

# THE MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Fall 2010

## KAISER BUILDS HIS FIRST SHIP

by Steve Gilford

It was August 15, 1941, when the *Ocean Vanguard*, the first ship built in the Kaiser Shipyards, slipped down the ways and into San Francisco Bay.

She was ugly, awkward and old-fashioned. She had been constructed by work crews who were far more familiar with highways than shipways in a shipyard that not many months before had been a coastal marsh. She was not even an American ship. What the *Ocean Vanguard* was, though, was one of the most significant ships ever built. She helped save the free world from domination by Adolph Hitler and his Axis allies, and she helped to provide the impetus for founding what would become the Kaiser Permanent Health Plan.

As a ship design, *Ocean Vanguard* had a past that stretched back well into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but her significance was that her design would have an astonishing future. She would be the model for Liberty Ships, a class of which more were built than any other ship in history.

The British shipyards of J.L. Thompson and Sons had been producing ships built on this basic plan ever since they had launched the first one in 1879. Slow but dependable, the Thompson-designed-and-built tramp steamers were a familiar sight on every trade route of the world's oceans. The technology was old, but it was dependable, sturdy, and simple to build.

At the time, World War II had broken out in Europe but the U.S. was not yet directly involved. Great Britain, an island nation, was being starved into submission by fleets of German submarines that were sinking freighters supplying that nation far faster than new ships could be built to replace them. So successful were the U-boats, that this period of the war became known to German submariners as *Die Glückliche Zeit*, "The Happy Time." In his post-war memoirs, the man who led Great Britain through this time, Winston Churchill, wrote, "The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril." It was clear that without new ships to supply food and arms, England could not hold out against the Germans.

In July of 1940, the British Merchant Shipbuilding Mission had arrived in the United States with \$96,000,000 in cash and blueprints for building copies of the Thompson freighter. They were looking for someone to build sixty of these ships to be called "Ocean Class" vessels.

What the Commission found was that the U.S. had already stepped up its own shipbuilding program, and there were no-

*See KAISER, continued on p. 6*



*Gail H. Barbitta stands near the painting she created as a child in the wartime child care center. This art is part of a new book. See the story on p. 7.*

### CALENDAR: PLAN TO COME

Now through Oct. 24th -- Exhibit "**One Small Story...**" (See p. 4) **Museum**

Saturday, Oct. 2nd -- Home Front Festival.

(See p. 4) **Red Oak**

Oct. 2nd and thru October -- "**RIVETS**," 8 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, 3 p.m. on Sundays.

(Ticket info. p. 2) **Red Oak**

Sunday, Oct. 10th -- last Pancake Breakfast,

9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. \$6 **Red Oak**

Thursday, Nov. 11th -- 12th celebration of

Veteran's Day **Red Oak**

Sunday, Nov. 14th -- 100th birthday of the

Carnegie Building. 2 p.m. **Museum**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ....

## RED OAK CAMP A SUCCESS; VOLUNTEERS ARE GOLD

by Lois Boyle

President, Richmond Museum Association

“Ship Ahoy!” said the *Red Oak* Campers! Sixteen students from the Richmond Police Activities League (PAL) had the nautical experiences of their young lives as they participated in the summer *Red Oak* Campers program. The one-week overnight camp on board the Ship (partially funded by Sims Metal Management and Mechanics Bank) was held twice, the first and third weeks in July. Campers learned about the awesome accomplishments of the folks who built the Ship (and 746 other ships in Richmond during WW II) and were treated to four excursions: a south bay cruise on board the 1942 WWII *Mazapeta* tug/fireboat, a San Pablo Bay cruise on the *U.S.S. Northland*, a torpedo recovery ship, now a sea scout training ship berthed at Shipyard 3, a bus tour of the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park led by Park Ranger Craig Riordan, and finally, a walking excursion to George Miller/John Knox Regional Park, including a swim at Richmond’s historic Keller’s Beach. This tour concluded at the Richmond Museum of History. Their experiences were supervised by Camp Director Erik Main from Humboldt State University, supervised by Craig Riordan, his teacher there.

The Museum is proud to announce a contractual arrangement with Inna Soiguine for the implementation of three major events in the Seaver Gallery: in August the reception and book signing of Joe Fischer’s book *Children’s Art, Children’s Words*; in September a rare exhibit entitled “*One Small Story From Richmond’s Hidden History*,” the story of Richmond’s nurseries and the Japanese American families who owned them, using artifacts from the Museum and from the collections of the Sakai, Oishi, and Maida families; and finally, the celebration of the Carnegie Library building’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in November. This is a tall order for Inna, but she is skillfully moving toward four months of activity in the Gallery. These projects are made possible by a grant from the Clarabelle Hamilton Trust administered by the San Francisco Foundation.

This year, the Pancake Breakfasts on the *Red Oak Victory* have been smashing successes, particularly the one on Father’s Day. Our photographer, Marjorie Hill, took pictures of fathers and captured this picture of three generations of Gralunds (see picture above). Hugh is a volunteer on the Ship, one of the “Clearlake Gang” of painters and strippers in the Deck Department. Hugh’s son Matthew is on the left in the picture, and his grandson Casey is on the right.

Creative volunteers from RichmondWORKS, participating in a one-month work program, designed two photo ops available for guest use before boarding the Ship: a pictorial face cutout of

a Rosie proclaiming “We can do it!” and a young sailor inviting an “All aboard!” to anyone with a camera. In addition, they took a rusted-out ventilator cowl (just like the ones on the *Red Oak*),

filled the holes, painted the surface inside and out, created an ocean scene in the funnel space, and then Ship volunteers mounted it on the dock alongside the existing display anchor. It’s another fun place for a family’s picture. Bricks – bricks – bricks! We’ve got bricks. During the restoration of the Richmond Plunge, the fire bricks from the furnace were removed and made ready for disposal. They were no longer needed because the plunge is now solar-heated. The bricks were manufactured at the Richmond Brick Works, and are

imprinted with *RICHMOND*. The contractor asked the Museum if we wanted them, and we gleefully said yes. Well, on the hottest day in August, Rich Chivers and Bronson Boyle loaded more than 500 bricks onto the Ship’s 1972 International flatbed truck for delivery to the Museum courtyard. Then Jerry Souza and Charles Emerson drove the truck to the Museum, off-loaded the bricks onto the lawn, and Bronson Boyle and John Steele moved them into the enclosed patio area. Plans are to use them in the Museum’s proposed sculpture garden.



Photo ops at the Red Oak.

All of this activity involves hundreds of hours of volunteer time and, to say the least, it has been challenging. To the guests who participate in our activities, everything appears leisurely and easily accomplished. But not so. It is hard work, often challenging the hardest and stretching the endurance and availability of all, while giving new meaning to the word “volunteer.” To these I extend my sincerest thanks, knowing full well that every measure of success the Museum enjoys is because of their hard work and dedication. Bless you all. —Lois Boyle

# A MEMORY OF ULITHI

by Joseph Fischer

In March 1945, I was serving aboard the light cruiser (CL-91) the *U.S.S. Oklahoma City*, which was anchored in the waters surrounding the Ulithi atoll in the South Pacific. My ship was part of an enormous fleet in the “world’s largest naval facility” during World War II. Around me as far as my eye could see was a vast U.S. armada, which I later found out included 15 battle-ships, 29 aircraft carriers, 23 cruisers, 100 destroyers and numerous supply ships. They were gathered in this staging area in preparation for the later engagement in Okinawa and eventually to support the invasion of Japan some 1,100 miles to the north.

My ship had stopped at Ulithi to refuel and to give all the sailors on board a brief respite after eighty days at sea. We were loaded onto a LCT and taken ashore to enjoy the white sand and palm trees and swim in the clean, warm, blue waters of the lagoon. On the island, there was an enormous building that housed probably the largest supply of beer in the world. I lined up with hundreds of other sailors at its entrance, and we were given six cans each of Shaeffer’s beer, a brand that has since disappeared. The beer was only slightly cold and was, believe it or not, at age seventeen, my first experience with alcohol. The sun was hot and we had nothing else to do but drink. And drink and drink we did! Afterwards, many of us, including me, were barely able to walk. Somehow, we got back to the LCT.

When we came alongside our light cruiser, it was obvious that some of us were unable to stand, and a few were quite unruly. A large cargo net was lowered from the ship and we were unceremoniously hoisted aboard. Somehow, I got to my bunk bed and fell asleep, or, more pointedly, “passed out.” I woke up after six hours, violently ill and disgusted with myself. A shower cleaned me up, but it took some time for my ego to recover. From that day forward, I never consumed another beer, and, in fact, I gave up alcohol consumption forever. It was estimated at the time that 90% of the ship’s crew had been drunk; the ship was a mess.

On a table in the chart room of the *Red Oak*, there is a sea chart of Ulithi. It was put there by Lou Berg, one of the super volunteers on the Ship. Because of this, he and I discovered that we were both on Ulithi in March 1945, perhaps on the same day, who knows. It was for me a haunting serendipity. And then I also learned that George Coles, a Museum board member, had stopped in Ulithi in 1944 on an Army ship. I could not let these coincidences pass without learning something more about Ulithi.

Ulithi is one of the four main islands in the Carolines. The other three are Fassarai, Asor and Falalop. These islands are all now part of the independent Federated States of Micronesia. Ulithi has forty inlets which cover about 1.75 square miles and is surrounded by a lagoon that is 18 miles long and 9 miles wide. The lagoon is reputedly the fourth largest of its kind in the world. It has a reef that runs 20 miles north and south and 10 miles across. It was a “vast anchorage” with an average depth of 80 to 100 feet. As such it was the only suitable anchorage in the South Pacific within 800 miles. The first European to find Ulithi was the Portuguese navigator Diego da Rocha, who did so in 1526. The Japanese occupied the island in 1942 and abandoned it two years

later. The U.S. Navy arrived in September 1944 and found 400 native residents and three Japanese soldiers. Ulithi has been called “an atoll on the Edge of Hell.” However, for me it was a beautiful tropical island where I was awed by the naval might of my own country. And now, 65 years later, Lou Berg, George Coles and I have shared memories of Ulithi and a war long since gone.

## RECENT DONATIONS:

James Holloway 08.18.10

Directories of the Richmond School Dept., annuals from 1950 thru 1961.

Myrna Barnes 07.30.10

Aladdin lunch pail w/insulated bottle, ca. 1943, reportedly used in Richmond Kaiser Shipyard in WWII; General Electric clothes iron in box, ca. 1943.

James Roark

Yearbooks: Roosevelt Junior High School, 1923 and 1926 thru '30; Pinole Junior High, 1969-'70 thru '76-'77.

Marie Kochaver 07.23.10

CD, interview with Alberta Cavness who worked in Shipyard #3 during WWII; she is on the big photo next to Priscilla Shelton. (See p. 6)

Priscilla Shelton 07.21.10

Two photos of her visiting the Museum on Feb 13, 2010. (She worked in Shipyard #3 during WWII. She is on the big photo of our exhibit “WWII.”) (See p. 6)

Mary Whaley 07.07.10

Two yearbooks: “The Shield,” Richmond Union High School, January 1937 and June 1937; Richmond Union High School Diploma 1933, Arthur Werner; Richmond Union High School Graduation Announcement, 1924; Raymond Campbell’s card

John Blasquez 05.27.10

7 photos of shipyard workers; 1 certificate for a job well done (print)

Jim and Janice Blair 05.15.10

Scrapbook by George Blair, who worked in the Shipyards from July 1941 to Feb. 1943, 21 pages, hardcover; newspaper clippings from 1941 to 2002; photos

Dolores Curry 05.14.10

Photo of American Radiator & Standard Sanitary Corp.



## “ONE SMALL STORY FROM RICHMOND’S HIDDEN HISTORY: *THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NURSERIES*”

This installation features photographs and archival objects illustrative of the Japanese American cut-flower business that thrived in Richmond for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The exhibition represents a “small story” of a complex, partly-forgotten history of success and perseverance, focusing on three families engaged in tending and selling a variety of flowers for local and national consumption.

At the Opening Reception on Sunday, September 12th, guests heard from several representatives of the Sakai, Oishi and Maida families who shared their memories of the flower-growing business and the internment experience. Richmond Museum Association Vice-President John Ziesenhenne served as the M.C. and accepted a Resolution honoring the Museum’s service to the community from Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner.

Blueprints, account books, and a desk constructed during the Japanese internment by Tom Oishi are just a few of the many items selected for viewing. The exhibition is designed to be an instructive event for the visitor interested in an important chapter in Richmond’s cultural and social history.



*On exhibit in the Seaver Gallery through October 24, 2010. Artifacts on display are from the Museum Collection and Sakai, Oishi and Maida Family Archives.*

## HOME FRONT FESTIVAL 2010-STYLE

by Clare Fischer

A lively program is planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Home Front Festival by the Richmond Museum of History. Activities at Shipyard #3 on Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> are scheduled to begin at 11:00 a.m. on the dock with a flag ceremony conducted by the U.S.S. Northland Sea Scouts. Included in the day’s events on board the *Red Oak Victory* are musical performances, theatrical presentations and a talk by Steve Gilford, whose study of Henry J. Kaiser, the shipyards and the founding of Kaiser Permanente will soon be published by the Richmond Museum Association.

Two band concerts — one featuring the United States Air Force Band of the Golden West from Travis Air Force Base, and the other a “Sing-Along” by The Kensington Serenaders — are scheduled in the morning. At 1:00, Sherrie’s Dance Studio will present “*A Riveting Tap.*” Afternoon events will focus on the history of the Home Front with a short, dramatic presentation based on experiences of shipyard women workers, “*A Rosie’s*

*Experience,*” created and spoken by Lois Boyle, President of the Richmond Museum Association. Later in the afternoon, the musical “*RIVETS,*” previewed on the *Red Oak Victory* two years ago, will be presented.

All of the Museum’s events are free of charge, except “*RIVETS*” (\$30/adult); reserving tickets for the performance is recommended (call 510-237-2933) but same-day seating is possible if space permits. Visitors are welcome to conduct self-guided tours on board the *Red Oak Victory*. Food service will be available to festival participants all day.

A shuttle between Shipyard #3, where the Museum’s events are scheduled, and the Craneway Pavilion, site of many other festival attractions, musical and otherwise, will transport visitors throughout the day.

For more information on the Home Front Festival, visit [www.homefrontfestival.com](http://www.homefrontfestival.com).

### THE MIRROR IS ON OUR WEBSITE!

You can access *The MIRROR* on the Museum website. To cut down on mailing expenses we are moving to online publication and to distribution via email.

Call the museum at (510) 235-7387 to get on the email distribution list.

Meanwhile, the website address for *The MIRROR* is [www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org/newsletter.htm](http://www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org/newsletter.htm).

### SEA CHARTS FOR SALE

More than 2,000 sea charts of country coastlines and islands from all over the world are available for sale at \$5.00 each on the *Red Oak Victory*. For information, contact the *Red Oak* Gift Shop at (510) 237-2933.

## News From the Red Oak Victory

# THE ROV'S INDISPENSABLE ELECTRICIANS

By Rich Chivers, First Electrician

A number of personnel from the *Red Oak Victory* Electrical Department came together in March 2010 to not only volunteer another eight hours but to have lunch (elk burgers), dinner, a poker game, and ultimately spend the night on board enjoying all of the luxuries that a World War II-era Victory Ship has to offer! I'm sure that a good time was had by all. A total of six volunteers stayed over.

We are fortunate to have the skills and enthusiasm of a good number of these consistent volunteers and are very grateful to them all.

We can thank 2<sup>nd</sup> Electrician Angelo Barone for recruiting the majority of these men, most of them being former workmates of his from days at the shipyards. With a combination of Navy and Merchant Marine experience, Angelo says, "I brought my nephew Angelo Gagliardi down to volunteer for his high school '100 hours of community service,' and then it was a done deal. I had to see this great ship get under way again." Young Angelo is now attending Cal Poly and studying Electrical Engineering.

Kevin Shannon, Pat Galagher (Pat's son Pat was there for the day), and Andrew Hunt are still active members of the IBEW and work in San Francisco. These guys come to the ship maybe twice a month and help with some of the many electrical requirements found to be done on board a ship.

Jimmy Crowley is a younger enthusiast who comes every other week or so with Kevin Shannon. He is fourteen and has been accepted to Saint Ignatius High School in San Francisco. Kevin and Jimmy's father were friends in the shipyards.

Ray Mullen is a former "Yard Bird Electrician" (now a lawyer) who worked with Angelo, Kevin and Pat from 1979-1984 in the shipyards. Ray says, "I live with my wife Sandy in the foothills east of Bakersfield and probably have one of the longest commutes to get to Richmond, but it's worth it."

Jason Atkin, who is an every-week guy, "had the privilege" to serve as a Radioman on a U.S. Navy nuclear submarine for five years (1991-1996). After an automobile injury, a Medical Discharge landed him in college, where he earned a degree in electronics, and he has been servicing Macintosh computers. His hobbies consist of collecting antique firearms and classic Dodge trucks, and restoring old steamships. Jason says, "I have a genuine passion for making old, ugly and unwanted things look and work like new and a tremendous appreciation for the feel of quality machinery and tools in my hands. I'm enamored by history and all things nautical, so working on the *Red Oak Victory* is like a dream come true for me."

Dave Penn's background is in ham radio, and he has maintained a license for a considerable number of years (he's another regular). He is Retired Air Force (22 years), where he maintained

computer systems including AUTODIN and missile launch systems. Last year Dave retired a second time, and after last year he had a total of 25 years in computer maintenance and software, the last ten of his career at Kaiser Permanente.

Harold Wagner is the Chief Electrician and one of the biggest supporters of the ROV. He has been around this project from close to the very beginning. A World War II Merchant Marine Veteran, Harold sailed a few years after the war before Uncle Sam asked him to join the U.S. Army during Korea. A while later he returned to sea and spent a number of years sailing as a Merchant Marine Electrician until getting a job in the shipyards, finishing off his career as a Building Maintenance Superintendent at a high-rise in San Francisco. He brings

invaluable "natural talent" to the department and has proven to be one of the greatest assets to this project, in my opinion.

Not all of us could make it to the festivities, but our new Chief Engineer, Greg Blasquez, did. Greg started his sailing career just out of high school as a Saloon Pantry Man. Greg says, "I despised this job and refused to take another job in the Steward's Department." After that, Greg took a Wiper job on a tanker, and he says he was amazed at all of the machinery. Quickly learning and qualifying for the positions of Fireman/Water Tender, Oiler, Electrician and QMED (Qualified Member of the Engine Department), Greg earned the Third Engineer License in 1983 after attending Laws School Of Marine. Eventually he earned First Engineer Steam Motor and Gas Turbine of any Horse Power,

retiring in 2008 from Sealand as a Crane Engineer. Two years ago, Greg became a permanent member of the crew of the *Red Oak* and, after being prodded by his peers, recently became certified as Chief Engineer. "I am honored to hold this position and to be working with such brilliant and talented people," he says. "I have conquered many goals in my life, and together with the crew of the ROV we will sail this ship!"

By the way, my name is Rich Chivers, and I am First Electrician and "Chief Pancake Flipper." I have been with the *Red Oak* almost as long as Harold and am a Richmond native. With a Navy and Merchant Marine background, I, too, have found a home at the ROV.

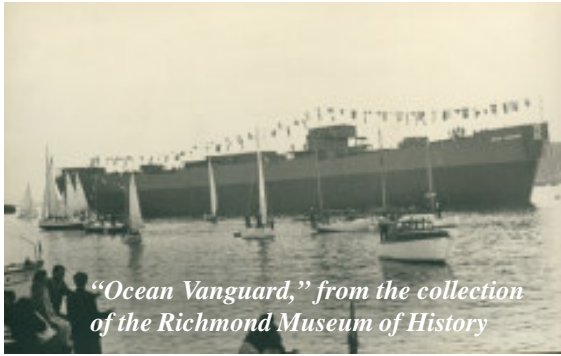
With all of the professionals coming to the ship these days it appears it won't be long now until we are getting "under way."

Thank you to all of you for your support over the years.



## KAISER, CONTINUED FROM P. 1

where near enough vacant shipways left to accommodate such a huge order. Henry Kaiser recognized this as a business opportunity, despite the fact that he had no experience building ships and



*"Ocean Vanguard," from the collection of the Richmond Museum of History*

had no shipyards in which to build them. It was a remarkable feat of salesmanship for Henry Kaiser,

who had neither shipbuilding experience nor shipyard, to get a contract to build thirty of those freighters at a yet-to-be-constructed shipyard on the shores of San Francisco Bay. It was company lore that because of the lack of shipbuilding experience in the Kaiser organization, Kaiser executives, on the way to Washington to meet with the British mission, stopped off in New York to visit the library and take out books on shipbuilding to prepare for submitting a proposal.

Throughout his career, Henry Kaiser was always able to make skillful use of partners already expert in a field he wished to enter. He had done it in construction; he would do it in automobile manufacturing and in several others of his major ventures. This time he joined with W.S. "Pete" Newell of the Todd Shipbuilding Company.

It was a good choice. The Todd Company owned one of the most experienced American shipyards, Bath Iron Works, in Maine. They had been building ships for more than a half-century. They had even built a battleship.

Newell and Kaiser would split the contract between them. The Todd Company would build thirty of the British Ocean Class vessels in their East Coast yards and Kaiser, with the Todd Company as his partner, would produce thirty ships in California. Cyril Thompson, the leader of the British mission, a man whose family had been building ships in Great Britain for several generations, remained in the U.S. for several months to help the Kaiser people in the planning of their new shipyard.

As obsolete as the Ocean Class ships may have appeared to the ship designers of 1940, it was a brilliant design for the needs of the time. The hull was angular, making the hull plates easy to shape. The design was very adaptable to the new electric arc welding techniques and needed less of the much more expensive riveting process. The engines were of a simple, proven design that operated under comparatively low steam pressure and were much easier to turn out in the large numbers that were needed than were the far more powerful steam-turbine engines that were currently being installed in other ships and would later power the Victory Ships. The ship had a single deckhouse, not only making it easier to build but reducing the need for costly and time-consuming wiring and plumbing. This simplicity shortened construction time even more. The Ocean Class freighter was a perfect design with which a new shipyard could gain experience. More complex ship designs could come later. *[To be continued in Steve's book; stay tuned.]*

## GREETERS WANTED -- NEED TO HAVE A BIG SMILE AND ONE DAY A MONTH.

Would you like to have a job that involves welcoming visitors to the *Red Oak Victory Ship* one or more days a month and doesn't pay anything but the satisfaction of a job that needs to be done?

The Ship is open for visitors on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and there are many volunteers working at many jobs on those days. But sometimes when visitors come aboard there is no one to tell them that they can do a self-guided tour or to call one of the volunteer docents or even to tell the visitors where the important things are like the heads or the Gift Shop.

To volunteer or get more information about being a greeter (or other volunteer opportunities), call Lorraine or Marjorie at (510) 237-2933 during open hours or leave a message.

There are many jobs on the *Red Oak* that involve hard work. This is not one of them. You might bring your knitting or a book to while away the time between visitors. You might find that it is such a pleasant way to pass the time you'll want to be a Greeter more often!

## A ROSIE VISITS THE MUSEUM



*Priscilla Shelton of Berkeley visited the Museum and identified herself in one of the large WW II photos on display in the Main Gallery. Ms. Shelton worked in Kaiser Shipyard #3 and is in the third row in the photo, sixth from left.*



# MUSEUM CELEBRATES NEW PUBLICATION

by Clare Fischer

The publication of Joseph Fischer's *Children's Art, Children's Words: Richmond, California 1943-1966* was celebrated with a book signing at a champagne reception on the patio of the Richmond Museum of History featuring tasty finger foods and good conversation.

Guests joined the author in the Seaver Gallery for a brief but informative introduction to the book which is based upon the Museum's unique collection of children's visual art produced at Richmond's WW II child care centers. Fischer's enthusiasm for promoting knowledge and appreciation of the Home Front as seen through the eyes of youthful artists is well documented in this most recent of the Museum's publications. His remarks included reference to the important work of conservation and preservation of the thou-



sands of paintings donated to the Museum by Monica Haley, longtime art director of the child care centers

During the Home Front Festival, a representative number of the children's artworks featured in the Fischer volume will be exhibited on board the *Red Oak Victory*.

Copies of the first edition may be purchased by check or credit card payment. Cost: \$45/copy plus \$10 for postage and handling. Please make checks payable to Richmond Museum of History and mail to P.O.Box 1267, Richmond, CA 94802.

For inquiries, email us at [info@richmondmuseumofhistory.org](mailto:info@richmondmuseumofhistory.org) or visit the Museum's website:

[www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org](http://www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org). You may also call us at (510) 235-7387.

## THE CARNEGIE BUILDING HITS 100



Richmond's Carnegie Library building, one of 142 erected in California, was completed in 1910. This year marks its 100th anniversary.

It is an example of the Classical Revival "temple in a park." The park is in a primarily residential area between Fourth and Sixth streets, Nevin Avenue and Macdonald Avenue, north of Highway 580 and west of the BART station, within a few blocks of historic downtown Richmond. The building itself is set back from the corner adjacent to well-used playing fields. The building was enlarged in 1923 and again in 1979, and in 1980 was rededicated as the Richmond Museum of History.

The history of the Carnegie Building is the story of women. It was women who decided that the new City of Richmond, incorporated in 1905, needed a public library. And it was women who applied for Carnegie funding and raised the matching money needed to buy land on which to build and money to fill the new building with books.

Architect William H. Weeks designed the building as well as 21 others in California.

### THE CARNEGIE LIBRARIES OF CALIFORNIA

On Wednesday, April 23, 1902, California's first Carnegie library opened in San Diego. It was a beautiful building and an outstanding example of the Classical Revival style. Nineteen years later, on November 15, 1921, in the small community of Orosi, the last of California's 142 public and two academic Carnegie libraries was completed. The Orosi Carnegie library is still in use today, as a branch library in the Tulare County Free Library System. It is a simple frame structure and its contrast to the San Diego building illustrates the wide range of architectural styles that were used in constructing Carnegie libraries between 1902 and 1921. Sadly, the San Diego Carnegie library was demolished in 1952.

California is second only to Indiana in the number of grants to construct Carnegie library buildings. Each library large or small represented a significant commitment by the people in the community. The Carnegie grant was to be used to construct the building, while the community was expected to provide a site and to tax itself at the annual rate of 10% of the grant amount for the purchase of books and for staffing and upkeep of the library.

Currently, only 85 of the original Carnegie public library buildings are still standing. Of these, 36 are still operating as libraries, 21 are museums, 13 are used for community services and the remaining 15 have a variety of uses. These buildings, regardless of their use, are clearly a part of the California heritage and should be preserved.

*This information was taken from [www.carnegie-libraries.org/](http://www.carnegie-libraries.org/) Visit this website for information on the Carnegie buildings in California and how to take an actual or virtual tour.*

**Celebrate this 100th Anniversary on Sunday, Nov. 14th from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. "You've Come a Long Way, Baby."**

## R.O.V. RESTORATION UPDATE

by Tom Bottomley

Earlier this year the *Red Oak Victory's* rudder was power-operated for the first time since December of 1968. Chief Engineer Greg Blasquez supervised the operation from the steering engine room, using both engine room and wheelhouse controls, eventually moving the rudder 20 degrees in each direction.

This was the culmination of several weeks of work by electrician Harold Wagner and engineers Bob Ball and Dick Bezman, and deck hand Richard Arnold. The motors, their controls, and the hydraulic systems were all completely overhauled, and the operating system was worked out in spite of the lack of instruction manuals.

Charlie Miglia drilled holes for mounting the two 20 mm guns on the aft house wings; gaskets were made to go between the deck and guns, and the guns were levered into position and bolted down. Cliff Warren, Jerry Souza, Charles Stephens and Richard Arnold all assisted.

All the ship's toilets are now flushable and all the sinks operable except for those in the aft boat deck washrooms. Jack Nolan had to replace a lot of rusted-out piping and defective faucets, as well as clear the drain pipes in many cases. John Bates did much of the work in restoring the toilet flush valves.

Cliff Warren climbed to the top of each king post, and removed the plywood covers from the ventilation shafts. Manson Construction brought a big crane alongside and loaded a "cherry picker" onto the deck alongside #3 hatch. With the help of the crane to hoist vent caps and the cherry picker to move men into position, two men were able to bolt vent caps on all four king posts. The four king posts now have all their caps for the first time since the ship was laid up.

The forward booms at hatch #3 have been lowered, and the blocks and other fittings associated with them are being installed so that these will become operational.

Ed Collins and Dick Dickenson have made riser platforms for the audience seating in #3 upper 'tween deck. Everyone in the audience will have a clear view of the stage area for performances.



## TOUR OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE RICHMOND MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Are you looking for an unusual and outstanding tour for your organization?

In cooperation with the National Park Service, tour and luncheon service is available through the Richmond Museum of History. Visit sites in the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park, tour the *SS Red Oak Victory* ship (a World War II ammunition ship built in the Kaiser Richmond Shipyards), enjoy a delicious lunch on the deck of the ship or in one of its restored cargo holds, and then have a docent-led tour of the Richmond Museum of History.

For information and bookings, call the Special Events Coordinator at 510-232-6593.

*Article courtesy of the Bentley Driver's Club, whose members enjoyed one of the tours of the park, the Ship and Museum.*

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE RICHMOND MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

### Privileges:

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- ◆ Advance notice of tours and events
- ◆ Free entrance to Museum and Ship

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### Categories of Membership

\$25	Senior/Student
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\_\_\_ I would like my newsletter sent by e-mail  
(saves money & trees).

Mail to:

**Richmond Museum of History  
PO Box 1267  
Richmond, CA 94802**



## ITEMS NOT ON DISPLAY

# FIRE EXTINGUISHER FROM THE PAST

by Lynn Maack

When I was a kid in Richmond's Atchison Village (actually, Atchison Village Annex I recently found out) in the 1950s, I remember an unassuming but important item attached to the outside wall of every residence. It was a fire extinguisher. It was a hand-operated device, with a pump handle on top and a hose for spraying water or whatever chemical concoction that was contained within the base. The Museum has one such fire extinguisher; although I can't be sure it was exactly like the one on my parents' house, it is likely very similar.

The Museum's example of home firefighting technology is a steel can (it looks like aluminum, but I tested it with a magnet) with a four-gallon capacity. It would hold either water or a chemical mix like soda/sulfuric acid for dispensing a carbon-dioxide-laden liquid or foam. The extinguisher stands 19 inches to the top of the body (can) and 25 inches to the top of the pump handle. The body is cone-shaped, with a top diameter of about 11 inches, tapering to a bottom diameter of nine inches. There is an opening on top of the body for filling, and on the pump assembly is a fitting for a hose (missing). A fitting on the base enables mounting the unit on a wall.



An orange-colored label on the side reads: "Underwriters' Laboratories Inc., Tested Number A-222969, 4-Gallon Hand Fire Extinguisher, Vimcar Steel Sash Co." Presumably the Vimcar Co. manufactured the device. In the center of the orange label is a Civil Defense logo, indicating that the fire extinguisher was considered part of national Civil Defense protections.

The extinguisher shows no manufacturing date, but a local resident, Sonny Jack-

son, provided a photograph of himself (on pony) and his sister Judy as children in the early 1950s, and we can see a fire extinguisher on the wall of their house. It appears to be the same type of extinguisher as the Museum's. Sonny thinks the home may have been on Cypress near 52nd St. in Richmond. In any case, it was in Richmond. Thanks to Sonny Jackson for the photo. It helps provide context for our fire extinguisher.

The Museum's fire extinguisher is far more cumbersome than modern-day extinguishers--those bright red canisters we see everywhere. Those canisters weigh a few pounds, can be easily handled and operated by one person and are pressurized for quick and easy application of contents on a fire. All you have to do is pull a pin, releasing a lever, aim the nozzle at the base of the fire and depress the lever to dispense the spray.

On the other hand--or I should say, on BOTH other hands, the Museum's fire extinguisher when full would weigh somewhere around 40 pounds! The user would have to place it on the ground or floor and, using one, maybe both hands, work the pump on top while somehow aiming the hose at the fire. Perhaps it was really a two-person operation.

Luckily, during my time at Atchison Village there were no fires.

*Donated in 1981 by T.D. Spillman.*

## FALL ENTERTAINMENT ON THE RED OAK

Returning for its last season on the *Red Oak* is "*RIVETS*," the musical sensation by Kathy McCarty, re-enacting the drama of life on the home front of World War II in Richmond. The story is about the changes our society was undergoing during the '40s as women and minorities joined the workforce in the country's defense industries. While the characters are fictional, McCarty incorporated in them composites of people she discovered in her decade of historical research.

Performances are at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 3 p.m. on Sundays throughout the month of October, commencing on October 2<sup>nd</sup> with a special matinee for the Home Front Festival at 3 p.m. on board the *S.S. Red Oak Victory*. Admission is \$30/person and reservations can be made through the ship's special events office by calling (510) 232-6593, or going online to Galatean Players.com. Blue Star Moms will be on board to receive donations for Holiday Care Packages for our service personnel engaged in foreign conflict.

The smashing success of 2009's "*Gangway to Broadway*" by the Clarewood Singers, mandated a return visit for another holiday show in the #4 hold of the ship this year. Watch for future announcement of the date. Space is limited for this cocktail show, and reservations are required.

And remember the last Pancake Breakfast of this year: October 10th is the kick-off of Fleet Week. A great excuse for a \$6 breakfast and a view to die for.

Stay tuned for details on the ROV's 12th celebration of Veterans Day on Thursday, Nov. 11th.

**Richmond Museum Association, Inc.**

Museum open Wed-Sun, 1-4 p.m.  
400 Nevin Ave., P.O. Box 1267  
Richmond CA 94802  
(510) 235-7387

[Richmondmuseumofhistory.org](http://Richmondmuseumofhistory.org)

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# HELP RAISE THE ANCHOR!

## CERTIFICATES OF INVESTMENT

We have launched a *Red Oak Drydock Campaign*. Savings Certificates, redeemable for passage on the Ship's first cruise after drydock, are now being sold at \$20 each. The first cruise requires six (6) certificates, which will have an appreciated value of \$150 -- the cost of the first cruise. Certificates must be purchased by December 10, 2010, and are available in the Ship's Gift Shop, or by calling the Ship's office at (510) 237-2933.



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



**Admission:**

Members: Free  
Seniors/Students: \$1.00  
General: \$2.00  
Children: Free w/adult

Non-Profit Org  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Richmond, CA  
Permit No. 78

The Museum is open Wednesday thru Sunday, 1-4 p.m.  
Call (510) 235-7387 for information and tour appointments.  
Visit us online at: [RICHMONDMUSEUMOFHISTORY.ORG](http://RICHMONDMUSEUMOFHISTORY.ORG)

## DATED MATERIAL -- PLEASE EXPEDITE DELIVERY

Return Service Requested

Richmond Museum Assoc., Inc.  
P.O. Box 1267  
Richmond, CA 94802