

THE MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Richmond Museum of History

Fall, 2015

SS Red Oak Victory Ship

LOST WPA RICHMOND MURAL FOUND AFTER 40 YEARS

Call it Indiana Jones meets the WPA. This week, an historic piece of Richmond's cultural heritage by noted artist Victor Arnautoff, a protégé of Diego Rivera, thought lost to the ages, will be carefully unrolled at the Richmond Museum of History (www.richmondmuseum.org). Rediscovered earlier this month, the mural portraying pre-WWII Richmond will undergo several months of delicate restoration following almost 40 years under wraps. For decades prominently displayed in the main branch of the Richmond Post Office, the mural was packed away in 1976 by Nathan Zakheim, son of artist Bernard Zakheim, a friend and colleague of both Arnautoff and Rivera, and then forgotten.

"This is a proud moment for Richmond," said Beth Javens, Executive Director of the Richmond Convention & Visitors Bureau, who has been working behind the scenes to secure the mural's restoration and re-exhibition. "This is exactly the sort of project we were designed to support, highlight and celebrate. Our hats are off to the Richmond Museum and everyone involved in this effort."

The latest chapter in the mural's history began in October 2014 when Richmond Museum of History Director Melinda McCrary was chatting with Fran Cappelletti, volunteer librarian for the Ross Historical Society. Cappelletti, originally from Richmond and a self-described "huge WPA era art enthusiast," told McCrary about a mural, supposedly by "a famous artist" and now lost, that used to grace the walls of the Richmond Post Office.

McCrary got in touch with the former Richmond postmaster, Al Martinez, who in turn put her in touch with a janitor, Earic Bohanon, who worked at the post office.

"Earic went poking around the basement and found a huge crate in a room with no lights," says McCrary. "The crate

was clearly marked as the mural packed by Nathan Zakheim in October 1976."

"The United States Postal Service is extremely proud to be able to make this piece of history available to the people of Richmond," said Augustine 'Gus' Ruiz from the USPS. After its restoration, the mural will be on long-term loan to the Richmond Museum of History.

Arnautoff, who was on the faculty at Stanford and worked under Diego Rivera, was also a primary artist on San Francisco's Coit Tower, internationally famed for its priceless WPA-era murals.

An interesting and moving side-note to this story was the friendship between Arnautoff and his fellow artist, Bernard Zakheim. In the 1920s, Zakheim escaped anti-Jewish discrimination in Poland and immigrated to San Francisco where he eventually found work, along with Arnautoff and Rivera, on the Coit Tower project.

"Zakheim begged his family to join him," says McCrary. "However, they refused. All of them were killed during the Holocaust. To find out that Zakheim's son, Nathan, was the person who helped save this piece of history was incredibly moving."

"My motto for the museum is a 'Proud Past and Proud Present for a Proud Future,'" said McCrary. "This mural is yet another example of our mission because it shows that extraordinary things can be accomplished by ordinary people right here where we live."

Restoration of the mural is expected to take several months with McCrary hoping to display the artwork by year's end.

Thanks to the Richmond Convention & Visitors Bureau for permission to reprint this article.



Detail of *Richmond-The Industrial City*

FROM THE DIRECTOR

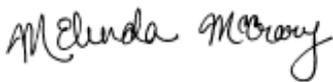
Dear Friends:

The Richmond Museum Association has had quite a busy summer forging new relationships with partners with whom we look forward to a fruitful collaboration. The board, staff and volunteers of the RMA are delighted to welcome R&B Cellars and the Rigger's Loft Wine Company to the Port of Richmond! The winery is located in the historic Rigger's Loft and Paint Shop, one of the original buildings that comprised the Kaiser Richmond Shipyard #3. All of us at the RMA are so excited for the new opportunities a winery will bring to the Port of Richmond, including a whole new audience that can learn about the *SS Red Oak Victory*. The winery also means the *Red Oak* will be moving. We view the move as a small loss for a larger gain. The ship will lose her great view of the bay, but she will gain a new and larger audience as people pass her to visit the winery.

The RMA recently welcomed an international delegation from Geoje City, South Korea, who share our love of all things Victory Ships. South Korea's interest in Victory Ships stems from the *SS Meredith Victory* which rescued thousands of refugees during the Korean conflict. Geoje City Mayor Kwon Min-Ho along with members of the Geoje City Council visited Richmond for two days in August. The delegation had a phone meeting with Mayor Tom Butt and attended a formal meeting at City Hall with members of the Mayor's staff, City employees, and City Council members Eduardo Martinez and Nat Bates. The visit culminated with a dinner reception at Salute e Vita Ristorante attended by RMA Board Vice President Jeff Wright, me, and all the aforementioned local dignitaries. We are so excited for the possibilities this new partnership might bring for the people of Richmond and the people of Geoje City.

Building new partnerships, such as that with R&B Cellars and the people of Geoje City, are critical for the organization at this time because one thing we have learned from the trials of the last few years is that Richmond Museum Association cannot grow and prosper without partnerships with other organizations. It is an exciting time to be a part of the Richmond Museum Association and I look forward to building more relationships that will allow us to expand our capacity and programming.

Best Wishes,



Melinda McCrary

WWII MOVIES ON THE *RED OAK*

The popular series of WW II-era movies continues on the Third Thursdays of each month on the *Red Oak Victory*, hosted by Ranger Craig Riordan of the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park.

The Fall 2015 theme is "Lasting Images of World War II." Movies begin at 7 p.m. with boarding from 6:30 p.m. A donation of \$10/person for the maintenance and preservation of the Ship is requested, and refreshments are available for a small fee.

Oct 15th	Stalag 17 (1953) William Holden
Nov 19th	Paradise Road (1997) Glenn Close
Dec 17th	Hope and Glory (1987) Sebastian Rice-Edwards

IN THE GALLERY

"Music: A reflection of Richmond and Richmond Day at the Panama Pacific International Exposition" will be on view at the Richmond Museum of History through December 31, 2015. Both exhibits are included with general admission of \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors/students, and kids under 12 are free. Members of the Richmond Museum Assoc. always have have free admission.

"Walking in Two Worlds," a documentary about Native American youth, will be screened at the Richmond Museum of History on Saturday, November 14, 2015. The screening will be preceded by a consultation meeting that will solicit comments and concerns from the community regarding the pending Native American exhibit in Richmond. The program is co-sponsored by the Richmond Native American Health Center and the Richmond Museum Association in celebration of Native American Heritage Month. The program is free with general admission of \$5 for adults, \$3 for senior citizens and students; kids under 12 are free.

While you are in the gallery, please consider participating in the pre-exhibit evaluation program while we plan the new Native American exhibit. Several large sheets of paper hanging in the upstairs permanent gallery pose several questions regarding your knowledge of Native peoples in Richmond and what you want to know about them. Your participation will help us design a better exhibit!

Join the Richmond Museum Association on social media! We are on Facebook under Richmond Museum of History and SS Red Oak Victory (2 separate pages). We are also on twitter @richmondhistory

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Ziesenhenn, President of the Board

Hello, Richmond Museum lovers. I hope you have had a great summer. The Museum has been a busy place. To start with, we have a new exciting logo thanks to long-time Museum member and graphic designer, Jan Brown of Spokewise. The new design incorporates the front columns on the Carnegie building and the bow of the *Red Oak Victory*—very cool. Thanks, Jan!

Board Member and Kaiser Historian Steve Gilford has started a speaker series on the *Red Oak* called “**Above, Below and In the San Francisco Bay.**” The first speaker in the series was Alan Olson, Executive Director of Educational Tall Ships, who has over 50 years of maritime experience. He was an excellent speaker. Check out the RMA website for the dates of our upcoming speakers for our “**Above, Below and In the San Francisco Bay.**” You will be entertained and educated all at the same time.

In May, the crew began the task of getting the *Red Oak* ready for its move to the Port of Richmond's Basin Five. It is not a long voyage, only about 800 feet, but the Ship has to be prepared just as if we were sailing to Honolulu. When Basin 5 is ready for us (immediately west of the Riggers Loft Winery), we will move there, thanks to our good friends at Foss Maritime. A Big Thank You to volunteer Cliff Warren for leading the move of the *Red Oak* and also to Board member Marsha Tomassi. Both volunteers attend bi-weekly meetings with the Mayor's Office and the Port of Richmond to keep the move on schedule.

The July 3rd BBQ and Fireworks show was another success. The 150 guests on the *Red Oak* were treated to a delicious meal, tours of the ship, beautiful views of San Francisco that we take for granted and a special fireworks show sponsored by the City of Richmond. Everyone in attendance had a great time. If you have not attended this event, please put it on your calendar as it sells out each year.

The City of Richmond, through the Community Block Grant Program, awarded the Richmond Museum Association, through the leadership of Melinda McCrary, a grant for \$70,000. The grant will allow us to replace the carpet in the Main Gallery with hardwood flooring. What a wonderful upgrade this is for our beautiful Carnegie building. As you can imagine, the Museum will be closed for a short time while the work is being done. We will notify you when the new floor is in, and we might even have a little celebration.

The Coast Guard granted the *Red Oak* its Certificate of Inspection on Sept 1st. This is very good news, as it allows us to continue welcoming guests on the *Red Oak* knowing that they will be in a safe environment along with our volunteer crew. Many, many hours were dedicated by the crew to prepare for this important inspection, and the hard work paid off. Thank

Continued to the right at President

RONNIE SCHELL RISES AGAIN

Hometown comedian and TV star Ronnie Schell returned to Richmond on Sunday, April 26th, to raise money for the Richmond Museum of History. Ronnie brought three of his funny friends, Will Durst, David Gee and Kivi Rogers, from Las Vegas to fill the comedy bill. There were two shows at the Topline Theatre at Marina Bay and both audiences had a great time watching a two-hour comedy show that included a short movie of Ronnie's TV clips ranging from an appearance on Groucho Marx to one on Johnny Carson's Tonight Show.

Lifelong resident Greg Montano, who bought tickets to the evening show with his family, said, “It was great to see Ronnie performing in person in his hometown. I remember watching him on Gomer Pyle. It was a first-class comedy show.”

During the show, Ronnie said “It was great to be back in Richmond performing before my schoolmates from Grant School and Richmond High.” Many who attended the afternoon show were long-time friends of the comedian, and they were proud to see him on stage. The last time Ronnie performed in Richmond was in 1981 as a benefit for Brookside Hospital.

There was a brief intermission during each show where people could talk with the performers as well as enjoy snacks and refreshments. The Topline Theatre is a wonderful venue that everyone enjoyed. The Richmond Museum Association thanks Ronnie, Will Durst, David Gee and Kivi Rogers for donating their time and talent for the benefit of the RMA. The performances will certainly be remembered and appreciated for years to come.



ATTENTION ACTIVE AND RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES: The Richmond Museum Association (RMA) is an approved charity through the NorCal Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Please use the **CFC Code #18312** to designate your donation to the RMA. What is the CFC? It is a program that allows Federal Employees to conveniently donate funds to approved charities throughout the United States.

President

you to Dee Davison for her continued leadership and her work with the Coast Guard to assure passing grades on these inspections.

Thank you very much for your Museum membership. Please stop by the Museum and the *Red Oak Victory* to see our great history. We appreciate your support and would not be successful without you!

ITEMS NOT ON DISPLAY

SPENCER'S BOTTLE

by Lynn Maack



Here is a strange and mysterious item—it's a small, glass bottle from a Richmond business called Spencer's that was located at 408 Macdonald Avenue. That may not sound strange, but this bottle is covered with what appears to be wood or bark. That's strange.

Richmond city directories reveal that Spencer's was a saloon owned by Frank N. Spencer from 1914 to 1918. The saloon may have operated in 1919, but since neither the Museum nor the Richmond

Library has a directory for that year, we can't say for sure. In any case, Spencer's does not appear in the 1920 directory or later. It is likely that Prohibition, which began in 1920, ended the saloon's life.

The bottle, including its unique covering, is about 7-1/8" tall to the top of the cap, 3-1/4" wide and 1-3/4" deep. The volume is probably about one cup, more or less. The bottle's size, and its origin, might lead one to believe that it's a liquor flask. It would not have been a traditional hip flask, since it does not have a concave side. Nor would it have been conveniently accessible from a coat pocket; the very rough coating would have made it difficult to slide the bottle in and out. It may have been simply a novelty item given away as an advertiser for the saloon. Sitting on a shelf, it certainly would have made an interesting conversation piece.



The bottle's covering is what makes this item mysterious—how was it made and applied? It appears as if the bottle had grown inside a tree trunk or branch. Two knots from flush-cut branches on the front add to its genuine wood look. Even the metal cap is completely covered. There are no visible seams that would suggest

that bark had been sliced off a tree and applied as a wrap. However, at the base of the bottle and in other spots, there are vertical striations that appear to be wood grain. Could it be real



wood? Perhaps wood and bark were somehow emulsified and applied as a coating. The smooth transition of the coating from the shoulder to the neck of the

bottle suggests use of that type of process. Also, the almost-smooth opening around the label, which is attached directly to the bottle, lends support to the paste-on method. Or maybe the coating is made of some other material to look like wood. Regardless of the method, the finished product is well-done and a real eye-catcher. Strange, yes, but Spencer's bottle is a wonderful artifact from Richmond's past.

The bottle was donated in 1959 by Mrs. George Erskine of Richmond.

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THE GOINGS-ON ON THE RED OAK

Just this year there have been performances, weddings, conferences, classes and celebrations of birthdays and anniversaries on the decks of the *Red Oak Victory Ship* and in the holds below.

What a great place to host your own celebration! Your family and friends will never forget your party and you can make arrangements to include tours of the Ship for your guests.

Call Lorraine or Marjorie on the Ship at (510) 237-2933 to discuss using this unique and amazing venue for your next celebration!

Call Melinda at the Museum (510) 235-7387 to talk about holding a meeting or event in the Museum itself.

RED OAK ON THE MOVE

by John Ziesenhenn

The *Red Oak Victory* will be moving to her new moorage in Basin #5 in front of the Shipyard's last remaining Whirly Crane.

As part of getting the Ship ready for the move, the crew is moving the *Red Oak's* restoration materials and equipment to Basin #5 now. In addition to moving equipment and supplies, the crew will be lowering and securing the *Red Oak's* fourteen cargo booms. They will then stow the booms' rigging and running gear for towing. While the dock and deck are being prepared for the move, the Engineering Department will be securing the Ship's propeller and rudder and making sure all gear and equipment on the Ship are secured for the tow.

The move will be planned and the tow executed by Foss Maritime Co. Once the *Red Oak* is ready to be moved, and Basin #5 is ready to receive her, the crew will begin clearing the decks to handle taking up her mooring lines in preparation for the tow. The tow is projected for early January 2016. The *Red Oak* will continue to be a major destination for visitors to the Port of Richmond and the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park.



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MUSEUM WISH LIST

The Museum needs a paper shredder, extension cords, folding chairs, power strips, a photo scanner and hand tools for gardening (claw, clippers, spades, watering bucket).

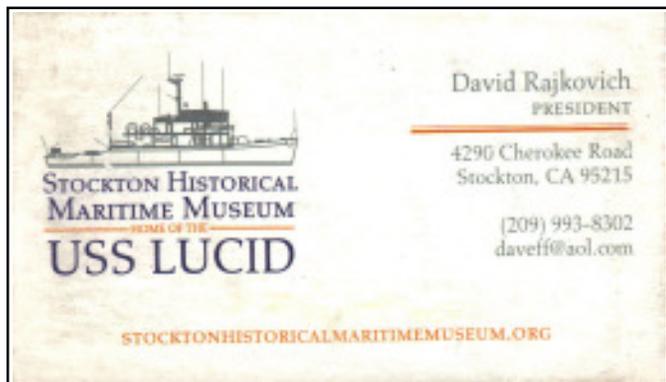
If you can donate these items or contribute toward their purchase, please call the Museum at (510) 235-7387.

RED OAK WISH LIST

Donate wish-list items or send a monetary contribution toward any of these things:

- 6-foot ladder (straight or step-ladder)
- White Christmas lights
- Cree LED light bulbs, 100W, 60W
- Electric griddle – commercial size
- Stand-alone convection oven – commercial
- Rags
- Traffic cones (orange)
- Haze-gray marine paint (approx. \$50/gal.)
(Hempel Coating Co.)
- Hydraulic oil for steering gear
(approx. \$67/5-gal pail)

If you have questions about these items or about how to get them to the Ship, please call the Ship at (510) 237-2933.



RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Phyllis (Peres) Brown

Collection of Nancy Ann Storybook Dolls (1930-1960)

Anonymous

Record, Club Savoy by Jimmy MacCracklin

Richard Giordano

Souvenir Cup, Panama Pacific International Exposition

Richmond Main Street Initiative

Collection of RMSI Event Posters

Estate of Marian (Bryant) Sauer

Significant collection of Richmond-related artifacts from 1902 to the present day, including materials related to Mrs. Sauer's family history and her childhood in Richmond, her time teaching music in the Richmond Unified School District, and her years of volunteering at the Richmond Museum of History.

SOUTH KOREAN DELEGATION VISITS

RED OAK VICTORY SHIP

by Jeff Wright

A delegation from Geoje City, South Korea, led by Mayor Kwon Min Ho, was graciously received by the crew of the *SS Red Oak Victory Ship* on August 25, 2015. The delegation made a special trip to Richmond in order to see the Ship and explore with Richmond Museum Association leadership and City of Richmond officials, including Mayor Tom Butt, ways to share each other's rich history.

During the Korean War, the *SS Meredith Victory Ship* evacuated 14,000 civilian refugees to the safety of Pusan, South Korea, in a single mission. As a result of the very significant role that the Victory Ship played in their history, the South Koreans have a deep respect and appreciation for Victory Ships such as our very own *Red Oak Victory*.

Just as Richmond was once a thriving shipbuilding city during World War II, Geoje, South Korea, is now home to the second and third largest shipbuilders in the world. The visit from the delegation from Geoje provided a wonderful opportunity for the leadership of the RMA and the City of Richmond to meet the Geoje officials and begin a dialogue about collaborating in the future.

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- ___ \$500 **Barrett Ave** -- Benefits above & exclusive tour & luncheon with museum curator & ship captain
- ___ \$1000 **Macdonald Ave** --Benefits above & two tickets on The Red Oak "Sail-on-the-Bay"
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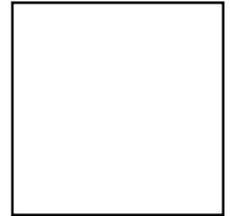
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Red Oak Victory Ship

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