

THE MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Spring 2009

Vol. 58

No. 1

MUSEUM, SHIP PLAY A BIG PART IN PRESERVING RICHMOND'S HISTORY

By *Sandi Genser-Maack*
Chair, *Historic Preservation Awards Committee*

The Richmond Museum of History and the *Red Oak Victory Ship* both figure prominently in this year's Historic Preservation Awards. Three nominations were made by Richmond Museum Association (RMA) Board President Lois Boyle on behalf of the Association, and all three were chosen for awards. A fourth award will be presented to a long-time RMA board member, now retired.



Craneway at Ford Point. Photo by Ellen Gailing.

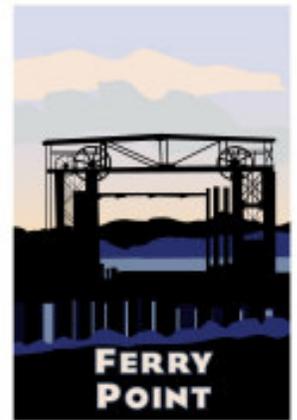
Chosen to receive awards are "*Images of America: Richmond*," by Donald Bastin, the Museum's Executive Director; the *Red Oak Victory* Amateur Radio Club for the renovation of the ship's Radio Room, and Donald L. Hardison, FAIA, for a lifetime of work from the shipyard years to local schools, community buildings and award-winning housing developments.

The fourth Museum-related award is the 2nd Annual Home Front Award from the National Park Service, this year given to long-time ROV volunteer Purser Thomas Bottomley for "*The Story of a Lone Survivor – SS Red Oak Victory*," the well researched and documented story of the ship which "promotes recognition and understanding of this important historical period in Richmond" and beyond.

Two historic buildings were chosen to receive awards: the Ford Assembly Plant, rehabilitated by Orton Development, Inc, and the Cannery, rehabilitated by the STG Group. And Bette Tarr of Terrafirma Graphics, a Richmond native daughter who donates her work to many local causes, including several based on preserving Richmond's history, was also chosen to be honored.

CELEBRATE AND SHARE

The Historic Preservation Awards Reception is Monday, May 18th, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Mountain Hardware in the Ford Point Building, 1414 Harbour Way South, Suite 1005. It is open to the public. Come share the celebration, meet the honorees and learn more about their projects.



Poster by Bette Tarr.

The awards presentations will be filmed by Richmond's TV station, KCRT, Channel 28, and shown often during the next year. Both books mentioned are available for purchase at the Museum and *Red Oak* Gift Shops, and visitors to the *Red Oak Victory* can view the Radio Room.

The Awards are sponsored by Richmond's Historic Preservation Advisory Committee.



The Cannery. Photo by Lina Velasco.

FEATURING FORD

by Donald Bastin

On Wednesday, March 18, Clem and I were privileged to take a tour of the Ford building in company with members of the Santa Clara branch of the Model A Ford Club of America. With us were Chuck Christensen, who sits on the national board of the club, and Dave Jones, VP of the Santa Clara chapter. Our host and guide was Troy Peterson, Building Manager with Orton Development. We met Troy at a little after 11 a.m. and spent an unhurried 90 minutes touring the site.

I think we were all very impressed with what we saw. The interior of the building, well over half a million square feet, is now almost all leased out to various tenants. At the north end of the building, Mountain Hardware, maker of high-end mountaineering gear, has made the space their own. At the south end of the building, the Craneway has been completely remodeled and restored, and is available for use as a dance and music venue, or almost any activity requiring space, light, and a great view of the bay.



The saw-tooth design of the original Albert Kahn-designed roofline, with its vast acreage of window glass, gives the interior of the building a cheerful lightness and reduces the need for artificial lighting. Orton Development has taken advantage of the available space on the roof by installing a huge solar array over the entire surface. The installation was made easier by the fact that the angle of the saw-tooth roofing is ideal for solar installation in our area -- about 38 degrees.



According to the website for Mountain Hardware, 100 percent of their power consumption is provided by the solar array.

While much has been changed in the old building, much has been preserved. The old stairways and metal banisters have not

only been preserved, but repaired. The oak-wood paneled offices that used to house the Ford company officers now serve the present tenants. The warm glow of the old oak could never have been replaced.

About the only thing presently lacking in the Ford building is a restaurant. Luckily for us locals, this amenity will also be provided. As we speak, the old boiler room is being renovated and should be open for food service before long. As we can see, some of the old machinery will remain to provide atmosphere.



Sitting alongside the southeastern side of the building is a separate structure, the oil house, which was originally used to



store oil. As of this writing, this building will house the National Park Service employees. It will also serve as the park's "Rosie" museum and Visitors' Center.

Renovation of the oil building is well under way and should provide a charming venue for the park and its many offerings. The site itself is pleasant and strategically located near the water and with a magnificent view of the San Francisco Bay and Richmond's historic southern shoreline.

Following our tour of the Ford building, Chuck and Dave accompanied us to our Museum, to engage in a little research and to do a little "restoration" work on our Ford.

Chuck has been very generous in providing the Museum with some original Ford tools to go along with our Ford display. During one visit, I mentioned to Chuck that I was concerned that the old 4-cylinder engine might be in danger of "freezing up," as I was certain that it had not been turned over in at least 30 years. I indicated that I would like to take out the spark plugs, squirt some oil into the cylinders, and slowly turn the engine over by hand. But I needed a crank, which we do not have. Chuck immediately offered to provide a crank. He was as good as his word, and within two weeks the museum had a genuine (reproduction) of an original Model A Ford hand crank.

Alas, nothing is quite as simple as one imagines, and when I attempted to insert the crank, I found that the engine was sitting too low for engagement to be made. It seems that when the engine was put back into the car, some 40 or more years ago, the proper "spacers" were not included. Back to the rescue, Chuck has provided the museum with the proper fittings; now I just have to set aside the time to install them.

When examining our car on his initial visit, Chuck noticed that the carburetor was not original, but actually was from a 1932 Model "B" engine. On this visit, he and Dave proposed to replace the incorrect carburetor with a genuine (but non-working) model from a 1931 Ford. Both men rolled up their sleeves, and within about 45 minutes the old carburetor was out and replaced.



The new carb, the black thing just below dead center

In addition, Chuck removed the old fuel filter, which was attached to the firewall. This was also not authentic to the 1931

Ford, as the fuel filter is part of the carburetor.

I want to personally thank Chuck and Dave for arranging the visit to the Ford building, and, in particular, for taking a personal interest in our car. Their knowledge and expertise have been a great asset to improving our display. And, it should be noted, it was Chuck's research on the opening of the Ford plant in 1931 which led to our carefully examining our newspaper records, leading to the almost certain identification of our car as, indeed, the first vehicle built at the Richmond plant (see Donald's Corner, this issue).

Thanks, Guys!

If you want to learn more about the Model A Ford Club of America (of which the Santa Clara Valley club is a chapter member), visit them at: MAFCA.com.



Dave Jones, left, Chuck Christensen, right

Photos in this article by Donald Bastin.

THE MIRROR IS ON OUR WEBSITE!

You can now access *The Mirror* on the Museum website. With this issue, we have the last five issues online. The Museum is trying to cut down on mailing expenses by moving to online publication and distribution via email instead of mailed hardcopy.

Contact Museum Director Donald Bastin at (510) 235-7387 to get on the email distribution list.

Meanwhile, the website address for The Mirror is

<http://www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org/newsletter.htm>.

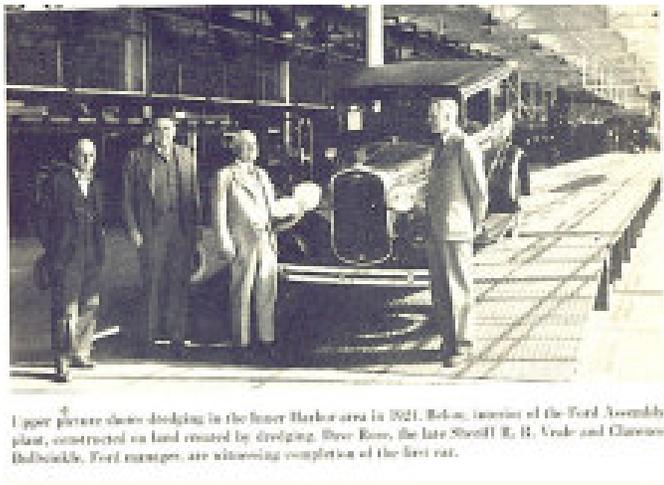
DONALD'S CORNER

THE FIRST FORD

by Donald Bastin, Executive Director

The First Ford? As you all know, the centerpiece of our Main Gallery exhibit area is our 1931 Model A Ford. A gift from the city, it was also (we understand), a gift from the Ford Company to the City of Richmond. We have told people for years that our car was the first automobile produced at Richmond's assembly plant. But the source of this legend has been elusive, and I have been troubled that we have had no documentation to support this claim.

My doubts were aggravated a few years ago as I was leafing through a copy of *A History of Richmond* by Joseph Whitnah (1944), when I came upon a photo (pg 107), that shows four gentlemen standing around what is purported to be "the first car" produced at the Richmond plant. I could tell immediately that this vehicle was a sedan (with seats front and back).



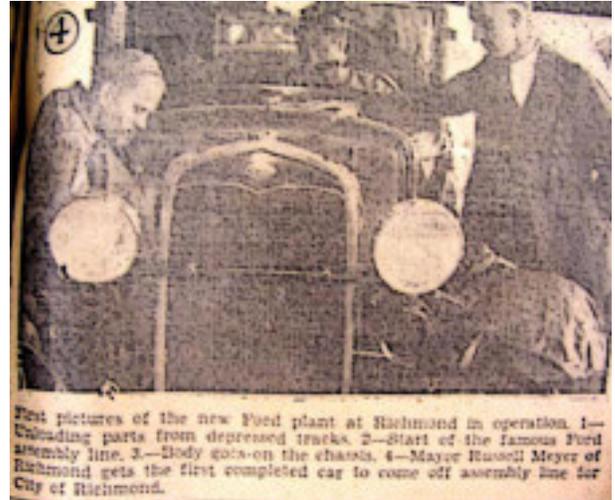
Upper picture shows shoddy in the Inner Harbor area in 1921. Below, interior of the Ford Assembly plant, constructed on land created by dredging. Here Ross, the late Sheriff H. B. Veale and Clarence Dalbovick, Ford managers, are witnessing completion of the first car.

Our car is a coupe body style, with only one seat. So Whitnah was directly contradicting our claim to have Richmond's first car. Either the museum or Whitnah was wrong.

So for the last two years, I have hedged a bit when describing our car, claiming only that it was built in Richmond, and probably on the first day of operation, but beyond that, I could affirm nothing. I even considered trying to get some attention from the "History Detectives." But, as luck would have it, while assisting a visitor doing research on the Ford building, we found our answers.

We have copies of the *Richmond Independent* newspaper in our archives, and I had reviewed the issues from the opening date of the Ford plant (August 1, 1931), but neglected to go back from that date. Pity, as I would have noted that on July 29, there was a photo of Richmond's Mayor Meyer inspecting his car, the

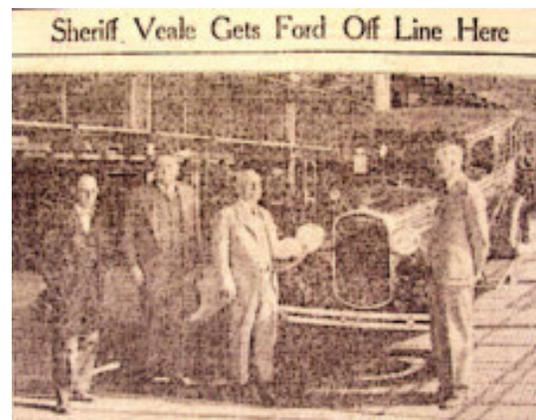
"first completed car to come off assembly line for City of Richmond."



First pictures of the new Ford plant at Richmond in operation. 1—Unloading parts from depressed tracks. 2—Start of the famous Ford assembly line. 3—Body gets on the chassis. 4—Mayor Russell Meyer of Richmond gets the first completed car to come off assembly line for City of Richmond.

So Richmond did get the first car! It seems that the Ford Company was actually producing cars before August 1, the official opening date. But where did Whitnah get his information? That question was answered in the August 18 edition of the *Independent*.

As we can see from the picture below, this was not the first car at all, but the car built for Contra Costa County Sheriff Veale (shorter man in white suit, center). So Whitnah got it wrong (I



should have known that it was strange that a local sheriff would be prominently featured at the opening ceremonies of an auto assembly plant). Now the picture made sense.

As the old saying goes, you just can't believe everything you read. And sometimes, old legends really are true. While we still don't have ironclad proof, the available evidence does indicate that our Ford is the very first car to come off the line at Richmond's assembly plant. Nice to know.

[Nice detective work, Donald! Ed.]

MEMBERSHIP DUES CHANGE

The Museum Association membership dues structure has changed. Dues for several of the membership categories have increased, while others have remained the same. The dues schedule is now as follows:

- Seniors -- \$25.00
- Individual -- \$35.00
- Family -- \$50.00
- Contributing -- \$65.00
- Sustaining -- \$100.00
- Patron -- \$500.00
- Benefactor/Corporate -- \$1,000.00

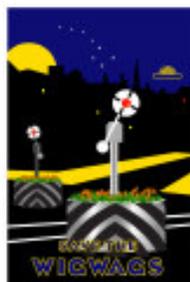
Renewing members can renew (this year only) at the old rates.

FILM FESTIVAL ABOARD THE *RED OAK VICTORY*

Six classic World War II movies will be shown on the *Red Oak Victory* on the second and fourth Thursdays during June, July and August. The series, the first Bay Area WWII Home Front Film Festival, is sponsored by the Richmond Museum Association and the National Park Service. Popcorn and other treats will be available. Boarding begins at 6:30 p.m., and show time is 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Boarding fee is \$5.00.

- June 11 - *Casablanca*
- June 25 - *Sergeant York*
- July 9 - *Mrs. Miniver*
- July 23 - *Action in the North Atlantic*
- Aug 13 - *Nothing but Trouble* and *Air Raid Wardens* (Laurel & Hardy double feature)
- Aug 27 - *The Best Years of Our Lives*

MORE GRAPHICS FROM AWARD WINNER BETTE TARR (SEE PAGE 1)



FROM THE PRESIDENT.... CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

by Lois Boyle

In April of 1919, President Woodrow Wilson was in Paris attending the Peace Conference and attempting to establish the League of Nations. World War I had just ended a few months before and the troops were returning home. The 36th state (Oklahoma) had just ratified the 18th amendment – prohibition would go into effect on January 20, 1920. Women were about to be given the right to vote, and the New York Yankees lost to the Red Sox, 10-0, on their opening game the day before. And, Mary Tom Coe was born. Mary Tom turns ninety this month! She has been our faithful corresponding secretary for almost 20 years. Thank you, Mary Tom, for all these wonderful years of service to the Richmond Museum, and Happy Birthday!

The busy fall months at the Museum rolled by so quickly into the new year when your seasoned officers and board directors were re-elected. The adoption of the new budget and calendar of events guaranteed that 2009 was going to be an eventful year, full of promise for the Museum as it celebrated its 55 years of community service on the occasion of the re-dedication of Nevin Park and the painting and improvements to the grounds of our building.

The Association was incorporated in 1954, but its story began in 1909 when the Women's Improvement Club, later called the Richmond Women's City Club, approached the city fathers with a plan for a free public library. They would purchase land in the San Pablo Tract at 4th and Nevin and give it to the City, contingent upon its gaining a Carnegie grant for the establishment of the library. This contingency was met and our grand Carnegie building was constructed in 1910 for \$17,000. When the library moved to its new quarters at the Civic Center, the Richmond Museum signed a lease for the building in June of 1962, at the reasonable price of \$1.00/year, and entered into an agreement in 1982 for the continued provision of a museum in the newly restored and enlarged building. Another Happy Birthday to celebrate.

May, Historic Preservation Month, is the time when the city's Historic Preservation Committee honors two of our own:

Donald Bastin for his book, *Images of America: Richmond*, and the Radio Club for its restoration and preservation of the *SS Red Oak Victory's* Radio Room to its original 1944 condition. The National Park Service has selected Thomas Bottomley's book, *The Story of a Lone Survivor, SS Red Oak Victory*, for its Home Front Award. These valued volunteers will be recognized at an award ceremony on Monday, May 18th, from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m., at Mountain Hardwear in the Ford Assembly Plant. Join with us and the city as we honor these preservationists.

COMING UP FOR 2009 ON THE SHIP

The *ROV* is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, weather permitting.

Father's Day, Sunday, June 21 -- Pancake Breakfast*.
We can't think of a better Father's Day treat.
9 a.m. to 1 p.m., as usual.

Friday, July 3 -- Richmond's 4th of July celebration.
Have dinner aboard ship and then watch Richmond's fireworks display from the after deck. Good food, a ringside seat for a fine display, and it's easy getting in and out. Cost: \$25.00. Reservations required. Mail checks to P.O. Box 1267, Richmond, CA 94802.

Sunday, August 9 -- Pancake Breakfast*.
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sunday, September 13 -- Pancake Breakfast*.
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday, October 3 -- Home Front Festival-by-the-Bay. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visit the *Red Oak* as part of the festivities of the day. More festival at Lucretia Edwards Park at the south end of Marina Way.

Sunday, October 11 -- Last Pancake Breakfast* of the year. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Fleet Week celebration.

Sunday, November 8, 2 p.m.
Combined Celebration: 65th Anniversary of the launch of the *ROV*/Veterans Day

* Join us at one of our monthly Pancake Breakfasts. Only \$6 for pancakes, eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, juice, and coffee. The best deal around the bay!

SS Red Oak Victory

1337 Canal Blvd., Berth 6A

www.ssredoakvictory.com

Open for visitors on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.. For group tour and event booking information, call Lorraine at (510) 222-0955.

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE RICHMOND MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

Privileges:

- ◆ Reduced admission to events
- ◆ Discounts on services, books, and gift items
- ◆ Quarterly newsletter, "*The MIRROR*"
- ◆ Advance notice of tours and events
- ◆ Free entrance to Museum and Ship

Yes, I want to become a member

Enclosed is my check for

\$ _____ (payable to RMA)

Categories of Membership

\$25	Senior/Student
\$35	Individual
\$50	Family/Organization
\$65	Contributing
\$100	Sustaining
\$500	Patron
\$1000	Benefactor/Corporate

___ New ___ Renew ___ Gift
___ I Would like to volunteer

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone _____

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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 IN THE MUSEUM COLLECTION NOT ON DISPLAY

STEREOGRAPHS AND STEREOSCOPES

by Lynn Maack

Long before there were video games, televisions or motion pictures for visual entertainment and education, there was a device called a stereoscope. With a stereoscope, a person could view photographs in a way that made them appear three-dimensional. Understandably, stereoscopes were a popular item. British scientist and inventor Charles Wheatstone unveiled the stereography concept in 1838 using drawings. With the development of photography in the late 1830s and 1840s, stereography using photographs quickly followed. The next 100 years saw a proliferation of stereographs; millions were produced. Mass production made them cheap enough that nearly every home, school and church had a stereoscope and at least a few stereographs. They brought two-dimensional images to life. Stereographs were used in schools to teach children about all manner of subjects, such as geography, natural history and foreign cultures. In the 1930s, the popularity of stereographs waned as motion pictures took center stage.

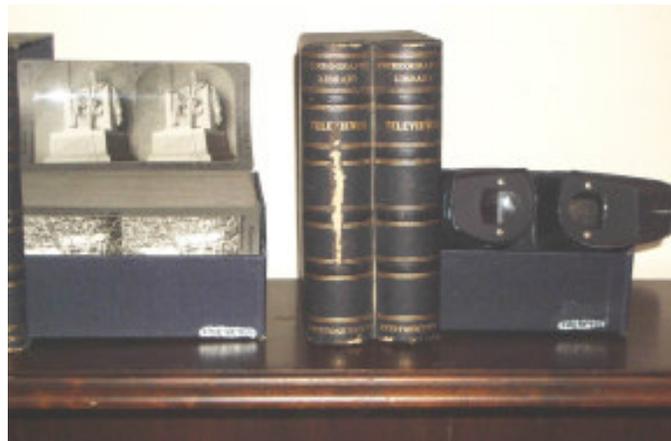
The stereoscope is a binocular apparatus with magnifying lenses and either a “hood” placed against the brow and nose or eyepieces that position the lenses in front of the user’s eyes and direct vision toward the photographs. Projecting several inches forward from the lens mounts is an attachment that provides a “blinder” between the eyes to prevent cross-vision and a holder for the stereograph card. The stereograph has two nearly-identical photographs mounted side-by-side—one for the left eye and one for the right eye. Very early stereographs were printed on copper or glass, but paper soon supplanted those materials and photographs were mounted on stiff paper board. Early stereograph cards were flat; in the 1880s, stereo cards were warped horizontally to increase the three-dimensional effect.



Stereograph of the Lincoln Memorial statue.

The photographs were taken of one subject from two different perspectives, much as the human eyes see things from slightly different perspectives. Looking through the viewer lenses, the user sees the two photographs as one image, appearing as three-dimensional. This “3-D” feature is caused by the brain interpreting the two slightly-different images as one containing depth and dimension.

The Museum has in its collection several different stereoscopes, made by different companies at different times. One of these was made by the Keystone View Company sometime in the 1920s or 1930s and is part of a set consisting of the viewer and



The Museum’s stereograph set contains stereo cards (left) and a metal binocular viewer (right) in boxes that look like hard-bound book volumes.

300 black-and-white stereographs. The set is entitled “Tour of the World” and contains views of landmarks, statues, buildings and scenes from countries all over the world. Keystone sold the “Tour of the World” in sets of 300, 600 and 1200 stereographs. The larger sets allowed the world traveler to visit more locations or linger in others.

The stereo cards and the viewer are held in four boxes, each of which appears to be two hard-bound books when in a bookcase. The set is a remarkable relic of a time past and still provides an enlightening look at the world at the time.

This set was donated to the Museum’s Treasure and Junque Faire, 1992. Photos by Lynn Maack.

**YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT THE RED
OAK VICTORY SHIP HAS A NEW, MUCH STEADIER,
GANGLANK AND BATHROOMS!!!!**

IF YOU HAVE NOT VISITED LATELY, IT’S TIME!

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

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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.

Summer on the Ship

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See more calendar listings on page 6.

SS Red Oak Victory

1337 Canal Blvd., Berth 6A
www.ssredoakvictory.com

Open for visitors on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.. For group tour and event booking information, call Lorraine at (510) 222-0955.



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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**

Admission:

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