



THE GUIDEPOST

Publication of the San Francisco Tour Guide Guild

Vol. 24 – No. 1

March 2009



INSIDE

Message from the Board	Page 2
Homesick at the Academy	Page 3
Meet the Members of the Board	Page 7
Programs	Page 8
Just the Facts	Insert

IN SEARCH OF POPOS

By Ulla Kaprielian

What is POPOS? You might ask. –

The acronym stands for privately-owned-public-open-spaces. Do you know that there are 68 of these open spaces in downtown San Francisco? While some of them are easily found, others are hidden gems. There are plazas (hard-surfaced spaces), urban parks (open spaces with mainly natural elements), greenhouses (partially or fully glassed-in enclosures), urban gardens (sheltered landscaped areas), sun terraces (wind-sheltered areas on upper levels), atria (indoor open spaces), and even “snippets” (small, sunny sitting areas). Some are well designed with trees, planters, emphasis on sunlight, seating and public art; others don’t even have a place to sit.

Of course, there are large public parks within the downtown area as well, such as Union Square, Yerba Buena Gardens, Justin Herman Plaza and St. Mary’s and Portsmouth Square in Chinatown, all designed and maintained by the city.

The need to revitalize America’s cities became more and more apparent with the steady move of the population to the suburbs. In San Francisco it was as far back as 1910 that young civic leaders were concerned about substandard housing in the city. They formed the San Francisco Housing Association. Their efforts resulted in the State Tenement House Act of 1911, the first public housing authority in the nation and, in 1942, the creation of the San Francisco Planning Department.

1959 was the birth year of SPUR, San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association, a member-supported, volunteer-based think tank. Urban renewal had to be the goal for reclaiming vitality and development in the city rather than losing everything to the suburban areas. Would you believe that in 1959 there were only two new buildings in downtown since World War II, Crown Zellerbach and 255 California (then known as John Hancock Building)? The 1960s saw an explosion of high rise buildings. At that rate San Francisco would soon look like Manhattan.

In 1968 the Planning Department developed an interesting bonus system. A new building’s size could be increased if there was a connection to BART, widened sidewalk, and/or ground level plaza provided. The developer could have additional 10 square feet of building for every square foot of public space featuring planting, art, fountains, etc. Unfortunately, the requirements were very vague. The Planning Code simply stated that “the balance shall be suitable for walking, sitting and similar pursuits.”

Cont’d page 5

S A N
FRANCISCO
T O U R
G U I D E
G U I L D

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.

For more information contact:

SFTGG
PO Box 170610
San Francisco, CA 94117-0610
415.753.8600 www.sftgg.org

Editing Team:

Ulla Kaprielian muttik@flash.net
Renate Coombs R2CO2M@earthlink.net
Jason Cohen jcohen1@pacbell.net

Layout & Design: Ulla Kaprielian

Contributors to this issue:

Jason Cohen, Christiane Diehnel,
Ulla Kaprielian, Michele McCurry

**Deadline for Next Issue:
May10, 2009**

2009 SFTGG Board of Trustees

President	Michele McCurry
V P	Bob Hunt
Secretary	Beth Graubart
Treasurer	Brigitte Gras
Membership	Beth Graubart & Brigitte Gras
Programs	Anita Rao & Don deLaura
Certification	Michael Stortz
Public Relations	Michael Purcell
Mentoring	Marilee Traynor

Happy 25th Anniversary, SFTGG!!

The 2009 Board of Trustees is a very animated and energetic group of people. Joining Marilee Traynor, Bob Hunt and myself, the new Board members are Beth Graubart, Secretary, Brigitte Gras, Treasurer, Anita Rao & Don DeLaura, Programs Co-Chairs, Michael Purcell, PR, and Michael Stortz, Certification. We hit the ground running in January brainstorming our goals for the year. Immediately it was plain to see that we were all on the same page. We agreed that we wanted to highlight and strengthen the fact that the SFTGG is an organization of colleagues. We want to work on recruiting members of the tourism community who, up to now, have not seen the Guild as the place for themselves. We want to get the Mentoring program back up and running. And we want to provide a wide range of programs, not necessarily just training tours which will meet the varied needs of our membership.

Currently, we are in the midst of planning a meeting with the DMCs to present and discuss the Guidelines document that was created and adopted last year. The date for that meeting has been set for March 18th. With the help of Sunny Lagardo and Barbara White, preparations for the meeting are coming right along. At least 16 San Francisco DMCs are to be invited, as will be a select number of guides. We will report on the outcome of the meeting in March.

As many of you are aware, every other year, the Concierge Association holds a trade show. It has been an event enjoyed by many in the past. This year, the SFTGG has been invited to have a booth at the trade show once again.

Unfortunately, only those Board members who will be staffing our booth will be invited to attend the trade show. We will, however, have a presence there, informing the concierges of the services we can provide for their guests.

Our first Program of the year will be conducted by none other than Anita Rao herself, as she leads us on a walk through the Multicultural Mission District. The Tour will take place on Thursday, February 27.

We will be administering a Certification Test on Wednesday, March 4. There will be a study session for the exam on Thursday, February 19. Both will be held in the Parish Hall of St. Mary's Cathedral. If you want to take the test, get your verification materials in to Nancy McCormick and get in touch with Michael Stortz right away!

Also in the works, our first Social Study Group, aka Trivia Night at Lefty O'Doul's, will take place in April. Whether you are certified, newly certified, a veteran guide or a newbie, this "Study Group" is for you! Join us for a night of fun and games that will also make you smarter. First drink is on the Guild! Date to be determined.

One final note, Guild member Theodora Gottwald passed away on January 13th. The Guild will be making a contribution to the American Cancer Society in her honor.

On behalf of the Board,
Michele McCurry, President

Most of you have by now visited the brilliant reincarnation of the venerable California Academy of Sciences and are familiar with the exhibits. They really prove that science can be both instructive and valuable while, at the same time, being great fun. Traveling to the places illustrated by the displays is often not practical, but this following article by my friend gives us a good opportunity for a virtual trip to the Peruvian jungle. We, the editors, hope that you will enjoy her thoughts as much as we did. She owns a small tour company that introduces people to this fascinating area. By sharing her experience with others, you may inspire your friends and clients to visit San Francisco's newest jewel in Golden Gate Park.

Ulla Kaprielian

Homesick at the Academy

By Christiane Diehnel

In the brand new Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park it takes just a few steps to go from outer space to the jungles of the world. My companions and I start our visit in the Planetarium, leaning back comfortably in our seats in the domed theater. The digital presentation zooms us from the building's living rooftop into outer space via the Galapagos Islands and Madagascar to the Moon, Mars, Jupiter and beyond. With squeamish stomachs and dizzy heads we cruise over desert-like moonscapes and fly through foggy rings of gases hiding planets into galaxies far from Earth. It is impossible for me to comprehend. Is there life somewhere out there? Nobody knows – yet.



The other major attraction promises to be at least more tangible than outer space. I had glanced at the Rainforest of the World exhibit when we arrived and now approach the entrance to it with skepticism. How could an exhibit in a building compare to the rainforest I know? After all, I have spent much time over many years in the “real” Amazon jungle. Entering on level 1 through a double entrance to keep the tropical birds and butterflies flying through the treetops from escaping, I am immediately enveloped by warm, humid air. A woman standing nearby worries about her hair getting frizzy, but the moist air caressing my face transports my mind to the jungles of Peru.



Crowds of people slowly make their way up the winding walkway to the top level, oohing and aahing every step of the way at marvels from tiny, poisonous frogs to big leaves

and fragile-looking flowers of this interconnected ecosystem. In a glass box at a landing between two levels I spot a leafcutter ant colony on display. At first glance it looks like a marching column of pieces of green leaves moving along at a fast clip. The leaves are much bigger than the ants carrying them and one has to look closely to see the tiny ants underneath their burden.

In the jungle these ants are called curuhuinsis. They live in huge colonies and travel up to half a mile to collect leaves. In their den a mold is grown on the leaves before they are used for food. I remember the time when these amazing ants stripped all the leaves of the grapefruit tree near our jungle home in just one day. Folklore says, the master and protector of the colony is a two-headed snake which sings like a bird. The curuhuinsis are the slave workers. Although nobody has ever seen this snake, local people are convinced it exists. Despite the superstitions, everyone wants to get rid of these destructive ants and every farmer has his own idea on how to accomplish that. One favorite method is to pour gasoline into the den and light it with a match so it will explode. However, the leafcutter ants I am looking at now do not have to worry about being bombed.



The elevator from the top level takes us down to the flooded forest. Looking at the displays behind thick glass windows along a wall, my mind is flooded with memories. First, there are two *Mata Matas*, river turtles which hide in murky waters. When they spot a fish, the head and long neck shoot out from their shell to catch it. In my mind I return to the first time my husband accompanied me to the Amazon.

We were slowly making our way down the Tahuayo River, a tributary of the Amazon, to spend a couple of days camping in a remote area of the jungle. It was August and the water was so low, the river could only be navigated by canoes. Several times we had to duck low to pass under fallen trees in the river, other times the canoes had to be hauled over logs. In late afternoon our little group of four tourists, two guides, a cook and his helper had reached our destination, a clearing in the forest with a crudely made wooden platform to sleep on and a fire pit for cooking. On the way, our guide Lino had killed a fer-de-lance, a poisonous snake, sunning itself on the river bank. Our other guide Moises had taken off barefoot in pursuit of huangana (wild pig, a delicacy) but returned without having had any hunter's luck.

Cont'd page 4

Cont'd from page 3

The two nights we spent so far from civilization had been exciting and scary. Unfamiliar tropical birds entertained us with their songs. Ominous noises during the night made us wonder if a jaguar or tapir was paying our camp a visit. The oppressive heat left us soaked with sweat in our tents. The air smelled of decaying plants. Our guides' expertise and reassurances calmed our fears and we were able to enjoy the magic of the tropical rainforest with all its sounds, smells, and vegetation. On the way back we found a Mata Mata turtle hiding in the river which Moises had caught to bring back as a gift to Don Ramon, the Jivaro shaman who lived along the Tahuayo River and who kindly had loaned us one of his canoes. Looking at these Mata Matas in their cage now, vivid memories of that long ago camping adventure come back to me.

In the next display I spot an anaconda resting among leaves and small branches. Its light tan color with dark brown patterns blends in perfectly with its surroundings. This snake is probably only about six feet long, but I have seen a few measuring more than 20 feet. They are constrictors and swallow their prey alive. During the high water season, chickens and ducks are an easy lunch to catch and the villagers take elaborate precautions to protect their animals by trying to keep them in their pens and being very vigilant at all times.

A few years ago on a rainy afternoon I was reading in my hammock in our house in the jungle when my friend Felicita came running from the village looking for her son Alejandro. He was the caretaker of our house and was chopping wood for cooking. Felicita called to him, "Hijo! Hijo! (son). Come, quick! An anaconda got one of my chickens! None of the men are in the village, come help me! The anaconda is starting to eat it!"

Alejandro dropped his hatchet, grabbed his machete, and took off followed by his lamenting mother. I hurried to find my camera and followed them. When I got to the village a few minutes later, Alejandro had already rescued the chicken which had taken off into the bushes cackling in terror. He had pinned down the snake with a piece of wood and was waiting for me to take pictures. When I was done and had put my camera away, Alejandro asked: "Now can I kill it?"



He knew I did not like to see animals being killed, but if he let the snake go, it would come back for more chickens. I nodded and turned away while he dispatched the snake with his machete.

Next to the anaconda I see a small tank with red bellied piranhas. These harmless looking small fish have a worldwide reputation for vicious attacks. Both can be true. Their teeth are razor sharp which some villagers use in place of scissors to cut hair.

When we had friends or tourists staying with us in our house in the jungle, we often delighted in impressing our



guests by swimming in the river with a carefree attitude. Back on the boat dock, we would throw some meat or a piece of fish in the water and watch our guests' eyes get bigger and

bigger when piranhas appeared instantly to fight for the meat. Anything with blood will attract them. I remember once when a woman from the village was cleaning a fish on her boat dock. When she rinsed it in the river, the piranhas appeared in a second, grabbed the fish in her hand, and bit off a chunk of her finger.

In a corner pool nearby several stingrays are swimming among rocks and logs. They look elegant as they gracefully flip their flat bodies around the obstacles in the pool. Their triangular shape and long skinny tail makes them look harmless, but anyone who has ever been stung by a stingray will tell you otherwise.

I remember an incident during one summer when the water in the river was very low. My son Mark and I were hosting a group of tourists in our house. One afternoon we had gone to the mouth of the Yarapa River which feeds into the Amazon to explore the river banks and to swim. Randy, a teacher from California, was wading through shallow waters when she started to scream, "Help! Help! Something bit my foot! What is it? It hurts!"



Immediately our driver started the boat motor and picked her up, the rest of us scrambled into the boat as quickly as possible.

Randy was holding her foot and she was obviously in excruciating pain. Nearby fishermen had watched and called to us, "We saw a stingray earlier in that same spot. The senora was probably stung by it. Get her home quickly, those stings are very painful."

Randy was pale from the pain but she was a trooper and did not cry. Our guide Alejandro lit a cigarette and held it close to the spot on her foot where she had been stung. The application of heat reduces the pain of the sting, he told us. Our boat driver Abencio put the throttle to full speed. When we arrived at the house 20 minutes later, Alejandro ran to alert the cook and helper while a couple of guys carried Randy to the house. Moments later Alejandro had prepared a can with a chunk of termites' nest and various medicinal herbs. He lit the concoction and when it started to smolder, he positioned Randy's foot

Cont'd page 6

Cont'd from page 1

It soon became apparent that better control was badly needed. The Planning Department and the Planning Commission started to expect, occasionally even demand, public amenities from the developers. Developers in turn realized that this would make their projects more marketable, not to mention more likely to be approved by the city.

In the 1980s a change took place in the public's attitude toward outdoor dining. It became fashionable, rather than being considered unsanitary and thus banned. Thank you Starbucks for the introduction of outdoor seating for coffee and food!

The 1985 Downtown Plan is a document that guides the development of the downtown area. Eva Liebermann and George Williams of SPUR conducted a survey of POPOS last summer (2008) to determine provisions like sunlight exposure, seating, hours of operation, food availability, etc. in pre- as well as post- 1985 open spaces.

The oldest such place is the Crown Zellerbach Building, now One Bush Plaza (Bush/Sansome & Market). It was designed as a "tower in the park" set within a sunken plaza. The space is nice to look at but totally user unfriendly; there is no place to sit and relax. On the other hand, the Transamerica Pyramid (Washington & Montgomery) open space invites people to sit and relax under the redwoods. There are seats, art and nearby one can find a variety of food vendors.

The survey found that 45 pre-1985 spaces north as well as south of Market Street existed. Since the adoption of the Downtown Plan a total of 16 office buildings have made 23 POPOS available, mostly south of Market where most new development has taken place in recent years. Since a majority of office workers have only a 30-minute lunch break, the proximity to work, food and seating is very important. The rarity of sunny days in San Francisco makes sunny and wind-sheltered areas desirable.

Adequate signs enable office workers, residents and visitors to easily find these spaces. SPUR has designed a plaque and hopes that all building owners will eventually place one at eye-level and visible from the public sidewalk. They would prefer the size to be at least 21 inches by 21 inches.

Following is a list of some of the best POPOS:

Redwood Park (Transamerica Pyramid),
Empire Park (Clay Street near Commercial Street),
Embarcadero Center pedestrian walkway,
Sky terrace on the 15th floor of 343 Sansome Street (look for the designation on the building.)

Greenhouse at 101 Second Street (five story lobby with café tables and chairs, granite benches, a large painting by Charles Arnoldi and a sculpture by Larry Bell)

Plaza at 555 Mission Street (sculptures, benches, and blooming groundcover)

Urban Garden at 560

Mission Street (bamboo is planted along a windowless wall facing two delis; the kinetic sculpture by George Rickey completes the picture)

The space is accessible from Mission and from Jessie Street.

Crocker Galleria and the sun terrace atop the Wells Fargo Bank (Bush/Montgomery & Market Streets).



Undoubtedly, a walking tour would be a good way to explore some of these public spaces.



**Be sure to look for Deborah Huth's
"Crime Tour" article on our website:
sftgg.org – Info Center, scroll down to
past programs.**

Cont'd from page 4

above it, her leg rested on a stool. Our cook Eloisa had run into the forest and soon returned with a piece of bark from a remo caspi tree to make a soothing tea for Randy. Abencio had gotten his flute to play calming songs. In less than an hour the pain was gone and Randy could walk without discomfort.

The hot smoke had destroyed the poisonous enzymes the stingray had injected into Randy's foot causing the pain. The tea and flute music kept her relaxed and calm during her "recovery" and no western treatment was necessary. There were only happy, smiling faces around the dinner table that night. What an amazing recovery!

Finally I reach the small tank with the electric eel. Like all the other electric eels I have seen in the wild, this one looks bald and slimy, the clay colored body blending in with its surroundings. Only around the square mouth and eyes is a hint of pink. Electric eels catch their prey by zapping it with several hundred volts of electricity, immobilizing the victim. As I observe the eel, my mind wanders back to a rainy day on the Yarapa River several years ago.

With my guide at my side I had gone camping in the rainforest behind the village before returning to the United States. My friend Felicita had suggested this outing, saying,

"You wanted to go camping in the jungle and if you don't go soon, you may not have another chance during this visit. Alejandro will take you today after breakfast. Christiane, get ready! You want to go, don't you?"

We will continue this story in the next issue.



The academy is open: 9:30-5 Monday through Saturday; 11-5 pm Sunday; Admission: \$24.95 adults, \$19.95 ages 12-17 and seniors (65+); \$14.95 ages 7-11 Free admission every third Wednesday of the month.

We want to thank Audrey Hulburd for generously allowing us to use her drawings for the Guidepost. Audrey was the editor in previous years.

We will include some of these drawings from time to time.



MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD



Michael Stortz, Certification, has been a SFTGG member since 1994. This is his third time to serve on the board. He is looking forward to increasing the number of SFTGG certified guides in 2009.



Michael Purcell, Public Relations, is a native California, who grew up in the Napa Valley. Before retiring and becoming a guide, he worked as photographer, film editor and cameraman and writer for World News Tonight and 20-20.



Anita Rao, Programs, has been involved in tourism one way or another in different areas of the world. When not working as a paid Bay Area guide, she volunteers as City Guide (Mission District) and docent at the Chinese Cultural Center.



Beth Graubart, Secretary, has been a member since 2005. She leads San Francisco Movie Tours, All About Chinatown Tours as well as San Francisco Gourmet Walks.

WANTED! Member Contributions!

The **Guidepost** has changed over the 24 years of its existence. It's not just because of the different people involved in creating it, but because of the different role it plays in the life of the Guild.

Initially conceived as a newsletter, it has lost this role to the internet. If there is something new of importance to many of us, why should we have to wait three months before we can read it in the **Guidepost**? With this in mind, the current editorial board seeks contributions from members dealing with subjects of longer lasting interest, something that supplements our knowledge and awareness of the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Guild puts on a large variety of programs to further the continuing education of its members, whether they are brand new or long experienced. Whereas reports of these programs are generally posted on the Guild's website as a valuable record of past activities, occasionally such a report is printed in the **Guidepost** because of its particular subject matter, in-depth research or other unusual features.

So, gather up your thoughts, put pen to paper and send us your masterpiece!

(If you want to first bounce your idea off the editorial board, feel free to call any of us)

=====

SFTGG PROGRAMS

February 26 **Mission District Walk**
10 – 12:30 Spot: Women’s Building @ 3548 18th Street, Main Entrance
 \$10, payable to SFTGG to be sent to Anita Rao, P.O. Box, Oakland, CA 94604

February 19 Study Session for upcoming certification test (6-8 pm)
March 04 **Certification Test** (6-8 pm)
Where: Parish Hall, St. Mary’s Cathedral

Contact Michael Stortz for details at 415-826-4902 – mssftgs@msn.com

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

If you do not have access to a computer, call:
Program Chair Person Anita Rao at 415-336-1998 - anitarao33@aol.com
or Don deLaura at 925-373-9005 – tangerine.travel@sbcglobal.net

S A N
FRANCISCO
T O U R
GUIDE
GUILD
PO Box 170610
San Francisco, CA
94117-0610

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. Is there any truth to the story that when Leland and Jane Stanford went to the University of California (or Harvard, depending on the version) to offer to donate money in memory of their son, they were laughed out of the office because they were dressed as country folk and not recognized as multi-millionaires, and therefore decided to found their own university?

We've heard this story several times, but have assumed it must be false. After all, by the time the Stanfords decided to honor their late son by giving money for education, Leland Stanford had already been governor of California and driven the Golden Spike to complete the transcontinental railroad, which was a major media event of its time.

Still, legends often have some basis in fact, but here's the answer, from Stanford's website:

The Stanfords "had one son, who died of typhoid fever in 1884 when the family was traveling in Italy. Leland Jr. was just 15. Legend has it that the grieving couple said to one another after their son's death, 'the children of California shall be our children,' and they quickly set about to find a lasting way to memorialize their beloved son.

"The Stanfords visited several great universities of the East to gather ideas. An urban legend, widely circulated on the Internet *but untrue* [emphasis added], describes the couple as poorly-dressed country bumpkins who decided to found their own university only after being rebuffed in their offer to endow a building at Harvard. They did visit Harvard's president but were well-received and given advice on starting a new university in California."

According to Stanford archivist Margaret Kimball, as quoted in 1998 on the Harvard website:

"A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, and walked timidly without an

appointment into the Harvard University president's outer office...

"This story ... claims that in the 1880's, Harvard's President Charles Eliot dismissed the fabulously wealthy but poorly dressed Leland Stanford and his wife without realizing they were offering a large endowment to the University as a memorial to their deceased son.

"The thought of Leland and Jane, by this time quite wealthy, arriving at Harvard in a faded gingham dress and homespun threadbare suit is quite entertaining. And, as a former governor of California and well-known railroad baron, I suspect they were not knowingly kept waiting for too long outside Eliot's office," Kimball wrote.

In a recent personal email (November 2008), Kimball added, "Well it does seem despite best efforts the story won't die. Thanks to research one of my staff did, we speculate that the story started thanks to Charles Eliot's son. Years later he was apparently at a dinner party and told the story of the Stanfords' visit to see his father, no doubt from his father's perspective and with his own embellishments."

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 go home?

The simple answer is "yes," but of course reality isn't so simple. Frederick Law Olmsted, the most respected landscape architect of the 19th century, co-designer of Central Park in New York, was in California in the 1860s, first as manager of John Fremont's Mariposa property near Yosemite and then as one of the first commissioners of the Yosemite Grant, established by Abraham Lincoln in 1864.

According to *The Story of Golden Gate Park* (Guy & Helen Giffen, 1949), Mayor McCoppin [mayor from 1867-69] "persuaded the Board of Supervisors to seek the advice of Frederick Law Olmsted... Olmsted came to San Francisco and conducted a survey of possible park locations."

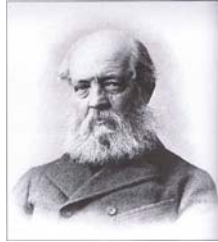
A park among the dunes in the "Outside Lands" west of the city was being considered, but Olmsted thought it was a bad idea. In *The Making of Golden Gate Park – The Early Years: 1865-1906* (Raymond H. Clary, 1980), Clary gives credit to Olmsted's assignment to Mayor McCoppin's predecessor, "[Olmsted] was engaged by Mayor HP Coon [mayor from 1863-67] to report on the subject of a possible park for San Francisco. His report was widely quoted in nearly all of the local newspapers. He was of the opinion that parks with trees and shrubs were out of the question for San Francisco...



“The Municipal Record of 1865-66 quoted Olmsted ‘It must, I believe, be acknowledged, that, neither in beauty of greensward nor in great umbrageous trees, do these special conditions of the topography, soil and climate of San Francisco allow us to hope that any pleasure ground it can acquire will ever compare in the most distant degree to those of New York or London.

‘There is not a full-grown tree of beautiful proportions near San Francisco, nor have I seen any young trees that promised fairly, except perhaps, of certain compact, clumpy forms of evergreens, wholly wanting in grace and cheerfulness.

‘It would not be wise nor safe to undertake to form a park upon any plan which assumed as a certainty that trees which would delight the eye can be made to grow near San Francisco.’”



Instead, according to *The Story of Golden Gate Park*, he proposed a park on a piece of land located approximately between today’s Civic Center and Alamo Square. He noted this area was sheltered and so plants could stay green in summer.

Happily, his opinion did not carry the day, and eleven years later, in 1876, he admitted his error and wrote to Golden Gate Park’s first Superintendent, William Hammond Hall, that “I do not doubt that [your undertaking] will be rewarded with results such as I have not hitherto thought reasonable to expect under the circumstances.”

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?

People often see the word and assume it is French, and so pronounce the last syllable the same as “Taj” as in Taj Mahal. However, that is incorrect. Meritage is an invented word, combining “merit” and “heritage,” so it should rhyme with heritage.

Traditionally in the U.S., wines are named after the variety of grape, e.g., chardonnay. If a wine contains less than 75% of a particular variety it cannot use the varietal name and must be called something else, e.g., “red table wine.” In the U.S. these blended wines have often been poor quality.

However, in France wines are not named after the varietal but rather the region in which they are produced. Legally, only certain grapes can be grown in a particular region, and the wine will contain some blend of those grapes. Some of the best (and most expensive) wines in the world are blended red wines from the Bordeaux

region. These will contain some blend of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, malbec and petite verdot.

In 1988, about two dozen American producers of high quality, blended red wines in the Bordeaux style joined together and created the Meritage Association to try to convince Americans that blended wines can be good. Napa’s Mitch Cosentino (Cosentino Winery), Agustin Huneeus (then at Franciscan, now owner of Quintessa) and Julie Garvey (Flora Springs Winery) helped found the new organization.

Since a key factor that influences wine is the soil and weather conditions where the grapes are grown (the *terroir*), it is not appropriate to use place names unrelated to the actual growing location. Therefore, to call a California wine a “Bordeaux” is not good. Thus, the new organization sponsored a contest to create a name for these American wines in the Bordeaux style. There were more than 6,000 entries, and the winner was “Meritage,” combining merit and heritage.

If a winery calls its wine Meritage it must send \$1 for each case sold (up to \$500) to the Meritage Association. Many wineries prefer to make up their own names for their version of a Meritage wine, so it is now quite common to see wines with invented names.

Sources:

- The Meritage Association (www.meritagewine.org)
- Exhibits at Franciscan Winery
- The SFTGG Study Guide



New questions:

1. What percentage of San Francisco’s population is gay and lesbian?



2. Is there any connection between the Pepperidge Farm Sausalito cookie and Sausalito, California?

3. Did Andrew Hallidie really see a horse dragged down a hill by a runaway wagon on a rainy day and therefore decide to create a better way to transport people on hills?