



Cupertino Historical Society & Museum
presents

the

Cornerstone

Winter 2019/2020

Volume 29, Issue 3

A LOOK AT THE PAST OF FAMILY-OWNED GROCERY STORES

By Donna Austin



Above: Donna Austin (age 13) outside of Gomes Grocery, Summer 1953.

Before there were Lucky's and Safeway, Trader Joes, Whole Foods, Costco's and so many more, there were little family owned grocery stores that dotted the Santa Clara Valley, accommodating our towns and villages.

I grew up, helping my father at Gomes Grocery in Santa Clara, a place where everyone came for groceries and every day needs like aspirin, "Carter's little liver pills", bait for fishing, beer and wine. Many people put the cost of groceries on a running tab and paid by the month. Grocery stores were special places in our cities.

every day needs and a place people talked to each other and exchanged ideas and news. I was told that in the early days in Cupertino, there was Mr. & Mrs. Gwynn's house that was a "little store". It was a very early convenience store for neighbors. The living room had a Coca Cola Cooler and Icebox and some shelves with bread, milk, eggs and basic staples. It was on Almaden Ave. in Monta Vista. There was an old dog that always lay on the living room floor, and when you walked by he watched and wagged his tail. Later Bess Hellesoe, the sister of Blanche Woeffle, bought the house from the Gwynns and continued the "little store". What a convenient way to shop! In the 40's, Paul & Eddie's evolved from an Engel's store selling food items and sundries, to the marvelous bar we have today that is the last of its kind in Cupertino.



Above: Steven's Creek Market

The Cupertino Store on the Stevens Creek and Highway 9 was one of those special places. There was a post office in the store and Alexander Montgomery one of the owners was also first postmaster. They later hired a book keeper Fanny Jollyman, who also managed the library. The county paid her \$5 a month for monitoring about 75 books filed on four shelves. The Cupertino Store sold everything that people did not raise for themselves...groceries, wood, coal, pots, pans, feed for livestock and poultry. It was a one

stop shop or what they call today a convenience store.



Above: Rifredi's General Store

In the 1930's Adriana

Quinterno & Charles Rifredi bought land in downtown Monta Vista and built the first Rifredi's Market. The new Rifredi's Market was built in the late 40's, next to a gas station, across from a Five and Dime Store and Coski...sic Market and a nearby Woeffel cannery down the way. Refredi was a central gathering place to shop for

Gordon Beckstrom, who came out from Nebraska to attend a wedding in Monta Vista, met Nellie Quinterno. They had a whirlwind romance and were married shortly after. Nellie Quinterno and her friend Zorka Picchetti had started the Stevens Creek Market at what is today the Bicycle shop. When Gordon and Nellie married, he joined his wife in operating the store. He and his wife owned and operated the store and later built a new grocery store and shopping center which they operated for 32 years. When Nellie and Gordon retired, the community gave them a big farewell party and Mayor Reed Sparks declared it Gordon Beckstrom day.

Today, there are no mom and pop family owned stores left. Customer loyalty helped the little stores survive and last as long as they did, but by the 70's they could not compete with the big conglomerates that bought bulk to offer lower prices and provided so many other products. 7-11's are a big chain that helps them preserve their smallness, but not the unique neighborhood gathering places of the olden days.

Today the Stevens Creek Market stands, sadly empty. It is the last of its kind! It has been waiting for 3 years now, for the plan approval from the city to make way for a 26 unit mixed use development.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Dear Members and Friends,

As 2019 comes to a close, I cannot help but reflect on this past year. We have had an AMAZING 2019, which began with an event honoring the 150th Anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Our guest speaker was notable scholar, Connie Young Yu.

In August we celebrated Chinese Valentine's Day with author and Advisory Council Member Crystal Tai. Crystal's outstanding presentation highlighted Chinese festivals and customs, as presented in her new book *A Poetic Portal to Chinese Culture*, available for purchase at the museum.

The traveling trunk team, under the leadership of Sonja Cook, has visited many classrooms and senior communities with their educational and entertaining presentations of Cupertino life in the early 1900s.

The opening of our highly-anticipated exhibit on early personal computers and their innovators has drawn hundreds of visitors. Right now, in collaboration with SpringLight Education Institute, we are sponsoring an essay contest for Middle and High School students based on this exhibit. We plan to announce the winners in February followed by a public event to present their work. The submission deadline for the contest is December 31, 2019.

A well-attended annual "Sip of History" at the Deep Cliff Tap Room; much appreciated support from the Cupertino City Council; and record donations in support of our Annual Fund Campaign, have helped secure current funding for the Historical Society and Museum.

Thanks to our many docents we have been able to keep the museum open four days a week, as well as extended hours during, city and community events such as the: Cherry Blossom Festival, Volunteer Fair, Silicon Valley Fall Festival, Bay Area Diwali Festival, International Children's Festival, Quinlan Center Tree Lighting and Breakfast with Santa (among others).

We, as an organization, are looking ahead to an even better 2020. A few of the future activities we are planning include:

- ♦ The installation of an exhibit at the Cupertino Library to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage. This exhibit will honor Cupertino women who have contributed to the betterment of our community.
- ♦ Once again, we plan to offer the popular Historical Society Happy Hour event at the original "Paul & Eddie's." Long-time residents are encouraged to share their stories and memorabilia of Cupertino's past. Watch our EventBrite and Facebook pages for dates and information on how to secure tickets.
- ♦ Our current exhibit, "Homage to the IT Revolution: 1975-1985," will be returned to Italy in June 2020. Look for our new exhibit shortly thereafter.
- ♦ Our annual "Sip of History" event will take place at the end of June at a local historical location. Stay tuned for further details.

Your participation, ideas, assistance, and support are always welcome. Feel free to contact me at seb@theblaines.net or Jennifer Furlong, our Executive Director, at jennifer@cupertinohistoricalsociety.org. Wishing you a very happy and healthy 2020!

Sharon Blaine

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

August through December 2019

Cupertino Historical Society & Museum

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sharon Blaine | *President*
Don Sun | *Immediate Past President*
Suzanne Morrison | *Co-Vice President*
Janet Riddell | *Co-Vice President*
Bill Kerr | *Treasurer*
Sean Sullivan | *Secretary*
Valerie Abid
Jane Alvarado
Donna Austin
D. Michael Foulkes
Gail Fretwell-Hugger
Sandy James
Shannon Patrick Lee
Mark McKenna
Darryl Stow
Steve Ting
Fabrizio Vitagliano

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Helene Davis
Paula Quinterno
Crystal Tai

STAFF

Jennifer Furlong | *Executive Director*

TRAVELING TRUNK DOCENTS

Sonja Cook | *Coordinator*
Gail Fretwell-Hugger
Shari Kerr
Sharon Bryon

The Cornerstone is published quarterly by the Cupertino Historical Society, a private, non-profit organization..

Renewing Members

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Marie Bartee | Gail Fretwell-Hugger | Margaret Butcher |
| Kathleen Calhan | Stacey and Wes Morse | Patricia Peterson |
| John Gatto and | Aaron Grossman | Fabrizio Vitagliano |
| Pat Dowd | Diane Benedetti | Julia Earley |
| Jeffrey Johnson | Wendell Kerr | |
| Esther Johnson | Eno Schmidt | New Members |
| Angelo and Judith | Janet Riddell | Larry Jin |
| Marchi | Mary Egan | Ved Joshi |
| Janet P. Meyers | Charlotte Niemeyer | Shari Kerr |
| Charles Newman | Valerie Abid | Yun-Chieh Lin |
| Laverne Rabinowitz | Gail and Howard Jensen | Jessica Lu |
| William and Jane Reed | Cheryl Gagliasso | Howard Shi |
| Fenton Hill | Mary Russell | Grace Villalobos |
| | Barbara Stockmeir | Xinfang Zhang |

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS, DONORS AND SUPPORTERS!

By Jennifer Furlong, Executive Director

This year, the Board of Directors decided to host a special Volunteer Appreciation “Cocoa and Cookies” Event on the (very rainy) Saturday after our Board Holiday Party, to honor our: Docents, Special Events and Traveling Trunk Volunteers. Volunteers enjoyed snacking on holiday treats and playing a “getting to know you” 20 questions game. A great time was had by all! The Cupertino Historical Society + Museum has a volunteer crew of over 85 individuals who work our special events, keep our museum open, share Cupertino history in local schools and serve on our Board of Directors.

Once again, we had the pleasure of hosting our Board Holiday Party at Enzo’s Italian Restaurant in Cupertino. Fabrizio Vitagliano, of our Board of Directors, was the consummate host. We were honored that City Manager, Deb Feng; Mayor, Steve Scharf; Council Member, Jon Willey; and Vice Mayor, Liang Chao were in attendance. Donna Austin, Board Member, donated special thank you gifts to all in attendance at both events.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please call or email: (408) 973-1495 or volunteer@cupertinohistoricalsociety.org.



IN MEMORIAM: Gordon Ralph Beckstrom

May 9, 1917 - August 27, 2019

Gordon passed away at the age of 102 surrounded by family. He was raised on a farm in Nebraska, but moved to California after meeting, and subsequently marrying, Nellie Quinterno at a mutual friend’s wedding in Monte Vista after serving in World War

II. They were married for 51 years, until she passed away in 1997. Gordon was in the grocery business for 32 years, retiring at age 60. He owned and operated Steven’s Creek Market Shopping Center.



Pictured Above at the “Cocoa and Cookies” Volunteer Appreciation Event: (From Left to Right) Jane Alvarado, Board Member; Bill Kerr, Treasurer; (Seated) Zorka Keenan, Museum Docent; Sharon Blaine, Board President, Barbara Lecus, Museum Docent; Paula Quinterno, Museum Docent and Advisory Board; Bruce Peng, Museum Docent; (Standing Back Row) Jennifer Furlong, Executive Director; Crystal Tai, Advisory Board and Special Events Volunteer; Valerie Abid, Board Member and Museum Docent; Shubhra Srivastava, Museum Docent (not pictured: Rishik Srivastava, Museum Docent); Lang Ding, Museum Docent; and Anran “Orion” Luo, Museum Docent.



Pictured Left and Right at the Board Holiday Event: The Srivastavas chat with Dick Blaine and the Cooks. (Right) Guests were served family style.



Pictured Above at the Board of Directors Holiday Party: (Left) Fabrizio Vitagliano and John Zirelli (Right) Donna Austin, Deb Feng, Bob Adams, and Jim Walker.



Cupertino Historical Society & Museum

Quinlan Community Center

10185 North Stelling Road

Cupertino, CA 95014

Telephone: (408)973-1495

E-mail: info@cupertinohistoricalsociety.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S.POSTAGE
PAID
CUPERTINO, CA
PERMIT NO.266

BULLETIN BOARD

Upcoming Board of Directors Meetings

(Meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month at 4 pm in the Quinlan Community Center Conference Room.)

January 15, February 19, March 18, April 15

Holidays: Museum Closed

Winter Holiday: December 23, 2019 to January 1, 2020

Quinlan Building Maintenance (Closed): January 6-14, 2020

Upcoming Events

For the most up-to-date event listings, follow us on EventBrite.com (search for "Cupertino Historical Society" and subscribe) or Like us on Facebook.

Museum Hours:

Located inside the Quinlan Community Center, the museum is open to the public **Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

Admission is FREE.

Current resident or:

