



# Orinda Historical Society Newsletter

July 2010

P.O. BOX 82, ORINDA, CA 94563

(925) 254-1353

### Museum Location

Lower Level of  
Orinda Library  
26 Orinda Way

### Museum Hours of

#### Operation

Monday,  
Wednesday, &  
Friday 3-5 pm\*\*  
Or by Appointment  
Call 925 254-1353  
Or  
Pres. Lucy Williams at  
650-349-3382

#### Web Site

[www.orindahistory.org](http://www.orindahistory.org)

#### Newsletter

Editor: Teresa Long  
[teresa@orindausa.com](mailto:teresa@orindausa.com)

\*\* If planning a visit,  
please call ahead to  
confirm museum hours  
We are a volunteer staff  
and thus our hours can  
vary.

## Upcoming Events

- **August Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, August 18  
3-5 pm at OHS Museum
- **September Joint OHS and  
CCCHS Luncheon**  
Saturday, September 11th  
11 am to 3 pm at the  
Orinda Community Church.

### **Moraga Adobe**

Help preserve the Adobe  
visit [www.MoragaAdobe.org](http://www.MoragaAdobe.org)  
for more info.

## New Images of Old Orinda - 1901 to 1920's



Connie de Laveaga Stoops

Connie de Laveaga Stoops was cleaning out a closet in her home in Orinda when she stumbled upon a box of old glass negatives. The photographs were taken by her grandfather, Edward I. de Laveaga, who was a major figure in the development of Orinda in the early 20th century. He was responsible for developing the El Toyonal area, Orinda Village, and the Orinda Country Club and surrounding area. Connie's home, Bien Venida, is one of Orinda's original family estates, built by the deLaveaga family in the 1880's. Her sister, Marty de Laveaga Stewart also lives on the estate, which now has been

home to four generations of de Laveagas. While it is not unexpected to find treasures in a house with so much history, these particular photographs are a unique and exciting discovery. They show Orinda at an early stage of development from 1901 through the mid-1920's.

Connie shared 45 of her grandfather's photos at the Orinda Historical Society's general meeting on March 10th. While a large portion showed Orinda scenes, there were also interesting photos from the early 1900's of San Francisco, where the de Laveagas also

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## Lamorinda, A Step Back In Time



Lucy Hupp Williams & Kay Norman

OHS board member Kay Norman gave a fascinating presentation at the May 19th OHS annual business meeting. She took on the monumental task of giving the history of the Lamorinda area from 15 to 30 million years ago to the present day.

Kay explained that the true history of the Lamorinda area is millions of years old. Whale bone fossils 15 to 30 millions years old have been found in the Orinda formation, indicating that this area was once covered by a shallow sea. Roughly 10-20,000 years ago one could find land animals like camels, saber tooth cats, and giant sloths roaming here. Even evidence of mammoths has been found, from the era before human inhabitants. The Native Americans that later came to inhabit this area were peaceful. The Saklan indians were a tribe of the Miwoks; their people lived in the Lamorinda area for around 10,000 years. In the 1770's the Spanish explorers arrived; evidence of their presence can be found in artifacts such as a Spanish cannonball and a Spanish dagger found by Lamorinda residents in recent years. The De Anza expedi-

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## In Memoriam - Paul & Dorothy Williams

### OHS Board Members 2010

**President:** Lucy Hupp Williams  
(650) 349-3382

**Vice President:** Charles Vollmar  
(925) 368-4181

**Treasurer:** Betty Karplus  
(925) 254-4970

**Recording Secretary:**  
Carl Weber  
(925) 254-8473

**Archivist:** Kent Long  
(925) 258-9771

**Publicity:** Erik Andersen  
(925) 254-8444

**Membership:** Randy Lamont  
(925)-631-0525

**Technology/Publications:**  
Teresa Long  
(925) 258-9771

**School Liaison:** Kay Norman  
(925) 254-9536

**Videographer:** Jerry Vurek  
(925) 253-7995

**At-Large:** Susan Ross  
(925) 254-3720

**At-Large:** Marge Rieger  
(925) 254-2759

**At-Large:** Lindy Phillips  
(925) 254-8478

Paul and Dorothy Williams, long-time Orindans, founding members and supporters of the Orinda Historical Society were recently honored by their children, Trisha and Leo Beland and Jeff Williams. They bestowed a generous gift in their name to the Orinda Historical Society for computer upgrades and archival storage. Their gift has enabled us to move forward with the system upgrades and to procure storage for the many materials and photos that their father, Paul Williams, had compiled, inventoried and donated to the historical society. Paul was the instrumental force behind the organization of the OHS photo archives. Dorothy was a valuable OHS member and served as secretary for many years.

Paul and Dorothy are deeply missed as they were so diligent in their efforts to save the history of Orinda and document any world activities that affected this area.

### **A Step Back in Time** *(continued from Page 1)*

tion passed nearby in 1776 and was instrumental in starting settlement of the Bay Area and bringing prominent families to the region. In 1821 Mexico gained its independence from Spain, and land grants were made for payment for military service to prominent families. In 1835 Joaquin Moraga and his cousin Juan Bernal were granted the Laguna de los Palos Colorados land grant that covered a large portion of the now Lamorinda area. Moraga built his adobe in 1841 on the slopes above present Del Rey school (with a view of Mt. Diablo), where it still stands today. These families raised cattle and horses on this land. With the gold rush in 1848, people descended into the area. Redwood trees in the area were harvested for San Francisco home builders. Lumbermen decimated trees in Canyon. Squatters took up residence on the land. After the Mexican-American war, California became part of the United States and an official state in 1850.

The Lamorinda landscape began to change significantly in the last 100 to 125 years. Orchards began sprouting up, hay balers could be seen working the land, railroads were built, tunnels excavated, and even oil wells sprouted up. Prominent families like the Miners, Wagners, and de Laveagas moved into the area. Kay showed many old photos from the 1880's to the 1900's. Jenny Bickerstaff, who was the Moraga School teacher in the 1890's, is shown riding on horseback to commute to school. An 1900's era photo of a rather sparse main street in Lafayette shows a large tree. That tree is still there in front of Diablo Foods. Another photo showed the Moraga Barn. Kay talked about the trains, mentioning the Sacramento Northern and the California & Nevada railroads. She told many interesting facts, such as Fish Ranch Road was named for the Oakland Trout Company and that the Wagner family had the first telephone in Orinda and hosted many fancy parties. In the 1920's, Edward de Laveaga developed the Orinda Country Club and designed the Orinda Village, which had the first fire house. The first tunnel connecting Orinda to Oakland was constructed in 1903, but it was the opening of the Caldecott Tunnel in 1937 that really started the modern era, developing the Lamorinda area into thriving towns and a place which so many people now call home.

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select "Newsletters"**



*New Images of Old Orinda (continued from Page 1)*

had a home, and rural photos of San Benito county at a ranch near Hollister.

The photographs of Orinda give a glimpse of country life for the de Laveaga family life as well as the beginnings of the town's development. One of the earlier Orinda photos, taken in 1901, shows a young Edward at age 18 looking very dapper in white trousers, tie, and hat standing under a tree. Other photos show family members in their 1900's era automobiles. There were a number of images of the Bien Venida, including views of the main house, the doll house, and the garden. These are especially poignant as the main house in these photos was destroyed by fire in 1915. The house was rebuilt from the original plans and pains were taken to make it to look the same as before the fire.

The panoramas of the Orinda hills and valley were particularly interesting. There was a single road running the length of the valley with hardly any houses, through open grasslands with only occasional oaks to be seen. Metal towers for power lines can be seen on the slopes of the hills. These power lines are still in the same location today, so they gave

a good point of reference when trying to figure out exactly where these photos were taken. Evidence of Orinda's changing landscape can be observed in the photos of Lake Orinda and Lake Cascade. Both are man-made lakes created as part of Edward de Laveaga's El Toyonal and Country Club projects. One shows the dredging of Lake Orinda. Others show idyllic scenes of picnickers and small boats in Lake Orinda. While Lake Cascade remains virtually the same today, Lake Orinda was cemented in and eventually became the Orinda Park Pool.



Connie de Laveaga Stoops, OHS board member Erik Andersen, Marty de Laveaga Stewart, & Peter de Laveaga

These views of Orinda life in the early 1900's are a true treasure, and the historical society is grateful to the de Laveaga family for sharing them.

*OHS and The Contra Costa County Historical Society to Host September Potluck*

The Orinda Historical Society is teaming up with the Contra Costa Historical Society to host a potluck luncheon on **September 11th at the Orinda Community Church from 11 am to 3 pm**. The speaker is **Tyche Hendricks**, an award-winning Bay Area journalist who worked for many years at the San Francisco Chronicle. She will be talking about her new book, *The Wind Doesn't Need a Passport: Stories From the U.S.- Mexico Borderland*, which chronicles her personal experience exploring the U.S.-Mexican borderlands and covering immigration issues. For more information contact Contra Costa Country Historical Society Vice President Andrea Blackman at (925) 372-7146 or Mary-Ellen Jones (OHS and CCCHS member) at (925) 254-2295.

Thank you to Rose Bolin, the owner of Treible's in Orinda, for generously providing the printing of this newsletter.