

The MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Richmond Museum of History

Winter 2018-2019

SS Red Oak Victory Ship

MEMBERS INVITED

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RICHMOND MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

The Richmond Museum Association's (RMA) Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, February 23, at 2:00 p.m. at the Museum, 400 Nevin Avenue.

The Annual Meeting is for members of the RMA and their non-voting guests. Non-members may join the RMA on that day (or before) and be included.

On the agenda will be reports of the 2018 activities of the Richmond Museum of History and the *SS Red Oak Victory* and the election of Directors to the RMA Board for three-year terms.

On the recommended slate are incumbents Lorraine Regier, Vinay Pimple, John Ziesenhenn, Rosa Lara Vargas and Karen Buchanan, all returning for an additional term.

Refreshments will be served, and there is no charge for this event.

In This Issue:

- RMA Annual Meeting p. 1
- New Exhibit Opens! p. 1
- Red Oak Victory's 75th Anniversary pp. 1, 6
- Director's Message p. 2
- President's Message p. 3
- Museum Free Field Trip Program p. 3
- Red Oak Report p. 4
- Upcoming Events pp. 5, 7
- Wig-wag Rehabilitation p. 6
- Who's This? p. 7
- New Acquisitions p. 8
- Join the RMA p. 9

NEW EXHIBIT OPENS WITH RECORD ATTENDANCE!

On January 13, 2019, the Richmond Museum of History held the grand opening of its new exhibition called "*Pioneers to the Present: Jews of Richmond and Contra Costa County*," honoring the contributions of the Jewish community in Richmond and greater Contra Costa County. The exhibition developed out of our work on the "*History Unfolded*" project in support of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. An estimated 200 people attended the event, which may have been record attendance for an exhibit opening at the Museum.

For the exhibit, we gathered artifacts from the Museum's collection, combed the Museum's collection of local newspapers for Holocaust-related news and interviewed significant Jewish individuals in Richmond and greater Contra Costa County, some of whom attended the opening.

Notably attending the opening were Richmond Mayor Tom Butt and three rabbis from Richmond's Temple Beth Hillel (TBH): Rabbi Dean Kertesz, TBH's current rabbi, and former TBH rabbis, Rabbi Judy Shanks and Rabbi Bernard Robinson.

The exhibit, which is dedicated to the late Sandi Genser-Maack, who was a well-respected Richmond advocate and activist and a board member and major supporter of the RMA, will run through June 30, 2019, in the **Seaver Gallery**, with several related events scheduled during that period. See page 7 for the schedule.

We hope to see you at the Museum!

WE CELEBRATE *RED OAK* VICTORY'S 75TH YEAR!

Launched November 9, 1944, at Kaiser Richmond Shipyard No. 1, the *SS Red Oak Victory (ROV)* has had a successful and varied career, first as a Navy, then Merchant Marine and commercial vessel. The RMA plans to celebrate the *ROV's* milestone 75th year in a number of ways during 2019. Find out more about it on page 6; read a brief history of the *ROV*, and then come on down to the Ship, get a tour and learn much more from our knowledgeable and inspiring docents.

As our Director of Ship Operations Johannes Hoech says: Arrive curious; leave in awe!

(Continued on p. 6)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

As 2018 winds down, I have been reflecting on the state of the Museum Association and our goals for 2019. I look back and wonder what do we have to show for our efforts over the last twelve months? In fact, we accomplished a great deal during the past year. We established a formal school group program with the help of Chevron Richmond that served over 800 students with no charge to the school district. We created a set of architectural renderings that lay out the renovation of the permanent exhibit with the help of Scientific Art Studio and the Native American Advisory Council. The renovation plan will soon come to fruition as we have planned a prototype of one of the columns that will fill the center of the space. We welcomed the community to come into the Museum with several Family Free Days that included educational programs and crafts. The one theme that is carried through all these accomplishments is relationship-building. We are so thankful for the community of Richmond and the greater Bay Area for all of the meaningful relationships that we have built over the last year.

I have three very specific goals for 2019 in addition to the normal exhibits and public programming. My first goal is to breathe energy and life into the Arnautoff mural restoration project as it has gone dormant due to lack of



Victor Arnautoff's 1941 mural, "Richmond Industrial City"

staff and capacity. We expect the restoration project to cost roughly \$60,000, but the City of Richmond is worth it. My second goal is to see the first components of the Ohlone exhibit to be installed in the permanent exhibit. Plans are in the works to build a prototype column about archaeology and the modern Ohlone people. Additionally, an interactive element is being planned that educates about the Choceny dialect of the Ohlone language that was once spoken in modern-day Richmond. The Ohlone Voices project is funded

by the California Humanities Council. My third and final goal is to develop a strategic plan for the Richmond Museum Association. As the organization continues to professionalize and grow, developing a strategic plan is an important document to demonstrate our plan to reach our goals for the future.

As always, thank you for your continued support!

Best,

Melinda McCrary

SAVE THIS DATE!

Think you know Richmond history? Come show your knowledge at the Richmond Museum's upcoming **Richmond Trivia Night** on Thursday, March 28, at East Brother Brewery. Details to be announced - Stay tuned.

HISTORY UNFOLDED

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) is asking citizen historians to help them track coverage of events in American newspapers leading up to the Holocaust in Europe. The Richmond Museum of History has contributed coverage from the Richmond Daily Independent and the Richmond Record Herald and is seeking people to search Oakland, San Francisco and other newspapers. Come to the Museum and see the results of our research in our new exhibit opening on January 13, 2019.

Learn more here:

<https://newspapers.ushmm.org>.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we say farewell to 2018 and embrace all that 2019 brings forth, I can fondly reflect on our collective contributions that have made us a better organization. The achievements, and the success that we have had would not have been possible without the effort and commitment of many.

Thanks are certainly in order, and let me begin by thanking the Museum Executive Director, Melinda McCrary, for her tireless work on behalf of the Museum. Melinda envisioned a museum that would be strongly tied to the community with activities and relevant exhibits that resonated with our diverse population. She reached out to the schools as well as various community leaders and organizations to accomplish that goal. She wrote grants to obtain funds to foster a deeper level of community engagement, and I am proud to say that her efforts along with those of the staff and a cadre of wonderful volunteers have been instrumental in moving the Museum to another level thus creating a richer and more fulfilling experience for all.

Speaking of experiences, the single largest artifact owned by the Richmond Museum Association is the *Red Oak Victory* ship which was built in Richmond as part of the great effort to mobilize sea-going vessels for service during World War II. The Ship has been undergoing restoration over the past two decades of our ownership. Thanks are in order to the Director of Ship Operations, Johannes Hoech, along with the dedicated crew of volunteers who have literally as well as figuratively kept the Ship afloat. Along with overseeing ongoing maintenance/restoration work, hosting special events aboard the Ship, and making it available for the public to tour, the Ship reached a long-sought-after achievement in 2018: for the first time in fifty years the Ship was powered-up to make steam, an instrumental milestone in the restoration process. I liken it to “starting the engine” on an old car undergoing restoration that has not run in decades.

The organization has had great success in 2018, and I very much appreciate our board of directors for their keen insight and deliberative posture in the decision-making process. My tenure as president is ending and it has certainly been my pleasure to work with the entire team, including the board, staff and volunteers, as well as interacting with the members and friends of the organization. And on that note, last but not least, I want to give special

thanks to all of our loyal members and generous donors who help keep the RMA going, enabling us to fulfill our mission to bring Richmond’s history to light and life for all to see and enjoy.

Thank you to all of you for your many contributions.

With Abundant Joy,

Jeff Wright



Carnegie Library, 1959, 4th Street and Nevin Avenue, Richmond, now the Richmond Museum of History

FREE SCHOOL FIELD TRIP PROGRAM

Working directly with the teachers especially in Richmond and North Richmond as well as surrounding areas, RMH coordinates and conducts school group tours of the Museum that include transportation to the Museum and engaging activities that explain the Museum’s contents, functions and relevance to the community.

Please Pass the Word

Do you know of a teacher in Richmond who would like to bring his or her class to the Richmond Museum of History? If so, please pass along the message that we are offering scholarships for bus transportation to and from the Museum. Interested teachers please contact Melinda at melinda@richmondmuseum.org or (510) 235-7387.

FROM THE *RED OAK VICTORY* SHIP -

AN EVENTFUL, HISTORIC YEAR

by Johannes Hoech, *ROV Director of Ship Operations*

Year in Review:

One day, when the history of the *SS Red Oak Victory (ROV)* gets told in the distant future, 2018 will go down as one of the more impactful years in its hitherto 74-year-long existence: It was the year when the engine room was lit off for the first time since 1968, which was when she last ran before being put in the mothball fleet after having served in WW II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Many said this couldn't be done, but thanks to the help of many volunteers, professionals, the California Maritime Academy and several governmental agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard, we all made this historic milestone. That achievement can never be taken away.

And despite missing the peak revenue-producing months of July and August, when the *ROV* was up at the California Maritime Academy for her light-off tests and thus could not open for business, we finished 2018 in the black. And, although we are financially poorer, having spent a significant amount to prove that the *ROV* can run and is worthy of further investment, we are immeasurably richer in experience and demonstrated restoration success.

Our top 2018 priorities will continue unchanged into 2019, and they are in this order:

Recruiting:

Continuing to focus on recruiting is the *ROV's* organization's No. 1 priority for 2019. Since the easiest way to grow our volunteer base is to bring back folks who had previously volunteered on the Ship, we started there and conducted a survey on why they had left after initially signing on as volunteers. That survey produced interesting findings:

1. Roughly a third left due to resurgent personal commitments (work, school, family, etc.); that was mostly an issue for younger volunteers.

2. Another third left because of the lack of a weekend work-day (when maintenance, repair and restoration are done), since they're working; again, this concern was voiced mostly by a younger demographic.

3. And about another third left for health and mobility reasons, e.g., they realized that they could not climb the gangway to the Ship; that was mostly an older demographic.

We're working on program changes for 2019 to mitigate these loss reasons, like re-introducing a weekend work-day, a buddy system, clearer expectation-setting and other innovations.

And we are also embarking on an effort to proactively maintain the welcoming warmth of the *ROV* culture that's

been its hallmark with visitors and volunteers alike. That welcoming warmth, combined with our wonderful docents, continues to make the *ROV* one of the highest-ranked historic ship venues in the SF Bay Area on social media sites like Yelp.

Fundraising:

We started meeting with several high-value donors to inquire about the continuing interest to support the *ROV*, and after the successful light-off of 2018, that interest remains strong. So, we are scheduling thank-you events and other occasions to showcase the *ROV* and her investment potential to interested funders. In addition, we're raising money online, and have also begun working with a grant-writer. The next fundraising effort will aim at securing the funds for some needed steel work on the starboard hull, another tow to a light-off location, and several incidental repairs; all in all, we are looking to raise almost \$300,000, hopefully in 2019 or 2020, to keep up the current restoration momentum.

Getting Ready for 2019:

We're meeting again with the Port and other tenants there to ensure the Ship has a long-term future in Richmond. The U.S. Coast Guard has been talking to us about keeping all our permits current, and those conversations are going well; as always, we're deeply grateful for the Coast Guard's technical expertise, support and constructive insights.

Since the *ROV* returned to Richmond in August, we have been open to the public and are happy to report a perceptible uptick in visitor traffic due to the popularity the Ship achieved during the light-off trials at the California Maritime Academy. Hopefully our 2019 events season, which will start with our famous pancake breakfasts in May, will beat the operating income records of the previous three years.

And so, we are continuously looking for volunteers to restore this great artifact as well as for funders. Please visit www.redoakvictory.us and click the "Donate" button to find us on GoFundMe, or send us an email if you wish to volunteer.

Come on down:

2018 was a spectacular success year for the *SS Red Oak Victory*, and credits go to our great crew and all those who supported us along the way.

Come visit the *SS Red Oak Victory* on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Arrive curious, leave in awe!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS ON THE *RED OAK VICTORY*

Our famous Sunday Pancake Breakfasts will be returning in a few, short months; here is the schedule so you can save the dates:

May 12 - Mother's Day

June 16 - Father's Day

August 11 - Dress Up Like 1944 Day

September 8 - Grandparents' Day

October 13 - Fleet Week

The Ship is open for tours on every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday throughout the year:

Summer hours (March - November): 10 am - 4 pm

Winter hours (November - March): 10 am - 3 pm

Admission Price:

Self-guided tour (with souvenir booklet): \$10

Docent-guided tour (entire ship except the lower engine room): \$15

Deluxe docent-guided tour (includes the lower engine room): \$20

Large Groups:

For groups of ten or more visiting the Ship at one time, please contact us to make arrangements. E-mail us at info@redoakvictory.us or call the Ship's phone (during business hours): (510) 237-2933.

THE *RED OAK* NEEDS YOU...

...to be a greeter. It's a hard job—you have to smile and welcome visitors to a great adventure. We especially need help on Saturdays and Sundays. Call the Ship at (510) 237-2933 for more information or to volunteer.

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 call the Ship at the number below to get details:

Media system for Holds 3 and 4 (and on-deck as needed); sound system, mic, modern projector
Heating system for Hold 4 for Winter/Spring events
Replica light shades to replace those broken throughout the Ship

New hatch-cover canvas

Spill kit

Emergency locker with lid, 3' x 4'

2 ink cartridges

AA batteries

LED penlights/laser pointers

and we really, really need SAFETY CONES

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

Easiest of all, go to www.redoakvictory.us and click DONATE to contribute monetarily to the Ship's restoration.

Thank you for your help and support!

EMAIL PLEASE...

Like many organizations, the Richmond Museum Association needs to cut costs where we can. And as much as I personally prefer to hold a newsletter in my hand, that hard copy is expensive to print and mail.

So let us email you your copy of *The MIRROR*. For those members who do not have email, we will continue to print and mail your newsletter. But many of you have email addresses and we hope you will share them with us. We promise not to sell them or share them with anyone else.

Please email us at melinda@richmondmuseum.org with *The MIRROR* in the subject line, and don't forget to tell us your name.

Thank you for helping us keep our costs down. [Ed.]

PT. RICHMOND WIG-WAG REHABILITATION PROJECT UPDATE

We are excited to report that the Wig-Wag Rehabilitation project is in full swing! The RMA, the Point Richmond Neighborhood Council and the Point Richmond Business Association have been working for several years to gain permission to inspect the wig-wags in Point Richmond. A wig-wag is an old-fashioned railroad crossing alerting device that flashes a red light, waves back-and-forth and sounds “ding, ding” to warn of an oncoming train.

The ultimate goal is to rehabilitate the wig-wags to working order so they can ring and wave during special events. Wig-wags and other historical railroad materials have become of interest to community members and railroad enthusiasts alike.

The Wig Wag Committee gained permission from the City of Richmond to enter the right-of-way to complete the necessary work. In late August, wig-wag repairman Dan Furtado made his first inspection of the wig-wags and found them in relatively good working order. It was only after the inspection that we learned that rehabilitation to working order is very likely possible! It was an exciting day when the committee learned our three-year efforts could pay off and the wig-wags could likely be rehabbed.

Dan Furtado will continue to work on the wig-wags into 2019 by sandblasting and painting the banners and working to make the mechanical elements functional once more. A community celebration will be held when the rehabilitation project is completed.



Dan Furtado and RMA board member Karen Buchanan on one of the wig-wags in Pt. Richmond

RED OAK'S 75TH (Continued from p. 1)

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF SERVICE

by Frederick Klink, Director of Marketing, Red Oak Victory

The *Red Oak Victory's* keel was laid down in September 1944 in Kaiser Richmond Shipyard No. 1. By December of that year, the Ship was completed and was commissioned into the U.S. Navy. *USS Red Oak Victory* AK-235 served in the Pacific Theater of Operations during and after World War II, finally returning to the United States in May 1946. The Ship continued to serve for an additional 22 years after that as a commercial cargo carrier and as a Merchant Marine vessel, including ferrying supplies for both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

After being rescued from the mothball fleet in 1998, *Red Oak Victory* has continued to serve as a source of education and entertainment for thousands of visitors. 2018 was a banner year in the restoration of the Ship because her engines were lit off for the first time in 50 years in preparation for taking passengers in the near future.

In 2019 we will celebrate the 75th birthday of our grand old lady with commemorative merchandise, programs and events. We hope all of you can come visit to wish the *Red Oak Victory* a happy 75th and many more to come.



Design for a commemorative patch, available soon

CURRENT AND UPCOMING MUSEUM PROGRAMS

January 13 through June 30, 2019

“Pioneers to the Present: Jews of Richmond and Contra Costa County”

Richmond Museum of History, **Seaver Gallery**

An exhibition honoring the history and contributions of the Jewish Community in Richmond. (See article, p. 1.)

January 27 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“A Day of Learning: What was the Holocaust?”

Richmond Museum of History, **Seaver Gallery**

International Holocaust Remembrance Day, featuring Rabbi Dean Kertesz of Richmond’s Temple Beth Hillel and Sam Genirberg, Richmond resident, Holocaust survivor and author of ***Among the Enemy: Hiding in Plain Sight in Nazi Germany.***

February 10 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“Memorial Concert for Ben Rust”

Musicians Rebecca Rust and Friedrich Edelman.

February 18 (Monday) 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

“Bubbes Read”

Grandmas do a Jewish-themed storytime.

February 24 (Sunday) 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“Intergenerational Trauma”

Elizabeth Rosner, author of ***Survivor Café.***

March 10 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Jewish Genealogy

“Finding Your Jewish Roots,” with Stephen Harris.

April 7 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“Unlikely Romance” between the son of a Nazi and a Jew, with Richmond residents Rudi Raab and Julie Freestone, authors of ***Stumbling Stone.***

April 28 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“From the Old Country to the Bay Area”

Fred Rosenbaum talks about his book ***Taking Risks,*** the story of Joseph Pell, who fought the Nazis and founded **Moo’s Ice Cream** in Richmond.

May 5 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“Jewish Arts in Richmond”

Richard Schwartz, author of ***The Man Who Lit Lady Liberty: The Extraordinary Rise and Fall of Actor M.B. Curtis,*** who founded the Richmond Opera House.

June 23 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“Jewish Food and Wine,” with **Perfusion Winery** conducting a wine tasting and Alix Wall speaking on Jewish chefs in the Bay Area.

WHO’S THIS?

by Lynn Maack

The Museum seeks the identities of unidentified people in local, historical photographs in the Museum’s collection. The historical record is fuller when we can identify the people and places in our photographs. We will try to provide some background on the photograph’s content to the extent we can to assist in jogging memories.

In the photograph below, we have 10 past presidents of Temple Beth Hillel in Richmond in 1953. The photo is featured in our new exhibit, **“Pioneers to Present: Jews of Richmond and Contra Costa County,”** which opened on January 13th and runs through June 30, 2019.

We’re hoping someone out there will recognize at least one of the people in this photograph. If you do, please email the Museum at melinda@richmondmuseum.org, or call 510-235-7387 and let us know whom the person is and any details you may know about him.

Thank you for your help.



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:

- Glass or ceramic serving platters for food
- Cloth tablecloths for 6-ft. x 4-ft rectangular table
- Serving utensils (please no plastic)
- Yarn
- Extension cords
- Power strip
- Garden hose

If you can donate these items or contribute to their purchase, please call the Museum at (510) 235-7387, or visit our website, www.richmondmuseum.org and click DONATE.

Thank you for your support!

NEED A LIFT?

You may have seen the big crane at Shipyard No. 3; you can't miss it if you visit the *SS Red Oak Victory* ship docked there or the Rigger's Loft Winery also located there. This type of crane is commonly called a "whirley" crane, and it played a huge role in shipbuilding in the Richmond Shipyards during World War II. From the February 4, 1944, issue of the Kaiser Shipyards newsletter *Fore 'n' Aft*, here is a little history about it and how it got its name.



"Clyde Wiley invented an improved gantry type crane in the early '20's. Gantries, or cranes that travel on tracks and have an overhead lift, were used in ship construction during World War I. But Wiley's crane was different. It was made so that the boom and "A" frame would turn in a complete 360 degree circle. Before Wiley's whirley (so-called because it could whirl completely around on the gantry), bridge cranes and hammerheads had been used almost exclusively for building bridges, unloading ships and other heavy construction.

"During the six years Coulee [Dam] was under construction, the whirley crane pioneered into its own as a fast, readily moveable crane—capable of handling large steel supports, big cement pouring jobs, and heavy dam conduits.

When the Richmond yards were built, seven Coulee whirleys were taken down and shipped here. Yard Three has two Coulee dam-builders; Yard Two has four, and Yard Four has one.

"The name Clyde on a whirley stands for Wiley's first name, but there are many other makes in the Richmond yards. Yard One numbers 17 Colby, Clyde and American whirleys. Yard Three uses 19 whirleys, Yard Two counts 23, and Yard Four has three whirleys in use, another being assembled on the outfitting dock."

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE PERMANENT COLLECTION:

John and Laura Weeks

Copper and brass Quick Aid Fire Guard extinguisher by The General Pacific Corp., from the Memorial Youth Center, located at 32nd St. and Macdonald Ave., circa 1940s.

Randy Pocekay

Blue and white metal pin badge from Enamel Ware Workers Union - American Federation of Labor, Richmond, Calif., 1942.

Bill Frank

Bronze plaque dedicated to Rotary member and Director and founder of Richmond's YMCA, Fred Breen (1928-1968).



The whirley crane next to the *SS Red Oak Victory* at Shipyard No. 3. Photo by Dori Luzbetak

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___ \$35 **History Ally**—Seniors aged 62 and over—Benefits include quarterly e-newsletter and free admission for one to the Richmond Museum of History and the SS Red Oak Victory

___ \$50 **History Enthusiast**—Benefits include one digital file of a photo in the permanent collection for personal use

___ \$100 **History Advocate**—2 adults/2 youth—Benefits above and one hour of staff research time

___ \$250 **History Guardian**—Benefits above and “Behind the Scenes” tour of permanent collection

___ \$500 **History Patron**—Benefits above and one ad in *The MIRROR* newsletter

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___ **I would like to Volunteer!**

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Send an email to l.maack@comcast.net to reserve your space.



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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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Johannes Hoech, Vice-President
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Red Oak Victory Ship

Open Tues, Thurs, Sat, Sun
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Richmond Museum of History

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Visit our website at www.richmondmuseum.org