

THE MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Richmond Museum of History & Culture

Summer 2020

SS Red Oak Victory

REMAINING CLOSED TEMPORARILY: THE RICHMOND MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND CULTURE AND THE SS *RED OAK* VICTORY SHIP

In accordance with Contra Costa Health Services order, both the Museum and the *Red Oak Victory* ship will remain closed for the foreseeable future. We have been busy behind the scenes preparing to reopen, and we hope to be able to reopen soon. Even more behind-the-scenes activity is detailed in these pages. Read on.

THE MUSEUM AWARDED \$25K EDUCATION GRANT

The Economic and Community Investment Agreement (ECIA) between the City of Richmond and Chevron provides grants to qualified community organizations on an annual basis. The Richmond Museum of History & Culture was awarded \$25,000 for the 2020/2021 fiscal year for our K-12 education program. We submitted the initial application prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and requested support for our popular student field trip program. The epidemic precludes a robust in-person field trip program so the grant project was changed to support distance learning. We are grateful for this award; it is through grants such as this that we are able to provide educational opportunities to our youth.

THE *RED OAK VICTORY'S* BIG SCORE!

Here's some behind-the-scenes activity that will result in an exciting new exhibit on the Ship. Through prodigious crew effort, many logistical challenges and a lot of generosity from Gary Ghilotti of **Maggiore-Ghilotti, Inc.**, of San Rafael and **Bragg Crane Service** of Richmond, the *Red Oak Victory* has acquired a WWII 5-inch/38 caliber cannon to complete its arsenal of on-deck weapons. Well, that's not entirely true — we still need six more 20mm anti-aircraft guns, but when added to the two 20mms on the aft-house and the 3-inch/50 caliber gun at the bow, the 5-inch gun means we now have all three types of guns originally onboard during WWII. Huge thanks go to Gary Ghilotti for helping to make this a reality. Read more about it on page 4.



Gary Ghilotti directing his crew on the morning of July 8 at Treasure Island. The 5" gun, complete with "Dumbo" graffiti, is seen next to his right hand. Without Gary's generosity, the Red Oak Victory would not have been able to acquire this gun. Photo by Dori Luzbetak.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Lynn Maack

I was hoping to report the reopening of the Museum and the Ship, but, alas, that is not to be, at least for the foreseeable future. Instead, and unfortunately, yet probably wisely in light of the recent spike in COVID-19 positive cases, Contra Costa Health Services has ordered us closed until further notice.

Also unfortunate is the divisiveness and racial unrest fomenting in the country. The divisiveness has been growing, as has racial unrest, which is like volcanic action, with magma beneath the earth seething from the weight of pressure from above. Eventually, the pressure mounts to cause a break in the earth, and the magma rises to the surface and flows out, making its presence known in very certain terms. We are seeing that outpouring in cities around the country as African Americans and people of all colors demonstrate for racial equality. The RMA hopes that the fight for racial equality succeeds and that the divisiveness which is at the root of the problem becomes less pervasive and we can all work together as a society.

The way the RMA and any museum can contribute to the fight for racial equality is through exhibits and events that highlight societal and cultural struggles. These struggles are our history, like it or not, and the Richmond Museum of History and Culture has for several years been inclusive in presenting that history to the public. For example, in 2016, the Museum mounted an exhibit entitled, *"The Black Panther Party in Richmond."* That exhibit highlighted the struggles of African Americans in Richmond, the surrounding area and the country and attracted more visitors and acclaim than any previous exhibits at our Museum.

In 2019, *"Jews in Richmond,"* another well-attended and well-received exhibit, chronicled the Jewish experience in Richmond since its beginnings in the early 1900s. And the Museum has hosted a *"Dia de los Muertos"* interactive arts-and-crafts fair each year for several years, bringing in the LatinX community.

We intend to present more of these types of exhibits and events in the future. It is unfortunate that our latest exhibit, *"Between Two Worlds: Untold Stories of Refugees from Laos,"* has been closed for most of its scheduled run due to COVID-19 precautions. Beautifully-curated by the Center for Lao Studies in San Francisco, this exhibit gives insight into the struggles and progress of the Lao people from their history through several centuries in Asia to the emigration of some to the United States, including Richmond, post-Vietnam war. Perhaps we will be able to bring this exhibit back when we reopen.

It is through exhibits and events such as these that we can help to bring about knowledge and change. Education is the key. Present the stories, stimulate thought, create dialogue, and change will happen.

Stay healthy, folks.

"AN EXPLORATION OF OUR HISTORY" ONLINE EXHIBIT

In the early 2000s, acclaimed filmmaker Doug Harris created the award-winning series *"An Exploration of Our History"* with teens in North Richmond. Harris' work was slated to be the subject of an exhibition at the Museum in spring 2020, but was halted due to the COVID 19 epidemic. So he did the next best thing and created an online exhibition that is scheduled to debut in summer 2020. The Museum is supporting the online exhibit with advertising and promotion. We still hope to hold the in-person exhibit at the Museum when it is once again safe to gather.

The Documentary Photo Exhibit is a selection of photographs and video clips from the award-winning four-part *"An Exploration of Our History"* documentary series that chronicled the history of the North Richmond community from a socio-economic perspective. The documentaries were produced by teens to chronicle and preserve the rich history of their West Contra Costa County community. The exhibit will be available online at www.dougharrismedia.com/exhibit.

Photos for the documentary films were furnished by the Richmond Public Library, Contra Costa County Library, Contra Costa County Historical Society and several community residents who were interviewed for the series of films. The documentary exhibit was made possible through support from the Richmond Arts & Culture Commission.

The project was conducted through the Digital Technology Academy, a media arts program for teens in partnership with Contra Costa County, City of Richmond, the California Endowment, and Athletes United for Peace. Select segments from *"An Exploration of Our History"* film series are available to be viewed on Doug Harris' YouTube Channel.

RMHC IS HIRING!

The Museum is hiring a part-time/on-call museum educator! The City of Richmond awarded the Museum a grant through the Economic and Community Investment Agreement for the K-12 education program. In light of COVID-19, the Museum will be building an online education program with a series of short videos and virtual museum visits. Successful candidates will possess a Bachelor's Degree in education, history, art, anthropology or related field. Coursework in Museum Studies is preferred. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) are strongly encouraged to apply.

Please send a letter of interest and résumé with three references in pdf format to melinda@richmondmuseum.org.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

I hope this note finds you and your loved ones well during this time of uncertainty and change. The Richmond Museum of History and Culture (RMHC) has been closed to the public since March 16, 2020, in adherence to the shelter-in-place order from the Contra Costa Health Services Department. We hope to reopen the galleries as soon as the health department deems it safe.

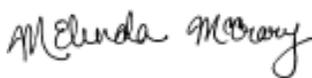
Our nation and community are facing mounting personal, economic and social challenges on dual fronts, including the COVID-19 epidemic and the struggle to adequately grapple with continued inequality present in the United States. Museums and cultural organizations play a role in how society emerges from these challenges. My personal pledge to the community of Richmond is to listen more, be more inclusive in hiring and representative in programming.

Recently the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) held a webinar entitled *Racism, Unrest and the Role of the Museum Field*, hosted by Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole, Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III, and Lori Fogarty.* The AAM is the premier professional association dedicated to furthering the Museum field in the United States. Secretary Bunch states, in effect, that good museums define reality and inspire hope. My goal for the RMHC is to embody the qualities espoused by Secretary Bunch and, through culturally-sensitive, thought-provoking exhibits and events, help Richmond emerge a stronger, healthier and more equitable community.

*The video and transcript of the webinar are available for free at <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/06/09/racism-unrest-and-the-role-of-the-museum-field/>

Take care of yourself and others during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Melinda McCrary

MUSEUM WISH LIST

The Museum, like all non-profit organizations, always seeks and greatly appreciates donations, monetary and otherwise. Here is a list of things we need to help us put on exhibits and events to bring you history you can enjoy:

- Face masks (new, unopened)
- Wooden clothes hangers
- Compost
- Legal writing pads
- Unbleached muslin fabric
- Quilt batting

If you can donate these items, contribute to their purchase or volunteer, please email the Museum at info@richmondmuseumofhistory.org, or visit our website, www.richmondmuseum.org and click **DONATE**.

RED OAK WISH LIST:

The *Red Oak Victory* ship needs a lot of attention. We hope you can help. We appreciate all donations, large and small, monetary and otherwise. Here is a list of physical things the Ship needs; some of them are very specific—please visit the Ship's website at (510) 237-2933 to get details:

- Face masks (new, unopened)
- Starboard-side steel hull plate replacement (to donate, email us at info@redoakvictory.us to make arrangements)
- Restore the insulation (lagging) on our high-pressure turbine
- Clean and re-hang the curtains in the Theater
- Upgrade the sound system in the Theater
- Improved lighting for Hold 5
- Replica light shades to replace those lost or broken throughout the Ship
- New hatch-cover canvas for Hold 2
- Spill kit
- Emergency locker with lid, 3' x 4'
- AA batteries
- Seat cushions for the Theater seats
- Safety cones
- Paint, paint, and more paint!

To make a donation, go to the website at www.redoakvictory.us and click the Donate button. This will allow you to give to our "*Fund the Ship for a Day*" campaign and will also give you instructions on how to donate by check or credit card. If you wish more information about any of our on-going programs and how you can help, please email us at info@redoakvictory.us.

Thank you for your help and support for both the Museum and the *Red Oak Victory*!

FROM THE *RED OAK VICTORY* SHIP

by Fred Klink, Marketing Director, Red Oak Victory

Greetings everyone! We hope you are all healthy and safe. We have several pieces of good news to share with you. We were hoping for the best news to be the reopening of the Ship, but, unfortunately, Contra Costa Health Services has postponed the reopening of museums from the planned date of July 1 for at least three weeks.

In the Spring 2020 issue of *The MIRROR*, I asked our friends and fans to donate to our “*Fund the Ship for a Day*” program. Well, I am happy to say that you came through in a big way! From the day we opened the campaign on April 4, to the present, 63 donors have contributed more than \$10,000 in donations. We have no words that are adequate to express our thanks to our donors for their generosity and support. We are still accepting donations to the campaign and, with the postponement of the reopening, we can really use your help. To donate, visit <https://redoakvictory.us/support-us/donate/>.

The recent dockside fire at the SS *Jeremiah O’Brien* in San Francisco illustrates clearly why fire protection is so vital for our historic vessels. In keeping with that, our next major expense is a fire extinguisher inspection which must be completed for the U.S. Coast Guard to sign off our Certificate of Inspection (COI). The COI allows us to bring visitors on board the Ship. We have to complete this inspection before re-opening the Ship and, as with routine expenses, we do not have the funds readily available because we have not had our normal revenue stream coming in. So, again, we’re asking for your help. We have launched a specific campaign to cover this expense. Please go to <https://redoakvictory.us/support-us/donate/> and scroll down to “Fire Extinguisher Inspection Due Now!” You may donate \$135 to inspect a single extinguisher, \$270 for two, or any amount you wish. We have already received many generous donations and we need just an additional thousand dollars to completely cover the inspection cost.

While we have had to cancel the first three Pancake Breakfasts for 2020 due to the COVID-19 shutdown, we are still hoping to hold the last two breakfasts as scheduled:

September 13: Grandparents’ Day

October 11: Fleet Week featuring the Blue Angels

We may depart from our standard Pancake Breakfast format but we are hoping to be able to hold some sort of event on the Ship before the summer season is over. Keep an eye on our website and our Facebook page for further information.

Just like all businesses and attractions, we’ll have to see how the reopening of the economy goes. We may have other events on the calendar later in the year. Keep an eye on our Facebook page (SS *Red Oak Victory*), Instagram (victoryshipredoak), Twitter (@SSRedOakVictory), and our website (www.redoakvictory.us) for updates.



5-inch/38-caliber Dual Purpose Naval Gun of the type that will be mounted in the stern gun tub of the Red Oak Victory. Historians consider this to have been the best Naval gun of World War II.

We’re very excited about our big project for this summer—the acquisition of a 5-inch/38 caliber Naval deck gun. We acquired this gun through the efforts of Mr. Peter Summerville of the Treasure Island Development Authority. We removed the gun from its former location on Treasure Island and brought it to the *Red Oak Victory* on July 8. (You may have seen us on Channel 2 news that morning.) **Maggiora-Ghilotti, Inc.** (San Rafael, California) and company president, Mr. Gary Ghilotti, plus **Bragg**

(Continued, p. 6)



This is the actual gun acquired from the Treasure Island Development Authority. The metal box (shroud) around the gun works will be removed, since the Red Oak’s gun was not so equipped during WWII. (The cute graffiti will also disappear in the process.) Photo by Charlie Moran.

THE ARNAUTOFF MURAL IS GETTING NEW LIFE

By Marvin Collins, RMA Board Member

A compelling new exhibit will be installed in the halls of the Richmond Museum of History and Culture later this year. The long-awaited 1940 mural “Richmond Industrial City” is currently undergoing restoration and preparation for display at the Fine Arts Conservation Laboratory of master conservator Scott Haskins in Goleta, California, near Santa Barbara.

The 14 x 7-foot mural on canvas was commissioned by the Works Progress Administration to decorate the lobby of the Richmond Post Office and was put in place in early 1941. Russian émigré artist Victor Arnautoff painted and installed the mural after having painted the famous frescoes in Coit Tower in San Francisco.

Arnautoff was a student and assistant to Mexican muralist Diego Rivera and painted other post office and school murals in California and Texas. In 2019, his mural showing General Washington with his slaves was shrouded in controversy at the Washington School in San Francisco. Victor Arnautoff’s long career included a stint teaching at Stanford University in the 1950s.

The Richmond mural was removed during a remodel of the post office in 1976, stored away and forgotten, to be rediscovered in 2014 by Museum Executive Director Melinda McCrary, who negotiated a long-term loan from the U.S. Postal Service in Washington, D.C.

As found, the painted surface was in good condition, save the needed removal of yellowed varnish, but the entire reverse of the fabric was encrusted with a thick layer of lead-based adhesive that was originally used to affix the mural to the post office wall. The heavy weight of the adhesive layer had considerably crimped and wrinkled the rolled-up canvas, and now must be taken off by a time-consuming process of dissolving the dried paste in solvent square inch by square inch.

During its original inspection by conservator Anne Rosenthal, the mural was re-rolled onto a two-foot-diameter tube from its original, much-smaller core, and has lost some of the wrinkles as the fabric relaxed.

The restoration of the mural has awaited the accumulation of sufficient funding while a search was begun for a conservation firm experienced in canvas murals of this period, hopefully one within the State to avoid expensive complications with transport. Now that the Museum has the majority of the necessary funds in hand, the restoration has begun.

Arnautoff created a design representing the daily life of Richmond, a city centered largely around facilities such as the

Standard Oil refinery and railroads. The painted image depicts daily life against the familiar background of oil tanks dotting the Point Molate hillside, showing women and men at market, the postman with his mail and has the unique feature of an African American man discussing the news with three white workers.

Arnautoff conceived and painted this montage months before the wartime Kaiser shipyards began drawing African Americans to Richmond and represents those black American workers who came to find jobs in the Ford assembly plant and the shops of the Pullman Car Company, an important early nod to the emerging African American community of Richmond.

The freshly-restored mural will be installed in its own section of the Main Gallery, accompanied by interpretive materials and a video documenting the conservation of the work. This beautiful cultural treasure will join the other treasures of the Museum, the SS *Red Oak Victory*, the only surviving ship built by the aforementioned workers in the Kaiser Richmond shipyards, and the very first 1931 Model A Ford built at the Richmond Ford plant. By restoring, preserving and once again displaying the Arnautoff mural, we are making Richmond history at the Museum!



Virginia Panizzon, Scott M. Haskins and Oriana Montemurro survey the Arnautoff mural, “Richmond Industrial City,” in preparation for its restoration.

More from the Red Oak Victory



Red Oak Victory welder Mike Nagamoto torch-cutting a portion of the turret from the 5" gun. (Photo by Fred Klink)

FROM THE RED OAK

(Continued from p. 4)

Crane Service (Richmond, California), donated all the equipment and labor needed to facilitate removal of the gun from Treasure Island and transportation to the *Red Oak Victory*. The *Red Oak Victory*, and for that matter many other historic ships and sites around the world, cannot continue to serve the public without the generosity and enthusiasm of people like these.

The gun is currently sitting on the dock where restoration and reconfiguration has already begun. The reconfiguration will consist of removing the turret and converting the gun to an open mount as was employed on cargo vessels in World War II. It will then be hoisted on board and bolted into the aft gun tub. Those who have been on the Ship know this location because that is where we have had the Ship's original propeller on display (now also sitting on the dock). During her World War II service, the *Red Oak Victory* carried a 5" deck gun in this same location. We now have an example of all three types of armament carried on the *Red Oak Victory* in World War II: a 3"/50 caliber deck gun, 20mm anti-aircraft guns, and this newly-acquired 5"/38 caliber gun. Keep an eye on our social media pages for more updates about this significant addition to the *Red Oak Victory's* exhibits.

EAGLE SCOUT DONATES MUSEUM GARDEN BENCH

The Richmond Museum of History & Culture was fortunate



enough to be chosen by a Boy Scout as the subject of his Eagle Scout Project. Brenda Kuehnle has volunteered in the Museum garden through the Chevron Community

Volunteer Initiative. When her son Joshua expressed interest in a building project to earn his Eagle Scout Badge, she suggested he build a bench for the Museum garden. In June 2020, Joshua installed a lovely redwood bench with adjacent planter boxes that now graces the Museum garden on the west side of the building. Thanks, Joshua!

Honor a special person in your life while providing lasting support to the Museum. Any individual, family, business or community group can sponsor the bench with an engraved message on a bronze plaque. Contact Melinda at melinda@richmondmuseum.org for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

On the Red Oak Victory Ship

Pancake Breakfasts (if COVID-19 shutdown orders are lifted)

If all goes well, our famous Sunday Pancake Breakfasts will be returning in another month or so. Breakfast is \$12 for adults, \$5.00 for kids and includes pancakes, eggs, bacon, juice, coffee and, for a bit extra, mimosas.

After your meal, if you can drag yourself away from the view, you can take a self-guided tour of the Ship. There will likely be no docent-guided tours nor engine-room tours.

Tickets will be available on-line and via phone; or just pay at the gate. Breakfast hours are 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Here is the hoped-for schedule:

September 13
October 11 - Fleet Week

Face Masks and social distancing required while on board.

Even More on the Red Oak's New Gun

Photos by Dori Luzbetak



Lift-off at Treasure Island to begin the journey to the Red Oak Victory.



Touchdown at the Red Oak Victory dock, where restoration and reconfiguration to an open mount will take place.

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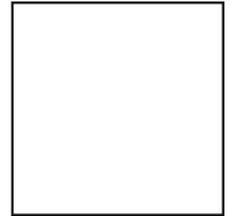
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Join the Richmond Museum Association on social media! We are on Facebook under Richmond Museum of History and *SS Red Oak Victory* (two separate pages). We are also on twitter @richmondhistory.

*The **Richmond Museum Association** is a 501 (C) 3 non-profit educational organization. Gifts and donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.*

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Red Oak Victory Ship

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