

Capitola Sunset

CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Winter 2012

NEWS, EVENTS & INFORMATION

Capitola—Where Land and Sky Meet Sand and Sea!

“Capitola—Where Land and Sky Meet Sand and Sea” is the theme for Capitola Museum’s next exhibit. If the title sounds like a shopping list for a visual feast, that’s exactly what we’re hoping to create.

The idea is to blend together familiar themes of Capitola’s past and present—boating on the lagoon, romping in the surf, walking the trestle, watching the sunset, enjoying the Begonia Festival. Then, using radiant imagery, we plan to convey a sense of dancing through time. It’s not just any dance, either—it’s the two-step: forward, then back, past and present.

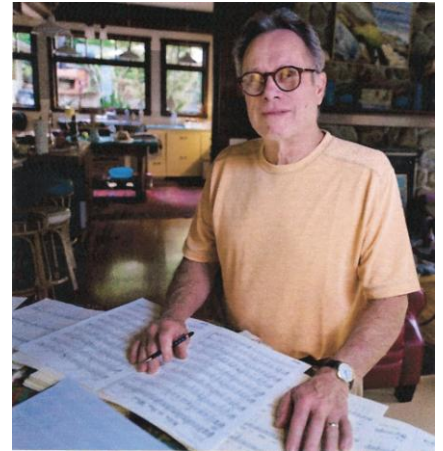
The work—as you may already have guessed—will be mixed with a just a dash of schmaltziness and a pinch of tongue-in-cheek.

The inspiration for the show came from a recently completed video, CAPITOLA SERENADE, based on the 1913 composition CAPITOLA MARCH TWO-STEP by F.H. Losey.



Ukulele Dick and Wallace Boss discuss a scene for the video from a bird’s-eye vantage point high above the village.

Capitola Museum volunteer Minna Hertel first thought of merging the old music with a new song. She asked Joe Ortiz, author, composer, publisher, and co-owner of Gayle’s Bakery to write the lyrics. He agreed, and then recorded music and song with Ukulele Dick playing the banjo and singing. A video was eventually created through the combined talents of Ortiz (pictured above), Ukulele Dick, Hertel, Wallace Boss, and Megan Orr.



When the video was first seen with its energetic song, witty affectations, innovative flashbacks, and hint of romance, we declared it too good for a simple public release.

These are ingredients for an entire, fun-filled exhibit!

High points of the upcoming show will contain surprises as well as reminders of Capitola’s unforgettable heroes, landmarks, and celebrations, including the Capitola Begonia Festival—which will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2012.

Opening date is tentatively set for February 25. The video CAPITOLA SERENADE is scheduled for release at the same time. Stay tuned.

The Rispin Mansion Preservation

The fire that gutted what was left of the Rispin Mansion in May of 2009 killed a development project that was in the works for over a decade. Without a developer, the Capitola City Council voted to allocate Capitola Redevelopment Funds towards a historical preservation project aimed at securing the building from further decay, discourage vandalism and open the entire property as a public park.

The immediate goal is to provide the citizens of Capitola and its many annual visitors with a historical public park on the piece of property that the city bought in the late 1980s. The Rispin Mansion was last occupied in 1959 by The Poor Clares and has sat vacant ever since.



In this photo taken in January 2010 the graffiti is evident. Harder to see, but just as disheartening, is the missing roof that was burned in the vandalism fire of May 2009.

Last summer Garden City Construction began the huge undertaking to preserve and stabilize the building. Work included repairing the fire damage, sealing all the exterior doors and windows, seismic stabilization and constructing a new roof including original-style Spanish tiles. This was followed by sandblasting and painting the exterior walls and fencing off the mansion to discourage future vandalism.

Capitola Public Works Director Steve Jesberg explained, “The City is working towards opening up all the property as a park. Work will include improvements to exterior stairways and construction of accessible pathways. Funding is still being sought to restore the fountain and landscape the gardens.”

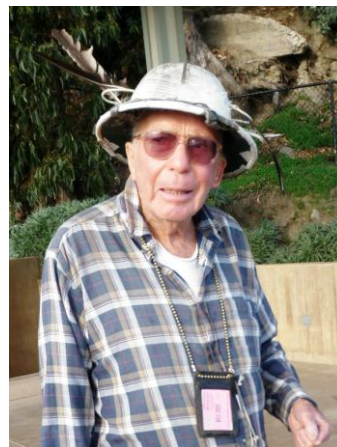
Steve credits the Capitola City Council for making the decision to save the mansion which is possibly the most important historic structure in Capitola. The preservation project will halt the building’s erosion allowing development in the future if an opportunity comes along to restore the property.



Capitola Public Works employee Ed Morrison showed off the work done so far on the Rispin preservation project to museum trustee Niels Kisling in December 2011.

Capitola’s Cast of Characters

Your Capitola Historical Museum is always looking for photographs and memories. Capitola is not just about resort living and beautiful views. The people help make this place special. The museum is dedicated to collecting photos and the stories that go along with them so that future generations can see who we are and where we came from.



Ike and Jo Jo are considered by some to be living legends in Capitola. They are among the many people that locals and tourists ‘expect’ to see when hanging out in the village. Like so many other Capitolans, both men have a unique story that the museum hopes to tell sometime soon.

Annexation Brings Mall to Capitola

By Niels Kisling

In the early 1970s Sutter Hill Development Company brought a project before the Santa Cruz County Planning Commission to build an indoor shopping mall at 41st Avenue. The commission turned down the project saying it was too small.

Luckily for the City of Capitola, Bill Clarke, Capitola Building Official, Max Kludt, Capitola City Manager and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) director were all sitting together at the hearing. Clarke leaned over to Kludt and said, "Tell Sutter that if they bring the project to the City of Capitola, we'll approve it."

Kludt and the head of LAFCO were good friends and that started the ball rolling towards annexation of the 38-acre Brown Ranch.

Clarke, who from 1968–1978 acted as Capitola's building department, building inspector and part-time planner went on to say, "Capitola didn't have two nickels to rub together. We needed the income that the mall could provide."

Clarke, Kludt, the Capitola City Council and LAFCO spent countless hours working on and preparing the annexation papers for submission to the State. Bill Clarke drove the papers to Sacramento and personally handed them to the Secretary of State.

"The rest of the mall project was easy," Clarke said. "We had some really good engineers working for the city including Tom Mason. The firm of Washington-Jensen did the structural check of the plans and after the 1989 earthquake, we had one little crack in the floor by the fountain while half of Santa Cruz fell down."

Completed in 1977, The Capitola Mall sits on property that, without annexation, would not belong to Capitola along with the tax revenues that the mall generates. The end result was a victory for the Capitola City Council and staff, and a continuous revenue stream for the City of Capitola.

Volunteer Spotlight: John and Anne Nicol

John Nicol enjoys family roots that run deep in Capitola. His family tree stands tall and proud. His wife of thirteen years, Anne Nicol has been grafted to John's branch and from the family property they both enjoy a view of Capitola and of the world in which they love to travel.

Whether it's camping in California, going down under to New Zealand or hanging out in a bungalow in Tobago, John and Anne both agree that Capitola is their single, greatest travel destination. John said, "We've been to so many beautiful places, but all of them are not where we'd want to spend all 12 months of the year and none of them offer the warmth and beauty of Capitola and its people."

The Nicol family arrived in California in the late-1880s and came to Capitola from Palo Alto shortly after the 1906 earthquake. John Nicol's grandfather, also John Nicol, was a baker who ran a seasonal bakery in what is now Capitola Village. He stabled horses and using real 'horse power' to get the job done, he was a house mover too. His family had four children, three girls and John's father; all born while living in their home at Lincoln and First Street in Capitola (First Street is now Emerald Street).

John's father Jack, born in 1912, graduated from Santa Cruz High School in 1931. He worked in the trades for the Izant & Wilson Plumbing families and for a company that became Geo H. Wilson that is still in business today. Jack Nicol served as a Capitola Planning Commissioner & council member and he, along with three others, signed a personal note to buy Capitola its first motorized fire truck.

John was born at the Old Dominican Hospital on Soquel Drive in 1948. He began working as a berry picker in Soquel while attending Soquel High School and soon moved on to the amusement industry in Capitola, operating Andy Antonetti's famous carousel during the tourist months.

(continued on next page)

Safeway out on Mission Street hired John as a bag boy while he was in high school and he worked his way up to stocker and inventory manager before the Vietnam War interrupted his career path. During the war, John was an air traffic controller and as part of his duties, he helped train Japanese air traffic controllers.

Back from Vietnam, John returned to work for Safeway again part-time and then joined Capitola's volunteer fire department. He eventually became a full-time firefighter while working 34 years with Safeway before retiring ten years ago.



John and Anne Nicol in their backyard retreat where all birds are welcome and where John has collected and archived weather data for the Santa Cruz Sentinel for three decades.

Anne's career successes took her to the White House where she worked for two Presidents. She worked to help Jimmy Carter get elected and then served under Ronald Reagan's administration. Anne was on a panel of sixty women chosen to help enlighten and empower other women in government. Her service brought her a deep understanding of Medicare and Medicaid systems, which lead to a second career in nursing home administration.

On a layover in Maui to check out a new position in Hawaii, Anne was stuck at the airport with no luggage and a long delay. She said, "This nice man offered to buy me a cup of coffee and we chatted for hours." The man also sent her a Christmas card that year inviting her to come visit him Capitola.

The "Kool-Aid acid test" for the relationship was a visit down south to Huntington Beach to see if "he could handle" her friends and her culture. He could. John Nicol proposed marriage to Anne on Valentine's Day and they married shortly afterwards. Together they enjoy a comfortable view of the world from their family heritage branch in Capitola.

Acknowledgements & Acquisitions

Thanks to the following people for their generous donations:

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Valerie Webb for Twin Lakes Baptist Church

The following people donated historical materials to the museum:

Bill Clark—Wood shaping tools from the early 1900s

Frank and Pat Castagnola—Printed menu from the Saba Club's Sailfish room c1957

Minna Hertel—Videos of Capitola

Many thanks to our anonymous donors—members of our community and out-of-town visitors—you know who you are! In addition, we are always looking for your historical images from Capitola.

Published by the Capitola Historical Museum

410 Capitola Ave., Capitola, CA 95010

Website: www.capitolamuseum.org

Email: cswift@ci.capitola.ca.us Phone: 831.464.0322

Museum Hours: The museum will be closed until the new exhibit opens in late February

Museum Director: Carolyn Swift

Board of Trustees: Linda Smith (president), Bob Anderson (vice president), Tom McGranahan (treasurer), Topsy Smalley (secretary), Gordon van Zuiden, David Shoaf, and Niels Kisling