

CAPITOLA SUNSET

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Begonias to Go, Head to Toe!

Once again the museum event, “Begonias to Go, Head to Toe” was a big hit at the Begonia Festival with locals and tourists alike. People were seen wildly decorating anything that didn’t move—shoes, shirts, hats, handbags, and even dogs if they stood still long enough—with the colorful flowers.



This year for the first time the museum sold rubber “It Came from the Sea” visors for a small fee. Kids big and small were seen having fun covering them with begonias.

Gayles Bakery funded the event that began with Boy Scout Troop #642 and Girl Scout Troop “Destination Group” showing up at the Brown Bulb Ranch picking fields in Marina on a brisk Saturday morning at 7:00am. It took them almost two hours to pick 200 flats of begonias, a 55% increase in the number of flats over last year.

Linda Smith, Museum Board President, took it from there. She trucked the flats back to Capitola where she lovingly misted and cared for them at her home until the next day.

The day of the event a number of people helped make it a success. From the museum, Carolyn Swift, Linda Smith, Darcy Horton, and Niels Kisling were on hand. In addition, Begonia staff members as well as Steve Swift, Larry Smith, Christian Kisling, Dave Shoaf, and Curt Johnson pitched in. Curt, who’s a welder at M/C Fabrication, stopped by, saw a need, and rolled up his sleeves to help. Many thanks to everyone who made this event possible!

Speaking of Begonias and Brown Bulb Ranch...

Did you know that the Brown Ranch history began in 1911, when James and Rura Brown built their cottage on a five-acre parcel along the dirt lane of Forty-First Avenue? Brown started with strawberries but soon realized the potential of bulbs. When begonias were planted in 1921, the ranch quickly gained standing as a worldwide producer.

Brown bought fourteen registered heifers and a bull to provide fertilizer for his bulbs and thereby began one of the state’s finest Guernsey herds. By the late 1920s, the ranch bottled and delivered milk for sale, as well as a brand of ice cream in a wide assortment of flavors known as “Moo Cow.” Another business was the “Moo Cow Store,” with fountains on the Esplanade in Capitola, and in Gilroy, Salinas, Ben Lomond, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville.

Over the years, the tradition of the Brown family has been its versatility, from begonias and the Golden Guernsey Dairy to Brown’s Ranch Marketplace on Forty-First Avenue.

In 1986, the name of the bulb and flower operation was changed to Golden State Bulb Growers, Inc. Its greenhouses and processing plant for begonias,

calla lilies, and cut flowers is located off Highway One near Salinas Road on the route from Watsonville to Moss Landing. The business is supervised by the fourth generation of the Brown family. For more than 30 years, the Browns have provided blossoms for the Capitola Begonia Festival from fields near Marina Beach.

President's Corner

By Linda Smith

Hello everyone! I am completing my first year as president, and have been asked to continue through 2009, which I am only too happy to do. All the other museum officers will remain the same, as well.

I wanted to share with you some of the things we accomplished in 2008. Last November we coordinated the release of our book, "The Grand Hotel Capitola," co-authored by Museum Board Member Gordon Van Zuiden and Museum Director Carolyn Swift, with the opening of the new museum exhibit "Welcome to the Hotel Capitola." The line to purchase the book and get it signed by the authors was already out to the sidewalk when the museum opened on the first day. All books on hand that day (250) were sold out within two hours. The entire event became a reunion for old and new Capitola fans. In addition, 5,198 visitors saw the exhibit, which is a record for us!

The bathhouse installation, which we worked on all year, is nearly complete. All that remains is the installation of plexiglass coverings for the three doors. The hard part will be convincing visitors that the antique toilet in the washhouse is for display purposes only!

Observation by volunteers has shown that the cottage has proven to be a great draw to the museum itself. Kids are often seen dragging their parents up the side path to look inside and then they naturally turn to the museum entry.

We welcomed new museum volunteers Bill Roberson, Roy C. Pendley, Bess Benson and Janet Merrick. So far, according to volunteer coordinator Niels Kisling, our coverage has been very good.

Finally, visits to the museum continued to rise. During the peak period of late summer we saw a monthly count of nearly 1,000 visitors, compared with 700 one year ago.

Beginning late this year we'll open a new exhibit that's sure to spark lots of interest. Our "Just Beachy—Capitola in the 1950s" exhibit will coordinate with other celebrations of Capitola's 60th birthday, which happens in early 2009.

Happy Birthday Frederick Hihn!

It was a surprise birthday party artfully planned and carried out by Museum Director Carolyn Swift and Museum Board President Linda Smith. On August 9th, Carolyn led members of the Researcher's Anonymous Group (from the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History at the McPherson Center) on a walk that took them to Hihn Park in Capitola to celebrate



our founder's 179th birthday. For those of you without a calculator handy, Hihn was born on August 16, 1829. Linda, dressed in period costume as his wife Theresa, was waiting for them with a birthday cake to

celebrate the occasion. Karen Nevis was on hand to photograph the entire event.

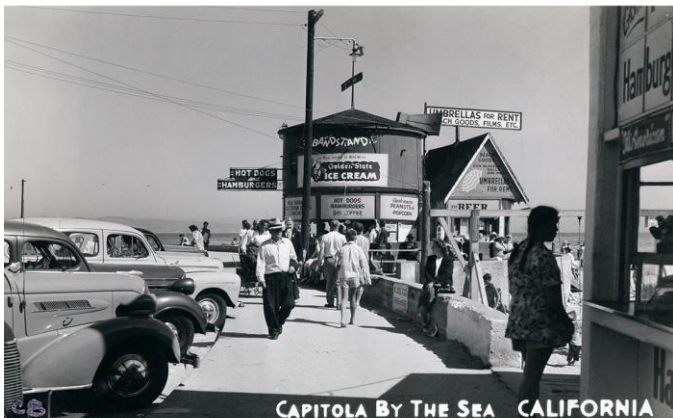
Question: Do you know where Hihn Park is? For the answer, see the last page.

Acknowledgments

Funds received in response to our last newsletter will be used to restore historically significant artifacts in the museum collection. Many thanks to the following generous people:

- Ted Burke and Shadowbrook Restaurant
- Toni Castro and the Capitola Chamber of Commerce
- Michael Clark
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- Emil Edgren
- Marvin Jensen
- Fran Miller
- William and Anna Mork
- George Ow Jr.
- Yvonne Zanis

Just Beachy—Capitola in the 1950s



Did you dance at the Caribbean Nightclub in 1954? Enjoy a Monterey Bay salmon entrée for \$2.50 at the Saba? Ride the merry-go-round? Sit through double features in the crying room at the Capitola Theater, play Skee-Roll and Pokerino at the Playhouse, or nosh on Babe's fries at the Bandstand?

The nostalgic era of inner tubes and paddleboats, sno-cones and nickel candy bars, gaudy Hawaiian shirts and tickly swimsuits is coming to the Capitola Museum in November.

The show is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to roll back the calendar and enjoy the experience of “Just Beachy—Capitola in the 1950s.” Now under construction, the exhibit promises to recapture both the mood and memories of the days when live jazz bands were giving way to the jukebox, the California coast was an affordable place to retire, and Capitola was a new city in its first decade of municipal life.

Once open, the museum exhibit will continue on its normal schedule from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

A DVD based on the museum book “The Grand Hotel Capitola” is now available for purchase for \$20. It includes many photos from the book with background music by Yanni. Stop by the museum soon and pick one up as a stocking stuffer!

The Bathhouse

Only a few finishing touches remain to be done before Capitola's petite bathhouse is ready for its public “opening.”

Capitola Museum Board of Directors thanks everyone who contributed toward the redemption of what is admittedly one of the most humble structures ever built in the village. Our friends made generous contributions that kept the project well within budget. Steve Swift's arm was twisted until he put in more than 150 hours remodeling the vintage structure, and now it looks more-or-less as it did when it was built in the early 1930s. Nels Westman, Bill Patterson, and Matt Miller worked on details that have even given the building a little flair, if such a thing is possible.

Recently installed at the site are two interpretive panels that explain the importance of both the bathhouse and the historic cottage next door. Visitor interest in Capitola history has increased

appreciably because of both the exhibits and the panels that give them meaning.

Longtime volunteer Fran Albrecht, who helps the museum look stunning in all seasons, has further given us some much needed landscaping advice and assistance this summer. Additional rock and plants in ornamental pots have created visual accents all along the front of the building and up to the cottage and bathhouse.

Now that work on a new exhibit is underway, the museum is getting ready to show off Capitola's history both inside and out.

Volunteer Spotlight: Judy Craig



Our volunteers never cease to amaze us with their interesting lives. Judy is no exception.

Although she has lived in Capitola for many years, Judy owns a home in Australia and lives there five months out of each year. It all started in 1973, when she and her husband accepted jobs as teachers in a small town. The town accepted them with open arms, and the Melbourne Education Department provided them with a nice 3 bedroom, 2 bath home at the exorbitant rental rate of \$19 per month. Her two children fell in love with their

new homeland and quickly began speaking with an Australian accent. As a result, they both live in Australia today with their families.

Judy's family has lived in this area for three generations. She lived with her father the last two years of his life and managed to capture many of his stories. One story involved her father when he was 10 years old and worked as a pin setter in the bowling alley of the Capitola Hotel. In those days, people came to Capitola for the entire summer. He remembered ladies sitting on the hotel veranda dressed in their big hats and fancy dresses, perfect attire for a day at the beach.

Judy became a volunteer at the museum because she loves telling visitors, particularly children, stories about what life used to be like in Capitola. We suspect she inherited this talent from her mother, the late Louise Malloch. Both Judy and her mother were Soquel school teachers. Judy also volunteers at the St. John's Helpful shop in Capitola and the Goodwill Collector's Corner. And what about that ukulele? Judy has been taking lessons and playing for four years, but she picked up her first uke in high school. All the students at Santa Cruz High had them, and they would play at lunch and breaks, plus at the beach.

Answer: Hihn Park is located on Depot Hill, on the corner of Fairview and Cliff.

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Museum Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 12 to 4 p.m.
Museum Director: Carolyn Swift
Board of Trustees: Linda Smith (President), Darcy Horton (Vice President), Tom McGranahan (Treasurer), Topsy Smalley (Secretary), Gordon van Zuiden, Bob Anderson, and Niels Kisling