

Capitola Sunset

SUMMER 2019

CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

NEWS, EVENTS & INFORMATION

"Providing a future for our past"

If A Cypress Could Talk

By Frank Perry

Back in the early 1970s, *Santa Cruz Sentinel* writer Margaret Koch did a series of features titled "If Trees Could Talk . . ." Each told about some aspect of local history involving a tree. I was reminded of this series a few months ago when a giant cypress fell in the lower parking lot behind the Capitola Police Department.

By the time I got around to examining it up close, much of it had been cut up and hauled away. Only the stump remained, but it was surely impressive. It measured almost 8 feet in diameter. Of course, I tried to count the rings to find out how old it was. It was hard to get an exact count, but my estimate was 75 years.



Capitola Museum Trustee, Niels Kisling, poses in front of the stump just after the tree fell in March. The tree was a little bit older than Kisling when it met its fate, but not much.

Imagine all that it has witnessed. It was just a sapling when World War II ended. A few years later, in 1949, it watched Capitola become an incorporated city. In the 1950s it saw the building of Capitola School, the launching of the Begonia Festival, the great flood of 1955, and the closing of the Capitola Airport and railroad depot. In the 1960s and 1970s it saw Capitola grow in population several fold as nearby vacant lots filled in with houses. In the 1980s came another flood and a big earthquake.

Through most of its life, it gazed down on a mobile home park. A few years ago this was replaced by a parking lot.

Our trees can't talk, of course. But they can tell us how old they are and encourage us to think about local history.

More Tree News—In April several large Eucalyptus trees were removed from the hillside behind City Hall and the Museum. They were determined by experts to be a threat to the buildings. The Eucalyptus trees behind City Hall were not real old, but Eucalyptus were among the first trees to be planted in Capitola—back when it was still "Camp Capitola." They were probably planted in the early days because Capitola had few natural trees and Eucalyptus grow fast. Even in the 1800s they were controversial. Some people thought them majestic; others thought they were 'weedy' and a fire hazard.

Today, several large groves remain: at the Rispin Mansion, at the east end of Depot Hill, along part of Park Avenue, and in New Brighton State Beach.

Special Thanks

Volunteers Bill Patterson and Steve Kayser keep the grounds outside the museum looking fresh. Recently, Steve rebuilt, repainted and replanted the two window boxes in front of the museum. They needed some extra attention and now they look great. Thank you Steve!



Rolling History Tells a Story

By David Peyton

The earsplitting roar of NASCARs entering the village signaled the start of the 14th annual Capitola Rod & Custom Classic Car Show on June 8 with hundreds of hot rods and classic cars (and a truck or two) filling Capitola Village streets to the delight of young and old. The annual event showcasing extraordinary automobiles from the beginnings of the internal combustion engine up to 1987 featured the NASCAR racers and a funny car dragster—all of which required ear plugs when fired up.



Photo: Jessica Cohen

As crowds streamed in, with volunteers and vendors putting the final touches on venues, the village turned into a gallery of unique design, breath taking sculpture, and mouth-watering color. This is where craftsmanship, creativity, and a fat roll of dough delivers the goods to the pleasure of those who enjoy the art of the automobile and its place in our changing view of how we get around. From "trailer queens" to rat-rods to muscle cars, the celebration of the automobile and acknowledgement of its role in the expansion of our nation took center stage at this event that attracted thousands.



Capitola Museum Junior Board Member, Joshua Henshaw (right) lends a hand helping Dave Peyton organize sponsorship banners and last-minute details.

Photo: Jessica Cohen

Visitors to Capitola's rolling museum of automobiles get close up glimpses of chromed engines, shaved & chopped bodies, extravagant interiors, and photo displays of an often-lengthy restoration process. Each car seems to have its fan base, and those who especially appreciate a particular feature are often seen holding up a phone for a selfie. A few lucky ones get to sit in these rolling works of art, but most spectators are relegated to oohing and ahing, and walking past with a wistful look. Some paint jobs, costing more than your first home, are so luxurious that one can imagine bathing in it or slurping it up like it was decadent ice cream. And some cars have nothing but

the patina (and maybe a little rust) of the original finish to show off—a real and respected feature among collectors.

As hobbies go, there is much to recommend the restoration of iconic vehicles of the past. For many, it becomes a labor of love to recapture youthful memories, for others it provides artistic expression, and for some it provides an opportunity to share the experience with a son or daughter. Whatever the reason, the result is a "museum on wheels" that preserves an important aspect of our national identity. Despite the current popularity of collecting and showing cars, the future is less certain as fewer cars are passed down to family members due to a general lack of interest by the children of today's classic car owners. A sure sign of this phenomenon is the noticeable increase of For Sale signs posted on the cars at this and other car shows.

The car show, a recognized rod and classic award winner, is the principal fundraiser for the Capitola Safety and Community Services Foundation, a volunteer organization that provides scholarships and support to the Junior Lifeguard Program, Operation Surf, and other community benefit services in the Capitola area.

Welcome Emmy Mitchell-Lynn

Upon the recommendation of the museum board, Capitola City Council appointed our newest board member at their June 27th meeting. Emmy is a college student and lifelong community member with a keen interest in local history. She grew up on a historic property in Soquel/Capitola and at a young age she found her passion for exploring and understanding the area. She has been developing her expertise of our local history ever since.



She loves volunteering at the Capitola Historical Museum and is also on the board of the Friends of Cowell Lime Works Historic District at UCSC. Emmy is deeply invested in Honors academics, Student Senate, the Student Ambassador Program, and the History Success Club at Cabrillo College where she is also employed as a history tutor.

She walks dogs in her spare time. Emmy hopes to become an active member of city government after completing her degrees in History and Anthropology with a concentration in Human Political Values. In the meantime, she'd like to continue to utilize her platform to educate and spread historical awareness throughout the community.

Capitola: The Play

By Brian Legakis and Frank Perry

The prevailing theory on how Capitola got its name is that it was named for Capitola Black, the tomboyish main character in the popular 19th century novel, *The Hidden Hand*. The novel was first published in 1859, serialized in a newspaper called the *New York Ledger*. It was widely distributed, but did not appear in book form until 1888. There is no evidence that it was published in Santa Cruz newspapers, however, so how did the Hall family, founders of Camp Capitola in 1874, come to use the name?

Less well-known today is that the novel was also presented as a play. The melodramatic scenes of adventure and bravery of the character Capitola Black were first dramatized for the stage in the 1860s by Robert Jones. The play starred the audacious Capitola, of course, beginning in childhood and taking her through her heroic encounters with danger during her teen years. The original novel sold nearly two million copies in its various forms, appealing to mostly female readers. The theater versions, however, reached a more diverse audience of men and women.

Jones's play incorporates the *The Hidden Hand* and the sequel, *Capitola's Peril*, both by author E.D.E.N. Southworth. The play's extensive cast of 23 characters took two and one half hours to perform in five acts. Most of the early performances occurred on the East Coast of the United States, especially Boston. Soon afterward the play was presented in London with changes to the geographic locations.

In central California, the play was performed at a theater in Stockton in 1867 and in San Francisco in 1868. Lulu Hall Greene Wolbach, who helped her parents set up Camp Capitola, was still living in San Francisco in the late 1860s. There she taught the blind at a school for the deaf, dumb, and blind. Might she have seen the play? Was she the one who got the idea for naming the resort? We may never know for sure, but it is an intriguing possibility. The American version of the Jones script appears to have

remained largely unchanged over the course of a half century and across the United States. Today the printed script of *The Hidden Hand* play can be purchased on Amazon.com. It can also be found in a dozen academic libraries, including UCLA, and it is available for free downloads.



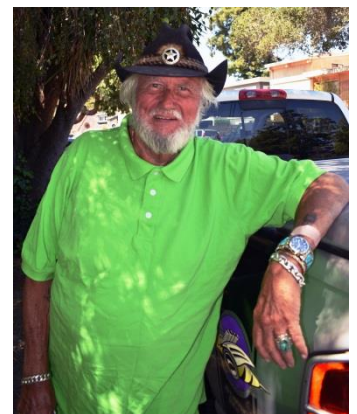
The "Hidden Hand" was performed in Santa Cruz at Knight's Opera House on Union Street in 1888 and several more times through the years. Coincidentally, after the old opera house was dismantled in the 1920s, the building was re-assembled on California Avenue in Capitola (as seen here). There, it was used as a garage and later by the Campo Del Mar porcelain factory. The building was demolished in 1962.

Most Historic Point of Interest

By Niels Kisling

To many people the Rispin Mansion holds the most historic point of interest on Wharf Road. Others might vote for Shadowbrook Restaurant. But my vote for the most historic point of interest on Wharf Road goes to Ed Hill.

Ed once told me my property was a dump. Before I could give him a piece of my mind, he said, "Yeah, the town's people used to drive up here, back their cars up to the bluff and dump their trash over the edge."



Ed went on to tell me, "Me and friends used to climb the big oak trees that were over there with our toy guns and wait for the soldiers. They would march up the creek and then scale the bluff to Wharf Road. They'd pass right under us, not even knowing we were quietly spying on them from those big, old oak trees."

Tuesday Evening, June 3d,
The new Spectacular,
"HIDDEN HAND!"
POPULAR PRICES! Gallery.....50 cts
Reserved Seats..75 cts
Seats now on sale at the Palace
Pharmacy. my28-td

He goes on to say that sometimes the soldiers would take a break and hang around in the shade of the very trees in which Ed and his buddies were hiding. They were afraid to make a peep and afraid to come down.

Ed Hill and his brother Frank Hill grew up on Wharf Road. Frank is an artist and illustrator in Soquel who has donated many projects to the Capitola Museum. Ed still lives on Wharf Road in the same family home that was owned by his grandmother and then by his mother, Doris. Ed's house is right across the street from the old redwood house that I own.

My house used to be a water tank house at the top of the hill that provided water for the summer home below that became Shadowbrook Restaurant. Shortly after buying the property in 1944 with partner Ed Phillipet, Brad Macdonald and his wife Bea moved into the summer home along with three year old, David, and one year old Judy. Ed Phillipet and Brad Macdonald went on to restore the property. They transformed it into Shadowbrook Restaurant from the rundown, overgrown summer home located on the hillside property below.

Before it was moved down the street, the two-room tank house at the top of the hill was later expanded to house the young Macdonald Family with two more rooms added to it by local carpenter Lee Gutterman.

Ed clearly remembers the day in 1950 that Jack Macdonald, along with his son Brad, jacked up the four-room house, put wheels under it, and rolled it down the street. Ed recalls Jack supervising the operation from his 1947 Lincoln Continental—driving up and down the street and watching.

Ed and Frank's mother, Doris Hill, lived in the Hill home at 1829 Wharf Road until her passing in December 1999—just one hour before the millennium. Ed still lives there today and the house hasn't changed much in outside appearance since those days when the soldiers from Camp McQuaide used to storm the bluff.

One change that did occur to the Hill home was back around 1932 with the addition of new windows. Museum volunteer and Santa Cruz native Paul Parsons grew up with Frank Hill and one day told me the story of the new windows that came from the cement ship, *Palo Alto*. Ed's grandmother worked on the cement ship and she acquired them when the ballroom was dismantled. She unwittingly brought a little more historic interest to Wharf Road by bringing a piece of the cement ship to her home—windows installed by Lee Gutterman.

In the late 1800s, Soquel-Wharf Road was a dirt road used by horse-drawn wagons full of redwood lumber on its way to Soquel Landing (Capitola Wharf). In 1921, Henry

Allen Rispin built a mansion on Wharf Road to serve as a real estate office as he subdivided Capitola. The Rispsin Mansion went on to become the home for the Poor Clares. They moved in 1957 and it became a hippie hangout and an abandoned cool, spooky place for kids to explore.



Frank Hill poses with his son, Troy, on the upper deck of my house on Wharf Road where Frank used to visit the Macdonald family back in the 1950s. The image was taken in May when I recently hosted an open house for all Capitola Museum Volunteers.

In 1947, Paul Parsons and Frank Hill were hired as the first dishwashers at Shadowbrook—Frank will make sure that you know he was hired first. Shadowbrook is an enduring mecca for prom dates to this day. So, Wharf Road has contributed more than its share to Capitola's rich history, but Ed Hill remains as my top pick for the most interesting and "most historic point of interest" on Wharf Road today.



My kids and I found this old license plate from 1914 at the bottom of our cliff where Ed Hill says Capitola residents used to dump stuff over the bluff many years ago.

Save the Date

Thirty years ago, at 5:04:30 P.M. on October 17, 1989 the ground shook hard in Santa Cruz County as a 7.1 earthquake struck, killing more than 60 people here and in the Bay Area. An additional 2,400 people were injured and upwards of 10,000 were left homeless from the big shake.

Capitola Museum Curator Frank Perry is giving a talk on the Loma Prieta earthquake at the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History on October 17, 2019. This will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the event that rocked Santa Cruz County. The Capitola Museum is a co-sponsor. Stay tuned for more information.

The Sands of Time

By Niels Kisling

Each winter the wave patterns and characteristics change. The waves carve away at our beaches in winter depositing the beach sand offshore. In the spring the wave patterns and wave periods become longer bringing the sand back onto the shoreline. This year, the wave patterns seem confused or at least disrupted a bit as the sand has not fully returned to Capitola Beach.

I don't predict climate change or project gloom-and-doom—I just know what I see.



Both of these images were taken on July 5th. The Saba Safe, above, is not normally exposed in July and Harry Hooper's Soquel Creek Flume is usually buried in the sand by this time of year.



The end of the Soquel Creek flume is normally buried in the sand by this time of year. In addition, the sand in front of Esplanade Park has retreated such that the old safe ever—especially for July. Overall, Capitola Beach should be much bigger at this time of the year.

Historically, the sand on our beaches comes and goes with the seasons, but this year the sand might be 'history' for now.



A south swell in May drove several boats onto Capitola Beach. Typically, a south swell removes sand from the beach.

Recent History Fair is a Historical Success

The Santa Cruz County History Fair, held on May 19, was a great success! Over 300 people attended and many of them thanked the Museum for holding this event. It was a delight to see such a large number of people interested in local history and to see all the connections being made.



The Capitola Museum history display is staffed by Junior Board Member, Joshua Henshaw and museum volunteer, Kim Natuk while Curator Frank Perry looks on.

Twenty-four history organizations participated. Geographically, they ranged from Boulder Creek to Davenport to the Pajaro Valley. Many brought old photographs, artifacts, and even videos. The fair was a wonderful opportunity for each of these groups to reach out to the public and share their enthusiasm for local history. At least two of the groups expressed interest in hosting a similar fair sometime in the future.



Former Santa Cruz Mayor and current council member, Cynthia Matthews and Frank Perry visit while Joe Michalak looks on from his display, Old is the New Green.

Your Capitola Museum sends out a big thank-you to the many volunteers and participants who made it all possible. Thanks also to the Capitola Community Center staff for their help and support. Zizzo's Coffeehouse and Wine Bar generously donated coffee, tea and more for the morning set-up.

Some images from the City of Capitola's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner held in May at Margaritaville.



Capitola City Council along with City Manager Jamie Goldstein (far right). Left to right: Ed Bottorff, Kristen Petersen, Sam Storey, Mayor Jacques Bertrand and Yvette Brooks.



Pam Greeninger, Museum Secretary is all smiles with her husband Stewart.



Museum Volunteers Ron & Vickie Beck and Marcia & David Biancalana appear to have been well-fed by The City of Capitola.



Museum Vice President Dave Peyton along with Capitola Museum Junior Board Member, Joshua Henshaw are looking forward to the dinner sponsored by the The City of Capitola.

The Capitola Museum has recently received generous donations from:

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|--|--------------------------|
| Ed Bottorff | Steve & Diane Burbank |
| Calvin & Carla Cornwell | Craig French |
| Carol Fuller | Robert Katz |
| Kathleen King | Nancy Lenz |
| Joan Gilbert Martin | Betty Mello |
| Paul & Judy Parsons | Dave Peyton |
| Barbara Reding | Terry & Stephanie Tetter |
| Ann Thiermann | Nels & Susan Westman |
| Dane P. Carver in memory of Dean Lewis Moser and Lulu Louise Pakroits Moser. | |
| Michael A. & Barbara Keeney Clark | |

Donations in memory of David Shoaf:
 Mr. and Mrs. Jed Myall
 Larry and Linda Smith

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

- Cynthia Mathews: poster
- Pam Greeninger: vintage Capitola T-shirts
- Ellen Yeoman: historic photographs
- Andrew Sowden: 1940 aerial photo
- Dave Biancalana: book



HISTORY QUIZ: What business is this and where was/is it located? Who are the people in the image?

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 and Gordon van Zuiden.
 Museum Youth Board Member: Joshua Henshaw.