



THE GUIDEPOST

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San Francisco
Columbarium

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A VISIT TO THE COLUMBARIUM

By Peggy Tuescher

What is a columbarium? – The literal answer is a dovecote, a set of niches that serve as shelters for pigeons or doves (from *columba*, the Latin word for dove). But that hardly seems worth the effort of an organized visit by a group of San Francisco tour guides – and, indeed, there is more to it. In modern usage, the term most often refers to a vault with niches for urns containing the ashes of cremated human bodies. Built in 1898 by architect Bernard J. S. Cahill, the San Francisco Columbarium is a beautiful example of neo-classical and baroque architecture. The copper-domed structure holds the remains of some of San Francisco’s most prominent founding families as well as memorials to such notable individuals as Harvey Milk. Located at One Loraine Court near the intersection of Stanyan and Anza streets in the Richmond District, the Columbarium (together with the adjacent Franciscan Room and Fountain Court) is the only active non-denominational final resting place in the city.

The Columbarium was once part of the Odd Fellows Cemetery. Our friend, fellow tour guide and historian, Al Lopez, told us about his purchase of a niche in 1983. He also gave us some history about the Fraternal Order of Odd Fellows, an organization founded in England in the 1700s. The organization spread to North America where Thomas Wildey is credited with the formation of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows whose symbol is the triple-linked chain. Each link contains a letter that stands for Friendship, Love and Truth.

In 1853, a group of wealthy entrepreneurs had purchased a large tract of land in the hills just north of the present-day USF campus and created a cemetery. The area, comprised of 170 acres, was dedicated to become Lone Mountain Cemetery in 1854. Within a few years, the property was divided into four separate cemeteries: Calvary (Roman Catholic), Masonic, Odd Fellows and non-denominational Lone Mountain. In 1867, the Lone Mountain part was renamed Laurel Hill. By 1900, most graveyards in San Francisco were filled. By 1902, an ordinance prohibited burials within the City. In the early 1930s, San Francisco voted the cemeteries out of existence and workmen began the evacuation of 47,000 graves. Many of the remains were transferred to Cypress Lawn in Colma. (See Renate Coombs’s article “*Visit to the Dead Zone*,” Guidepost Vol. 19 No. 4, December 2003.) Thousands of crypts and mausoleums were emptied, the granite and marble dumped into the sea to reinforce the seawalls. The Columbarium was allowed to remain.

Al introduced us to Emmitt Watson, caretaker and unofficial historian of the cavernous, round structure. When Emmitt came to work at the Columbarium, it was in terrible disrepair. Restoration began after the Neptune Society purchased the building in 1980. Emmitt himself painted the entire interior. He changed the original dark colors to lighter pastel shades.

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The GUIDEPOST (ISSN 1097-2285) is published quarterly by the San Francisco Tour Guide Guild, a non-profit association established in 1984 to promote the integrity of the profession through certification testing and continuing education, and foster a standard of quality, ethics, and professionalism among guides and operators in the San Francisco Bay Area. SFTGG is a member of the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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Message from the Outgoing President

In 2008 we used this space to report on activities of the organization and the Board, but for this final column the Board has allowed me to share some personal feelings and ideas.

We all know the Guild has always had a strong focus on DMC work. Over the years that work has evolved to include very few tours. We do have plenty of members who lead step-on tours, over-the-road tours, per capita tours, and who do other types of work such as incentive programs. But although we are called the Tour Guide Guild, we function mostly as a DMC Employee Guild. Perhaps that's okay, but if so, I think we should change our name and call ourselves what we are! Alternately, there should be much more support for the other activities our members do, especially tours. It's so odd that we're a tour guide guild where leading tours isn't the focus of the organization!

Earlier this year I overheard a conversation in which a member who has his own tour company was mentioned, and the speaker said, "Well, he's in a different industry." Someone who leads tours every day is in a different industry from the Tour Guide Guild?! Very strange. When we changed the Certification Policy so that those who lead tours but don't do meet-and-greets or dine-arounds can achieve Certification, there were those who accused us of weakening Certification. It weakens Certification to allow those who give tours every day to become Certified? Very strange.

Now don't get me wrong. I understand that large numbers of our members do DMC work, and people are really hurting for better wages and conditions. If the Guild can help achieve that, I think it should. However, I think it would make more sense to have a separate organization to focus on that—perhaps a Tour Guide Labor Union. That organization would focus 100% on rates and conditions, and the Guild could re-focus on the mission for which it was founded—creating and maintaining a high level of quality among tour guides.

Our Articles of Incorporation (on file with the Secretary of State in Sacramento) state that the legal purpose of the Guild is "to promote and maintain a high degree of excellence and integrity within the tour guiding profession." It also says "...this corporation shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the specific purposes of this corporation." I think we have strayed too far from this.

We know that the vast majority of people who take tours in San Francisco take them from people who are not members of our organization. I doubt that many driver/guides for Gray Line, Super Sightseeing and Tower Tours will ever join the Guild, but I know for a fact that many of the employees of the smaller per capita companies such as City Sightseeing, Great Pacific, and San Francisco Shuttle Tours are "real" tour guides who read books on San Francisco history, take City Guides tours, etc.

In conclusion, I propose the creation of a new organization that would focus on achieving better rates and conditions for DMC employees, and I would like the Guild to re-focus on its original purpose of promoting and maintaining a high degree of excellence and integrity within the tour guiding profession!

Jason Cohen

HEINLENVILLE, CA

By Renate Coombs

23 Cleveland Avenue, Heinlerville, CA, sounds like a perfectly ordinary mailing address until you are trying to find its zip code or, when that fails, locate the town on a California map. Then you begin to suspect that the address no longer exists. And that is indeed what you find when you dig a little deeper: Heinlerville was one of six Chinatowns in San Jose. During Heinlerville's short existence from 1887 to 1931, Cleveland Avenue was its main artery and #23 was the address of its nerve center, *Sing Chong*, a large general store. But why did a Chinatown bear such a non-Asian name and why did it disappear so completely from the face of the earth?

As San Francisco tour guides, you are undoubtedly well familiar with your own city's Chinatown. As residents of the Bay area, you may even have taken some interest in Oakland's Chinatown. But San Jose's Chinatown just wasn't quite on your radar – at least not until now – or was it?

One of the several recent occurrences that may have alerted you could have been the publication of "Chinese in San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley," a new title in the Arcadia series "Images of America," authored by Lillian Gong-Guy and Gerrye Wong on behalf of the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project (CHCP). Or you may have heard a lecture by Humboldt State professor Jean Pfaelzer about her new book entitled "Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans." In my case, it was "The Chinese of California: A Struggle for Community." On display at the California Historical Society (CHS) from Feb 7 – Aug 31, 2008, this exhibit was a first-ever collaboration of the Bancroft Library of UC Berkeley, CHS and the Chinese Historical Society of America.

One wall in this exhibit was dedicated to that astounding creation called Heinlerville, a prosperous and secure enclave in the middle of hostile, Sino-phobic, end-of-the 19th century San Jose where Chinese merchants could pursue their trade and Chinese residents could enjoy a semblance of family life in their own culture. This unlikely setting had been made possible by the generosity of a serious-minded German American family who was stoic enough to ignore the animosity of the white citizenry and press and savvy enough to hire a white night watchman to guard the eight-foot fence surrounding the settlement.



Ng Shing Gung Temple

All of this aroused my curiosity enough to sign up for CHS's daylong tour "Chinese History in the South Bay." The centerpiece of this tour was Heinlerville or, more accurately, its concept and its memory. Bounded by Fifth, Seventh, Taylor and Jackson streets, the district itself is vacant land ready for redevelopment – subject to prior archeological exploration. To bring these memories to life we visited the most powerful reminder of the glory that was Heinlerville, the recreated Ng Shing Gung Temple in San Jose's Kelley Park. Our guide was Dr. Rodney Lum, president of CHCP.

On its ground floor, the temple houses a small, but expert display of some choice artifacts recovered from various archeological digs at suspected Chinatown locations in San Jose and an excellent triple time line juxtaposing relevant historical events in China, the US and San Jose. I can't imagine a better way of bringing to life the history of these two very different countries and the thousands of unfortunate individuals caught in between.

On the upper floor, one can enjoy the faithful recreation of the temple formerly located at Sixth and Taylor streets. What makes this labor of love especially precious is the original hand-carved altar featuring the gilded statues of five gods. Nearly lost during demolition, these glorious items spent over twenty years in an obscure warehouse before being restored to their proper place. To make it all perfect, Oscar award-winning producer Jessica Yu's documentary, "Home Base: A Chinatown Called Heinlerville," lets you relive the history of San Jose's last Chinese enclave.

Upon entering the temple, each one of us had been given a folder with informational material. Little did we know that these folders were also the way to winning the door prize. As it turned out, each package contained a copy of the September 2005 issue of Gentry Magazine featuring as its cover story the 15-year history of CHCP; only one of them bore Dr. Lum's autograph! My husband Robert, the designated "lucky person" in our house, had that winning copy. The prize was a copy of "Chinatown, San Jose, USA" by Connie Young Yu, the ultimate authority on the topic.

Ms. Yu did the laborious research not only on San Jose's various Chinatowns, but also on the history of the Heinlens. Johann and Anna Maria were immigrants from Württemberg who, like some other 20,000 people in 1816, tried to escape from political unrest, religious

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prosecution and disastrous harvests. They first settled in Pennsylvania, then in Ohio. One of their sons, John (1815-1903), and his wife Jane Eliza decided to move to California in 1852. Even though Jane Eliza was of English descent, John's attachment to his German cultural heritage was still strong enough to name one of their sons "Goethe."

Too late for the Gold Rush like so many mid-westerners, John decided to go into farming. San Jose was a great place for that. Many of the farm laborers were Chinese. Heinlen and his hard-working family prospered, but they never showed any social ambitions. None of the six children ever married. In 1887, when John Heinlen was 71 years old, he had witnessed enough ugly treatment of the Chinese that he wanted to do something about it.

As they did in Oakland, Chinatowns in San Jose had a lamentable habit of burning down whenever the real estate they occupied became too desirable. After a suspicious fire destroyed the Chinese quarter in downtown San Jose in May 1887, John Heinlen applied for permits to build a new Chinatown on his own property. Vilified by the city council, the press and the citizenry, he was ridiculed as *Ah* Heinlen. Despite angry mobs and a recalcitrant tenant who allowed himself to be used by the anti-Chinese factions, John Heinlein stood fast. His lawyer son, Goethe Heinlen, left his practice in San Francisco to support his father. After the court had ruled in his favor against the would-be tenant, Heinlen proceeded with the project.



John Heinlen had made a contractual promise to build premises for rent to Chinese merchants and now was ready to make good on it. He hired the best-known architect working in the area at the time. Bavarian-born Theodore Lenzen had designed many prominent structures in Santa Clara County, private homes, business houses and public buildings including San Jose's City Hall. This large brick structure had to be built entirely from materials made by white labor under a stipulation imposed by the city council. No bricks or sewer pipes made by Chinese laborers were allowed.

Lenzen, also a German American, had known Heinlen for years and was not intimidated by the unpopularity of the project. He drew up plans for a variety of brick buildings to meet the needs of the prospective Chinese tenants. Heinlenville was only three blocks long and two blocks wide with Cleveland Avenue as its main street. Lenzen's design helped create a self-sufficient community that became the commercial and social center

for many Chinese living and working in the surroundings. Unfortunately, apart from the occasional foundation buried under the asphalt, nothing is left of Lenzen's buildings.

Protected by gates and a guardhouse against those who hated the "Chinks," Heinlenville prospered and became a magnet for Chinese living outside the San Jose area. But it was not to last. After John Heinlein's death in 1903, his children carried on valiantly through the 1906 earthquake and beyond. The Chinese immigrant population had begun to dwindle as a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Eventually, the Great Depression took its toll. When the Heinlen Company couldn't pay its back taxes on the property, the land was turned over to a bank. On December 31, 1931, the razing of Chinatown began. A brief shining moment in an otherwise sinister chapter of the Chinese struggle for community in California had come to an end.

In contemporary accounts, there is repeated mention of six different Chinatowns in San Jose, but it's difficult to envision their exact locations. Without doubt, the earliest Chinese settlements were downtown. During excavation for the Fairmont Hotel parking garage at Market and San Fernando streets, important evidence of a large Chinese settlement was found. A plaque near the entrance to the hotel now marks this historic fact. A site believed to have been the location of another Chinatown awaits exploration pending redevelopment.

But no matter how many there might have been, all of San Jose's historic Chinese communities have been lost. Today the major tangible evidence of a significant and influential Chinese presence is the replica of the Ng Shing Gung temple and museum. For those of us who are accustomed to the Chinatowns in San Francisco and Oakland as part of our daily life, it is important to remember that the Chinatowns in dozens of other California cities like Chico, Truckee and Eureka have completely disappeared, not by happenstance but as a result of the virulent anti-Chinese movement sweeping the country in the late 19th century and beyond.

Our Program Committee might consider San Jose's Chinatowns a worthwhile subject matter for an SFTGG outing. Moreover, such a field trip might be combined with a visit to San Jose's thriving Japantown, located just around the corner from the empty lot that was Heinlenville. An opportunity to learn more about San Jose's Asian communities might even get our sister organization in Silicon Valley interested in a joint venture!

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JUST THE FACTS!

By Jason Cohen

In this column we publish questions on subjects that have potential for confusion or misinformation. Here are the questions from the last Guidepost, and the answers we have found (with sources cited). Please send questions for future columns to Jason at jcohen1@pacbell.net (don't forget the "1")

1. Was George Lucas really inspired to create the "imperial walkers" in the Empire Strikes Back based on the cranes at the Port of Oakland?

We thought it would never be possible to answer this question since LucasFilm receives thousands of pieces of fan mail and would never see an email from us. Luckily, the answer appeared in a *Chronicle* interview by Peter Hartlaub on June 25, 2008.



Hartlaub wrote "As a 'Star Wars' geek and Oakland resident, I've been plagued by the legend as well. So last year, during an interview for a profile that ran in the *Chronicle*, I asked Lucas about the similarities – making sure it was my last question, in case it got me kicked out of Skywalker Ranch.

"That's a myth," Lucas said, politely but firmly. "That is definitely a myth." (And for anyone who might think that the trench-like San Pablo/MacArthur exit on Interstate 580 might have inspired the surface features of the Death Star, Lucas insisted that "that's a myth, too.")

Hartlaub also asked Phil Tippett, the stop-motion animation master who animated the walkers in the movie. "Everybody asks that," Tippett said, adding that "I think everyone would pretty much disavow it."

2. Was Dock of the Bay written on a Sausalito floating home, at Sam's in Tiburon, or somewhere else?

According to *Otis! The Otis Redding Story* (Scott Freeman, 2001), "While Otis was in San Francisco for his gig at the Fillmore, he and Speedo Sims stayed on a rented houseboat on the Bay in Sausalito. It was an idyllic setting, peaceful and reflective, and Otis began writing a song there that offered the first tangible sign of a modern rock influence on his music. He didn't have it all, but he had a melody and had a title...He also had the first couple of lines...Every afternoon Otis would sit on the boat and play the chords on his acoustic guitar...'We must have been out there three or four days before I could get any concept of where he was going with the song.'" Speedo said.

Here's the chronology:

- June 17, 1967–Played the Monterey Pop Festival to huge acclaim

- One week later–Played the Fillmore in San Francisco and stayed on the houseboat in Sausalito
- Mid-November to early December–Finished writing the song and recorded it at Stax Records in Memphis
- December 10–Killed in plane crash in Madison, Wisconsin—just a few days after recording the song!
- January 8, 1968–(Sittin on) The Dock of the Bay released
- March 1968–#1 on both the pop and R&B charts

Side notes: Redding insisted on the seagull sound effects even though it was gimmicky, because there had been so many gulls around him in Sausalito. Redding's advisors disliked the song because it was so different from what he'd been doing, but he insisted it was a breakthrough direction that his fans would accept.

3. I've always heard that the City Hall dome is the 5th tallest on earth? Is this true? What are the others? I heard on a City Guides tour that there's a church right here in SF with a taller dome. What's the deal?

We looked through the files on City Hall in the Main Library's 6th floor History Room. Various sources (newspapers, brochures, etc.) cited the height of City Hall's dome at 300', 301'6", 306', 307', 308', and 310'. All sources agree that it's taller than the dome on the U.S. Capitol, but the amount varies, with citations of 11 ½', 13' 7¾", 14', and 16' 2-5/8". An article in the *SF Independent* from 1992 calls it the "tallest domed structure in the U.S." The official brochure when the building re-opened in 1999 after its seismic retrofit calls the dome largest in the country. "one of the world." The 1999 brochure calls it largest in the country."



Rob Spoor, who leads City Hall tours for City Guides, wrote "I've heard or read that SF City Hall is 3', 17' and 42' taller than the Capitol in D.C. Those measurements are based on ground level, which in Washington eliminates a reading from the ground on the Mall side of the Capitol. Obviously, climbing down all those steps alters the measuring process considerably, hence the tendency to measure from the other side, at "street" level. Plus, even trying

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175th Anniversary of a Classic

By Jason Cohen

In 1834, a young man named Richard Henry Dana dropped out of Harvard to have an adventure. He signed onto a sailing ship and went to sea “before the mast” (i.e., as a common sailor, since the sailors lived in the front part of the ship). When he eventually returned to Boston he finished college and wrote his memoir, *Two Years Before the Mast*, which instantly became a best seller and remains a classic of seafaring literature. 2009-2010 will be the 175th anniversary of his voyage.



What makes *Two Years Before the Mast* of special interest to us is that the ship he joined was bound for California, to trade

manufactured goods for the cow hides and tallow (beef fat) from the Mexican ranchos. The crew spent more than a year sailing up and down the coast, visiting the missions and settlements from San Diego to San Francisco, until they had collected a full cargo of hides and could return home. The book remains one of the best accounts of life in California in the period before the Gold Rush. Dana met personalities we are familiar with, such as Mariano Vallejo and William Richardson.

You have probably seen references to Dana before—there is an alley called Richard Henry Dana Way near the Maritime Museum at Fisherman’s Wharf, and exhibits at museums throughout coastal California frequently quote from the book. I finally decided to actually read it, and found it very enjoyable.

I do have to give a big warning, however. The narrative is filled with sailing ship terminology that is virtually impossible for a 21st century layperson to understand. Here is a passage drawn almost at random: “Again it was clew up and haul down, reef and furl, until we had got her down to close-reefed topsails, double-reefed trysail, and reefed fore spenser.” I found it good enough to understand that the sailors were constantly putting up and taking down the sails as weather conditions changed.

Dana concludes with an interesting description of the changes he saw in California when he returned for a visit only 24 years later, in 1859. Of course the Gold Rush had changed almost everything. San Francisco and Los Angeles had grown dramatically and the missions were abandoned and crumbling, but Monterey and Santa Barbara were still essentially Mexican towns.

If you decide to read the book I’d suggest stopping at the bookstore at the Hyde Street Pier and buying a CD of sea shanties—they make great accompaniment to this book!

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He has spent years becoming familiar with the niches and listening to visiting families’ stories as he worked on the restoration. The personal anecdotes and intimate details Watson revealed about the “apartments” on his tour transformed the gloomy nature one might expect from a walk through a cemetery into a funny and touching experience.

Different pictures and personal memorabilia reflect a person’s personality. People have used cookie jars, teapots, brandy decanters, martini shakers, and piggy banks to celebrate and commemorate a loved one. His mission is to make bereaved people feel better; by promising to take care of their loved one. He, in turn, has been adopted by the living families. Emmitt begins each day at the Columbarium with a loud “Good Morning, you all!” and then 10 or so minutes of prayer. He is a down to earth philosopher with wonderful wisdom to share. Emmitt has been interviewed 43 times and a documentary has been made about him.

Al Lopez pointed out that most of the eight rooms or alcoves on the ground floor bear the names of the mythological winds. Six of the ground floor rooms feature beautiful stained glass windows. The window in the Aquilo room (Roman name for “Boreas,” the North Wind) depicting three angels in flight is attributed to Louis Comfort Tiffany. Some of the first floor rooms are named after constellations. The floors are tile mosaics in a workmanship no longer seen.



Huge, bronze doors are the entry into the Columbarium. Walls are between 4 and 5 feet thick. An incredibly beautiful and detailed stained glass window covers the interior of the dome. Emmitt Watson told us that three television programs have been filmed in the Columbarium. They are “Nash Bridges,” “Streets of San Francisco” and the “Midnight Caller.” Two weddings have been performed here and on November 4, the Columbarium is a polling station. At the end of the tour, Emmitt gave everyone a little gift and offered us beads to place on an “apartment.”

This tour was a perfect reminder to all of us to live each day with gratitude and to remember that we are all connected. One of San Francisco’s many wonders was generously shared with the thirty SFTGG members.

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to pin down the 5 tallest domes in the world can be problematic. First of all, we're talking about ONLY "Roman" domes. That disqualifies structures such as the Hagia Sophia. There's a huge Roman Catholic church in Africa that some experts include, but only if the cross on top is included."

The *Chronicle's* January 1, 1999 description of the reopening after the retrofit included a graphic that showed the "World's Tallest Domes" with these heights:

- St. Peter's (Rome) 451'
- Duomo (Florence) 385'
- St. Paul's (London) 366'
- Les Invalides (Paris) 325'
- SF City Hall 307'
- US Capitol 287'

Regarding the church with a higher dome in San Francisco, it was actually the Science Hall at San Francisco City College that was cited on a City Guides tour, however, the website www.mtdavidson.org/san_francisco_city_college states, "The five story classically designed Science Hall was purposely made 89 feet longer than San Francisco's 400 foot long City Hall and placed on the crest of the highest hill on the site to claim that the building was also higher than City Hall." So while the building is *higher* than City Hall, it's not *taller* than it.

Here are three new questions:

1. Is there any truth to the story that when Leland and Jane Stanford offered to donate money to the University of California (or Harvard, depending on the version), they were laughed off the campus because they were dressed as country folk and not recognized as multi-millionaires, and therefore decided to found their own university?
 2. What really was the connection between Frederick Law Olmsted and Golden Gate Park? Did he really look at all the sand dunes, shake his head, and get back on the train?
 3. On wine tours we sometimes hear of a blended, Bordeaux-style red wine called Meritage. What is the correct way to pronounce Meritage, and why?
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Postscript: Near the end of the Heinlenville part of our tour, Dr. Lum had another prize to award, this one to the person who could remember the architect's name – not a problem for a fellow German American. Now I'm the proud owner of a publication entitled "Life along the Guadalupe River – an Archaeological and Historical Journey" by Rebecca Allen and Mark Hylkema. This work describes the extensive excavations and research performed in preparation for the expansion of the Guadalupe Parkway on a three-mile stretch along the Guadalupe River, including the site of the even shorter-lived Woolen Mills Chinatown (1887 - 1902).



*The Members of the Board
and the
Guidepost Editors
are wishing all of you
Happy Holidays
and a
Successful New Year.*

May there be Peace.

SFTGG PROGRAMS

December 16th SFTGG Holiday Party

6 – 10 PM Bay View Boat Club, 489 China Basin Street, Pier 54 (415-495-9500)

Bring an item or two for the annual Toy Drive, Food Drive,
or blankets/towels for the SPCA



There will be a jazz quartet, raffles for prizes and a full BBQ dinner.

Cost: none

RSVP: friscofran@rcm or 415-647-1431 by November 29th

For detailed information on other programs, check our website at www.sftgg.org/programs.

If you do not have access to a computer, call:
Madelon van Lier at 415-485-1355 (madelonvanlier@aol.com)
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