Up Museum is a temporary museum created by the people who show up to participate. It works by creating a theme and location, and inviting people to bring something on topic to share."

As part of your Capitola Museum's 50th birthday celebration, we are hosting our first Pop Up Museum on Sunday, June 5 at the Capitola Rod and Custom Car Show from 10 A.M. until 2 P.M.

Look for us in the old Capitola Theater parking lot on Sunday.

Buy the Mercedes-Benz 250S and spend your \$6400 on engineering, not status—you'll sleep better at night.

Driving the Mercedes-Benz 250S will be a tribute to your good sense, not your ego.

It's not reasonably expected to keep this car until it has more than equal in cost by means of faithful service. Your investment won't be eroded by annual benefits, stipend construction or cheap materials.

Built for the long haul

You pay for superior engineering when you buy the 250S. For instance, 28 selected pieces of sheet metal help form the 250S "one" body. It is welded in 10,000 points, then hand-banded, then and is spread for 3 hours.

In all, it carries 46 pounds of protection against rust (including 24 pounds of permanent undercoating).

Not a barge

If you are a good driver now, your 250S will make you a better one. It's an almost incomprehensibly responsive car. One reason: the 250S measures two feet shorter than its major rivals. You thread through traffic with the agility of a sports car. And you ride on fully independent suspension system adapted from a sports-racing machine.

According to Road & Track magazine, this suspension "offers a combination of riding comfort and stability that is the standard for comparison."

Racing-car brakes

Mercedes-Benz engineers fitted the 250S with the same brake system found on Grand Prix racing machines: 4-wheel, caliper-type disc brakes.

1966, FEBRUARY 24, 1967

Racing drivers like the way disc brakes mean faster, more accurate stops from 100 mph. Disc brakes also resist the effects of moisture and dust—and they wear very slowly.

Fatigue factor

No matter how far the destination, you and your passengers will arrive relaxed in the 250S.

guarantee more travel enjoyment—no crowds, no awkward schedules. When you return home, your 250S comes too.

And remember that overconfidence costs you hundreds of dollars on the purchase price of your new

The seats are as good as any in the world," writes the Editor of Car and Driver magazine.

One reason: They were designed, with the aid of orthopedic physicians, to support your body properly and thus ward off muscle fatigue.

Inside and out, the 250S is a snicker's delight. The fourth and final point on its hand-spread and hand-rolled. Even the underside of the door is fully trimmed and finished.

Mercedes-Benz: For full details, see your authorized Mercedes-Benz dealer. Or clip and send the coupon below now and get a free, fact-filled information kit.

Mr. Peter Dool, Mercedes-Benz, P.O. Box 100, Los Angeles, CA 90008.

Please send me the free Mercedes-Benz literature information kit.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____

My dad bought this car in 1966 and I will be bringing this ad and a few other tidbits from the 1960s. This vintage automobile has been a Capitola car since my dad brought it here in 1971. I took a trip across the country in it with my mom in 1967—I was 8 years old. The car is still in our family 50 years later!

Please dust off your best artifacts from the middle 1960s. The theme will be "Cars, Capitola, and The 1960s." Anything that's important to you will be important to exhibit on Sunday—you are the museum!

The Capitola Museum will provide tables on which to display your special memorabilia. Please note that if you bring anything valuable or irreplaceable, you will want to remain on-hand to talk about it and keep it safe. Sharing your stories with others is the best feature of any Pop Up Museum.



For more information you can contact me at: nkisling@pacbell.net or 831-332-7454 mobile.

This year marks the Capitola Museum's 50th birthday. If you have old photos, clippings, or stories relating to the Museum's early years, please contact curator Frank Perry. 831-464-0322 fperry@ci.capitola.ca.us.

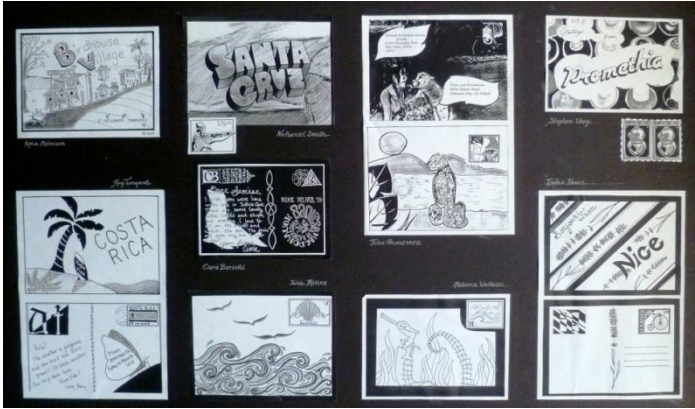
Carolyn Swift to Speak at Picnic



Mark your calendars. The Soquel Pioneers will be holding their annual potluck lunch on Saturday, July 30, noon to 2:30 p.m. Former Capitola Museum Director Carolyn Swift will give a short talk on Soquel History. This fun community event is free and open to the public, and is held in the picnic grounds at the end of Pringle Lane in Soquel.

Exhibit Inspires Class

Local artist Ann Thiermann, after seeing our Postmarked Capitola exhibition last year, decided to have her students design postcards. She teaches Art 4A, Beginning Design and Color, at Cabrillo College. After Ann showed the class photos she took of the exhibit, each student designed a postcard. They then mailed the cards to each other. Some of the students had never received a postcard in the mail before.



Save These Dates

Sunday, June 5
Pop-Up Museum hosted by the Capitola Museum at the Capitola Rod and Custom Car Show from 10-2 P.M.

Saturday, July 9
Capitola Historical Museum Birthday Party at the museum from 10-2 P.M. Short program begins at 11 A.M. Come for the celebration/stay for the hot dogs and cake!

Saturday, October 15
1960s celebration at Jade Street Park Community Center from 1-4 P.M. Share your memories from the 60s and who knows, maybe a museum will pop-up!

Saba Safe is Safe in Sand

By Niels Kisling—with help from Carolyn Swift, David Macdonald and Jack Macdonald

I was walking on the beach in front of Esplanade Park at low tide on a rainy winter day, when I spotted a familiar sight sticking out of the sand. It was the old safe from the ruins of the Saba nightclub fire. The safe has been buried in the sand for 59 years. This is just how Brad Macdonald wanted it when, with tongue in cheek, he donated it to serve as rip-rap for the jetty built to keep our sand on Capitola Beach. Local surf groms call the safe's location 'First Jetty,' for there are actually two jetties.



When Brad Macdonald sold his interest in Shadowbrook in the early 1950s, he and his dad, Jack Macdonald bought the Capitola Ballroom and Beach Club located where Esplanade Park sits

today. They transformed the property into a cool, hip and swinging night club with a Caribbean theme called the Saba (pronounced say-bah).

Tikis decorated the entrance as they were in-vogue at the time. The Saba was patterned after the popular restaurant chain Trader Vic's that featured tiki statues at all of their locations. Local artist Frank Hill worked for the Macdonald family and he carved those tiki statues. Hill also helped decorate the interior to create a little Caribbean feel right here in Capitola.

Who knows if Brad and Jack knew, or even cared, that tikis were a Pacific Islander thing and weren't even found in the Caribbean.

I digress, but hardly apologize for this digression, as there is so much to say about the Macdonald Family, what they brought to Capitola, and what they contributed to its rich history.

On my recent beach walk, I found that the winter swell had once again uncovered the old safe, just a few yards out in the sand off of Esplanade Park. The Saba safe 'surfaces' on occasion—well, it doesn't actually surface or move much, the sand simply retreats and sometimes exposes it in the winter. In the summer, the sand is pushed back onshore and reburies it again. This happens every few years.

According to local historian, Carolyn Swift, "Brad got a kick out of the excitement the safe causes every time it surfaces, because nobody remembers the story and he'd get to tell it again." The last tale of the safe may have been

published in Brad's obituary in 1999 that read, "In 1957, the restaurant burned to the ground, but to this day, the restaurant's safe can still be seen in the Capitola surf by the jetty."

About the safe, Brad's son David, 13 years old in 1957, recalls, "I remember the safe well and remember seeing them count and store the nightly receipts. There was a handgun in the safe and another one hidden which I found afterwards in the rubble of the fire."

Brad Macdonald returned to Capitola from Utah to help celebrate the city's 50th birthday in 1999. At that time he told Carolyn Swift about that gun. Carolyn told Brad, "I'd love to see that handgun."

Weeks later, a well-taped shoebox arrived for her at City Hall. She opened it, and there was this fire-singed handgun. She couldn't believe it. Just then, the police chief walked by, and Carolyn said, "I've got a gun!" He said, without blinking an eye, "The cylinder is in backwards, and it's been fused that way."

Carolyn goes on to say, "That gun has always been one of my favorite museum treasures. I hope Frank (Perry) can use it someday. Brad told me that he only carried it a few times, once when some kids stole a crate of beer (or wine) at the Shadowbrook, and I think the other time was at the Saba."

David Macdonald goes on to say, "I was 13 at the time of the fire and slept through that night only to learn of it the next morning, Monday. My Dad (Brad) had heard the volunteer fire department alarm Sunday night and went down from our home in Opal Cliffs and discovered the blaze of the fire from the top of the hill.

I remember going to Ebert's in East Santa Cruz that next morning to get rubber boots in order to sift through the soggy rubble. It had been raining a lot and things were very wet. The fire had burned so hot, however, that glass from bottles had actually melted. I know that whatever had been inside the safe was destroyed. I believe that they had to remove the door to gain access."



Now, almost 60 years later, the safe still comes back out of the sand every once in a while. The safe cannot tell its story and neither can Brad Macdonald. It is now up to us as citizen-historians to pass along this very interesting tale from our past.

The Saba safe is safe in (the) sand on Capitola Beach.

Volunteer Spotlight: Bill Patterson

I never knew that I knew an 83-year old Abalone diver until I sat down with my friend Bill Patterson last month to discuss this Volunteer Spotlight. He may also be the fittest senior citizen you will ever know. His routines vary amongst weight training, water aerobics, biking and kayaking. He quit competitive running, swimming, biking, triathlons and handball at age 75—probably because he is too busy living his life here in Santa Cruz County.



Bill has taught CPR and First Aid to over 10,000 people. When I joked during our interview about this being a good time for me to drop, he quipped, "Go for it, I haven't lost one yet!"

An avid supporter of education, Bill began renting out his house on Moran Lake in Live Oak 40 years ago to Cabrillo College students. With a twinkle in his eye, he told me, "I never knew who was living there. The check always appeared on the first of the month." He turned a blind eye to teepees in his back yard and a garage full of additional lodgers, all in support of some deserving student's educational opportunities.

Bill is a past President and current member of UCSC's thriving eight hundred member "Life Long Learners." A career high school teacher, he avidly continues a pursuit for learning and for teaching others, mentoring his family's written and photographic history as family elder.

A lifetime gardener out of Iowa, he volunteers his spare time principally to gardening for local organizations including the Ag History Project in Watsonville, Cabrillo College Horticulture Department, Pajaro Valley Historical Association and the Gardener's Club of Santa Cruz County. The Genealogy Society of Santa Cruz County and Helping Hands are other favorites amongst many.

Oh, yes, he also volunteers for the Capitola Historical Museum. In addition to staffing the front desk when the Museum is open, Bill is also our groundskeeper and occasionally serves as the Museum's handyman. One of his favorite tasks was working with Steve Swift in the renovation of the bath house project 10 years ago.

Bill says, "I enjoy the changing displays of the museum and greatly admire the creativity of Frank Perry." Bill Patterson is a humble volunteer who goes on to say, "Volunteering here has been rewarding, providing a connectedness with Capitola, finding in it a place that I enjoy, and an opportunity to express my appreciation to the town."

The Capitola Museum has recently received generous donations from:

Ed Botorff	Diane Burbank
Toni Castro	Calvin & Carla Cornwell
Tory Del Favero	Rickey Feldner
Carol Fuller	Ronald Graves
Lani Hall	Marvin Jensen
David Lyng & Assoc.	Joan Gilbert Martin
Betty Mello	Jed & Helen Myall
Richard Nutter	Paul Parsons
Barbara Reding	Carolyn Swift
Debbie Vilotti	

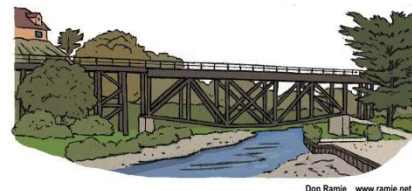
Nancy and Michael Davis (in memory of Ettamae Shaffer and Lillian Heebner)

Kathryn & Tony Gualtieri (in memory of Lillian Heebner)

Recently, the following artifacts were generously donated to the Capitola Museum:

Minna Hertel:	Classic Capitola photos
Carolyn Swift:	Book
Rhoda Collins:	Book on history of post office
Janice Smith:	Three books on local history

Thank you to all of our great volunteers for staffing the museum and contributing to special events. Volunteerism is your gift to the community.



Capitola Sunset is published by:

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Telephone: 831-464-0322

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

Curator: Frank Perry

Board Members: Niels Kisling (President), Pam Greeninger (Vice President & Secretary), Kristen Petersen (Treasurer), Kathleen Church, Stephanie Tetter & Gordon van Zuiden