

# CAPITOLA SUNSET

June 2007, Volume 1, Issue 2

## It's all About the Volunteers!

On June 7<sup>th</sup> the Capitola Historic Museum Board hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at the home of Gordon and Michele Van Zuiden on Fanmar Way.

In attendance were Carolyn Swift, Museum Director, and her husband, Steve, as well as all the members of the Board: David Shoaf, Darcy Horton, Topsy Smalley, Tom McGranahan, Linda Smith, Gordon Van Zuiden, and Bob Anderson.

Long time Museum volunteers Mike and Nancy Davis drove all the way from Murphys, California, their new home, to visit with old friends.

Other Museum volunteers included Marian Carlson, Judy Craig, Stephanie Harlan, Joe Michalak, Paul Parsons, Bill Patterson, Ettamae Shaffer, Judy Steen, and Dorothy Whitmore.

Other guests included Gordon Van Zuiden's wife, Michele; Linda Smith's husband, Larry; Bob Anderson's wife, Liz; Marian Carlson's husband, Al; and Paul Parson's wife, Judy.

Georgette DuFresne, a former Board member who recently resigned to pursue other interests, was honored with a reproduction of the Camp Capitola subdivision map of 1882.

## Herman Kraft: Nation's Oldest Lifeguard

By Carolyn Swift, Museum Director



Discovered several years ago in the Capitola Museum archives was a file simply marked "Herman Kraft (A Very Important

Person)." The label referred to a local hero who, even though he died years ago, is still esteemed by longtime residents who knew him as "the nation's oldest lifeguard."

Born in Jefferson, Indiana, in 1894, Kraft had made his way to California and was working as an office boy in San Francisco at the age of fifteen. He lived in the Bay area as a driller for Union Iron Works and later as a boilermaker for General Engineering in Alameda. His daughter, Peggy Slatter Matthews, said Kraft was suffering from diabetes and feared he had less than a year to live when he retired at age 51.

Instead, he moved to Capitola and began a new career as a lifeguard. Even before the city incorporated in 1949, he was on duty supervising young swimmers. Although Kraft swam regularly, his greatest gift was a booming voice known as "the human fog horn" that could thunder up the beach, over the lagoon, under the bridge, and up the creek. He also possessed surprising agility when the occasion called for it, which helped saved the lives of 27 children his first year on the sand.

Village locals held a party in Kraft's honor when he finally hung up his towel and hat twenty years later. During the ceremony on the Esplanade, the old lifeguard scanned the edge of the lagoon pool, and fixed on a small boy. He cupped his hands and shouted, "GET OFF—THAT WATER'S OVER YOUR HEAD THERE!"

For the kids on the beach, Kraft was a commanding authority figure, but he was also a friend, first aid dispenser, keeper of the lost-and-found, and locator of wayward parents. When artist Olaf Palm did his portrait in the mid-1960s, Kraft insisted on

removing his teeth, telling the painter, "People will just have to like me the way I am."

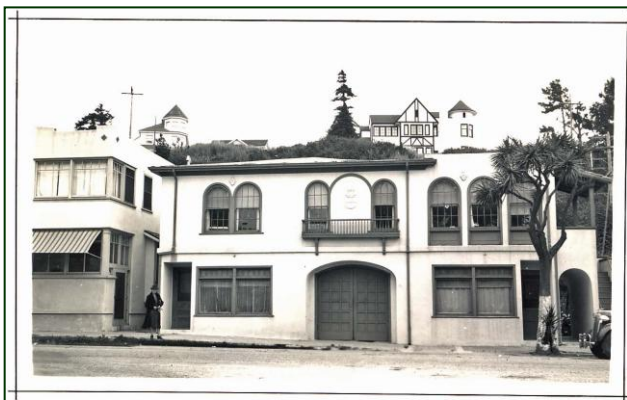
And of course, everybody did.

Kraft remained a resident of Capitola until his death in May 1970.

**Mystery Solved!** The building at Capitola and Monterey Avenues shown in the last newsletter was NOT the Capitola Firehouse in 1944. Jim Reding, owner of the building, said it was built for Joseph and Mary Hooper, parents of Capitola's best known local hero, Harry B. Hooper.

Hooper played for the Boston Red Sox from 1909 to 1920 during which time the team won four world championships. He also played for the Chicago White Sox from 1921 to 1925. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971.

Hooper was also well known to Capitola residents as the community's Postmaster, a position he kept for 35 years until his retirement.



## President's Corner

By David Shoaf

When I stepped into the President's role last year, it quickly became clear to me that the single most important asset the Capitola Historic Museum has is its robust group of volunteers. As a result, this year's highest priority for the Board of Directors has been to find ways to use the skills and interests

of that group as well as take every opportunity to say "Thank you!"

In a recent review of the Museum's operating budget with the Capitola City Council, I highlighted a couple of little known facts regarding the results of our volunteer's efforts over the past year:

- Volunteer Hours: Our volunteers invested over 350 hours of time in various functions at the Museum, primarily in staffing the "Little Red Schoolhouse" on the weekends.
- Number of Visitors: We recorded over 2,000 visitors to the Museum as a result of this effort.
- Hours of Operation: The number of hours the Museum is open increased by 25% when we added Wednesday afternoons to the schedule. Museum hours are now Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 12 to 4 p.m.

In addition, our volunteers also set and ran some important outreach programs:

- Fundraising: Various special packages were developed for campaigns to raise funds to purchase items for the new permanent Capitola Cottage building beside the Museum. I would like to recognize Gordon Van Zuiden for his creative efforts in making those packages a reality.
- Quarterly Newsletter and Website: We restarted outreach efforts such as this newsletter to help get the word out about our wonderful Museum. We are fortunate to have people like Topsy Smalley, who maintains our website, and Darcy Horton, our newsletter editor, without whom we would not have deadlines to make it happen.

If you're wondering how you can get more involved with the Museum, or you have an idea or interest you would like to see fulfilled, here's how to get more involved:

- Participate in the Capitola Historic Museum Board's monthly meetings. They're held the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month in the Community Room in Capitola City Hall at 5:30 p.m. The Board wants to hear from you!
- Contact any Board Member or Carolyn Swift at (831) 464-0322 just to test your ideas out.
- Propose a project to the Board. We're all ears!

Again, on behalf of the entire Board of the Capitola Historic Museum, please stand with me in saluting our entire community of Volunteers!

## Acknowledgments

Donations we received in response to our first newsletter were amazing! This money will be used to develop Museum exhibits and educational programs as well as acquire historical artifacts and photographs. Many thanks to the following generous people:

- Margy Cottle in memory of John MacPherson
- Richard and Theresa Crocker
- Georgette DuFresne
- Pat and Ted Durkee
- Emil Edgren
- Wayne Fontes
- Janis French
- Ron Graves
- Dick and David Lynn
- Helen and Jed Mayall
- George Ow
- Jim and Barbara Reding
- Karen Ruland
- Marilyn and Bill Selby
- Stanley Stevens
- Susan and Nels Westman

## Exhibit News

### The Cottage

Capitola's 100-year-old "Cottage by the Sea" is now making its debut, providing viewers with an evocative glance back in time to the Edwardian era, c1910.

The cottage, originally a part of Cottage City at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, was sold and relocated to an Oak Avenue backyard in 1941. It remained there as a Capitola residence until 2004, when it was due to be demolished, and arrangements were made to preserve the little building by moving it next to the Capitola Museum.

Once the City of Capitola finished work on the cottage's renovation, it was turned over to the Museum for the creation of a display that portrays how vacationers lived and played by the sea.

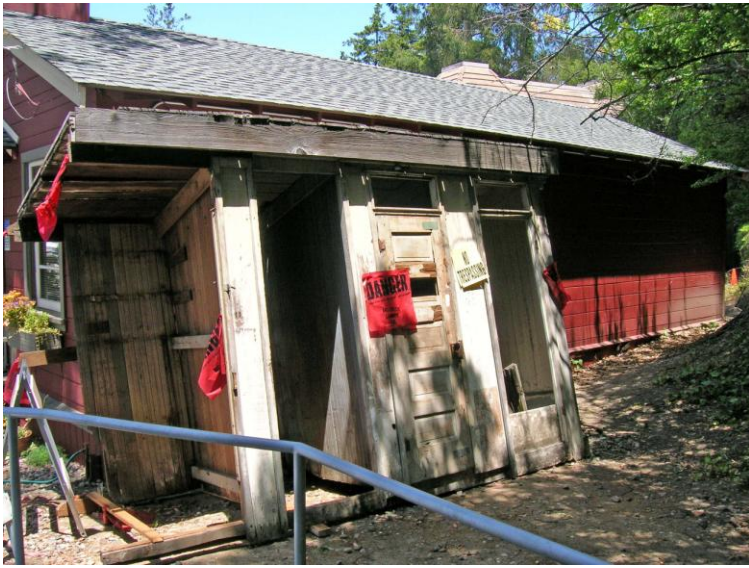


### The Washhouse

As work on the new exhibit was being completed this spring, the City approved another addition to the Museum site. A long structure housing narrow booths for a toilet, shower, sink, and changing room was discovered behind a house on San Jose Avenue that was due to be torn down. Research revealed the "washhouse" was built roughly 75 years ago, shortly after the old Capitola Hotel burned to the ground in 1929. The hotel's destruction, it seemed, left many vacationers in the

oldest section of the village without easy access to bathing facilities. Several washhouses like the one on San Jose Avenue were built in the residential flats, but all the rest gradually disappeared over time as newer homes were built.

Last month, the washhouse was picked up and trucked to the Museum, where it now rests behind the cottage. Plans are underway for restoration, and the Museum Board of Trustees is organizing a fundraising effort to be launched soon. The monies raised by the Museum will be used to help pay the cost of repairs and preparation for public viewing.



## Are We There Yet? Destination Capitola

The current Museum exhibit has proven to be the perfect accompaniment to the slice-of-life show in the cottage next door. Emphasizing Capitola as a fashionable destination by various means of transportation, *Are We There Yet? Destination Capitola* highlights Capitola summer resort life from the 1880s through the 1930s. Since it's become so popular, the Museum Board of Trustees has decided to add new material and extend its run through the fall season.

## New Acquisitions

Linda Sanders donated a small black collapsible parasol circa 1890s.

Local Boulder Creek artist Gary Yakima Geyer presented the Museum with two signs that he hand carved in 1970 for The Bandstand Restaurant. The restaurant stood on the site of the original band stand that was established in 1895. That site is the current location of Il Pirata restaurant on the Esplanade.



**Museum Director:** Carolyn Swift

### Board of Trustees:

- David Shoaf, President
- Darcy Horton, Vice President
- Tom McGranahan, Treasurer
- Topsy Smalley, Secretary
- Linda Smith
- Gordon Van Zuiden
- Bob Anderson

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