

The MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Richmond Museum of History

Winter 2015 - 2016

SS Red Oak Victory Ship

RICHMOND AND THE LEGACY OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The Museum's Seaver Gallery soon will be witness to a different sort of exhibit than it usually hosts. Local history is replete with a



From the Collection of BPP/It's About Time

variety of interesting stories that may have had a significant impact that is not entirely understood today. Lesser-known movements that had subtle effects are often overshadowed by significant events that resulted in huge changes. The Richmond Museum of History has set a goal to bring more of the lesser-known stories back into the light for the education and enjoyment of our community.

In the early morning hours of April 1, 1967, a young man named Denzil Dowell was shot by a Contra Costa Deputy Sheriff in North Richmond. The following morning, the Richmond Independent reported that Denzil had been shot twice in the back while fleeing an attempted robbery of Bill's Liquor Store located at Chesley & Truman. The Dowell family, particularly Mama Dowell, was incensed at the local newspaper coverage that contradicted their first-hand account of the events and called upon the newly-formed Black Panther Party for Self Defense for assistance in calling for justice over Denzil's death. The Black Panther Party obliged and dedicated the first issue of the party newspaper to the circumstances surrounding the death. The newspaper continued for many years, its sales eventually becoming one of the primary sources of income for the Party.

The Black Panther Party in Richmond is the subject of the next exhibit in the Seaver Gallery, set to open on Saturday, January 23, 2016 with a Reception at 2:00 p.m. A series of related events will take place throughout the month of February in honor of Black History Month. Check the online events calendar at www.richmondmuseum.org for a full listing of events at the Richmond Museum of History and the SS Red Oak Victory Ship.

COME CELEBRATE WITH THE RMA

While we were hoping to capitalize in 2016 on the huge success that was the first-ever RMA Crab Fest, the water pollution levels have made crab season in Northern California difficult, and the move of the *Red Oak Victory* challenged us to find another venue. We here at the RMA take pride in our flexibility and are always up for a challenge. So we are hosting our first fundraising dinner to be held at Richmond's Historic Galileo Club on Friday, January 29, 2016, to celebrate the 110th anniversary of the Incorporation of the City of Richmond, slightly late. (Actual date of Incorporation, August 7, 1905.)

Tickets to the event are \$45 per person or a table of eight can be purchased for \$350. The Silent Auction will begin the evening at 5:30 p.m., and we have a range of wonderful items for all budgets. The Silent Auction is comprised of donations from Disneyland, Sonoma Raceway/NASCAR, San Francisco Opera, Masquers Playhouse, Pier 39, and some great local restaurants, among many others. Sports memorabilia in the auction include a plaque signed by Hall of Famer Willie Mays, a signed puck from the San Jose Sharks and an autographed 49ers football. Thank you to all of the generous donors who made the Silent Auction possible!

An elegant and delicious dinner by the Galileo Club follows the Silent Auction. The choices are Roast Beef and Roasted Pork Loin, along with a Vegetarian option. Tickets can be purchased in three ways: in person at the Museum or Ship gift shop, over the phone at 510-235-7387, or online at www.richmondmuseum.org.

ANNUAL MEETING

Members of the Richmond Museum Association are invited to the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 21st, 2016, at 2:00 p.m. at the Richmond Museum of History. On the agenda is the election of Board members, review of 2015 and preview of the exciting events coming in 2016, and, most importantly (and most fun), recognition of some very special people.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

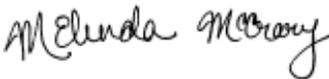
Dear Members and Friends of the Richmond Museum Association (RMA):

We find ourselves again at a time of renewal as we leave 2015 behind and look ahead to the unknown of 2016. A new year provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the past and make the changes we deem necessary to make our world a better place to live for the following year and beyond. Self-reflection is a powerful tool for both individuals and organizations and the Richmond Museum Association is no exception.

The mission of the Museum centers around preserving and displaying materials of historical interest related to Richmond, California, in order to educate the public about our local history. (Read the RMA Mission Statement below.) A range of recent issues at the Museum and the Ship have distracted our attention away from the core mission, including the Ship move, lack of critical resources, and updating the organizational bylaws. At this time, everyone who loves this organization must steel their resolve and commitment to the mission statement of our organization, which is to educate the public about local history.

Thank you for your continued support of the Richmond Museum Association. I am confident that together we can keep carrying out the important mission of educating people about the importance of local history.

Sincerely,

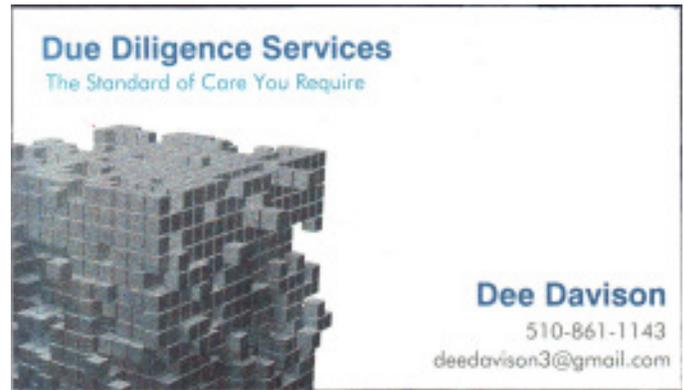


Melinda McCrary

The mission of the Richmond Museum Association (RMA) is to promote and encourage the study and research of Richmond's history, including the greater Richmond area, and to disseminate knowledge of that history; to collect, preserve and display historical materials and artifacts of significance to Richmond, and to mark, preserve, and maintain places of historical interest.

WWII MOVIES ON THE *RED OAK*

The popular series of WW II-era movies shown on the third Thursdays of each month on the *Red Oak Victory*, and hosted by Ranger Craig Riordan of the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park, will resume once the Ship has moved and reopened. Check the website, www.richmondmuseum.org to confirm.



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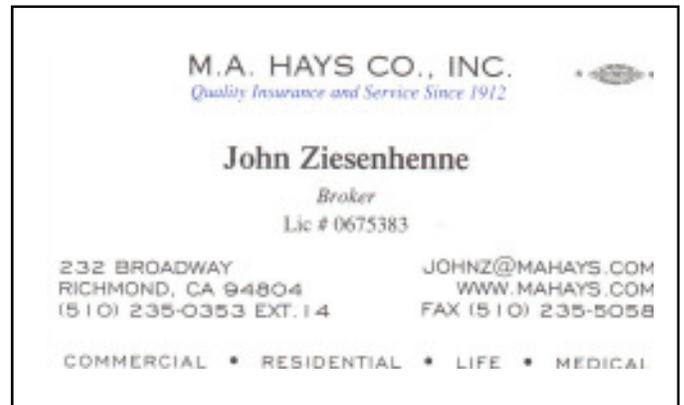
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Ziesenhenne, President of the Board

It has been a quick three years for me as President of the Richmond Museum Association Board, and what a tremendous honor it has been. The special people that make up the Board of Directors work tirelessly for the betterment of the RMA and the Richmond community at large. To Executive Director Melinda McCrary and her staff—thank you for your daily work to promote our wonderful Museum as it grows professionally, educationally and historically in our community and throughout California. To Director of Ship Operations John Rodgers and former Director Angelo Barone—thank you for your leadership, and thank you also to the wonderful dedicated volunteer crew working to restore the *Red Oak*.

A very special Thank You to Marsha Tomassi, the Treasurer of the RMA Board of Directors the past three years; as we enter 2016, the financial accounting and reporting is as accurate as it has ever been in the 61-year history of the organization. Because of the countless hundreds, if not thousands of hours that she has volunteered, the organization was able to have the 2014 financial audit completed, with 2015 soon to be finished. With its financial records verified and in order, the RMA is able to submit applications for grants for the Museum as well as the *Red Oak*. With a solid, trusted financial base, the Board, Staff and Volunteers are able to move forward with future planning for needed expenditures at 4th & Nevin and on the historic *Red Oak Victory*. It cannot be said too many times, Thank you, Marsha!

Thank you to the Executive Board—Jeff Wright, Sandi Genser-Maack, Susan McCloskey, Marsha Tomassi and Lorraine Regier. We have spent many hours together with the full board rebuilding the organization into a professional nonprofit that the community and our donors can be very proud of.

2016 will be a very exciting year for the Richmond Museum Association—the Museum will have a new wooden floor installed, the Victor Arnautoff mural will be on display and the *Red Oak's* engines should run for the first time in 48 years as she prepares to travel under her own power on San Francisco Bay and perhaps beyond! There is so much to be thankful for and to look forward to in the New Year ahead. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you who support the Richmond Museum Association through each of your individual time and talents.

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

ROV GANGWAY DAMAGED

by John Rodgers

The shore end of the Ship's gangway was damaged last month and will not safely accommodate visitors. Until the gangway is repaired, the Ship will be closed to visitors. Thanks go out to Angelo Barone, Chief Engineer Greg Blasquez and the Volunteer crew who turned to getting the gangway damage under control on Christmas Day and the following week.

The reasons for the damage appear to have been tide, wind and possible vessel traffic (tug) nearby. We will be working to make sure it does not happen again. The new location in the graving dock will be a much better berth, to avoid storm and traffic damage to the gangway. I would say by mid-January the gangway should be repaired.



Shipyard 3, showing the entrance to Basin #5, the new home of the *Red Oak Victory*, which is adjacent to the original Shipyard whirley crane.

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.

ITEMS NOT ON DISPLAY

MINER'S SAFETY LAMP

by Lynn Maack

Here is a miner's safety lamp made by the the Wolf Safety Lamp Company of America. The Wolf Safety Lamp Co. was established in Leeds, England, in 1880 as a distributor for mining lamps manufactured by the German company, Friemann & Wolf.



The Museum's lamp, ca. 1905-10, is a product of the evolution of mine safety lamps since the late 18th century. Mine safety lamps were developed not only to provide light, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to detect dangerous gasses in coal mines.

Light for mining was produced by open flame, damped to the extent possible to prevent igniting explosive gasses. Prior to safety lamps, miners used candles and wick or carbide headlamps, often with disastrous results. Often tests were required to detect the presence of gasses. The miner selected to perform the test would lie flat on the ground, place a lighted candle on the floor of the mine and slowly raise it (what could possi-

bly go wrong??); if the flame increased or turned bluish, flammable gas, usually methane, was present; if the flame decreased or went out, excess carbon dioxide or nitrogen was suspected. If gas was detected, the miner would slowly retreat with the candle so the mine could be properly ventilated or, if the quantity of explosive gas was thought to be small, the gas set afire. The purpose of lying flat on the ground was so any explosion would pass safely over the miner's head. Many a hapless miner did not survive the experience. One can readily see the importance of a safer means of lighting and gas detection.

The first attempt at making a safety lamp occurred in 1798 in England, without success. The first successful lamp was made by Dr. William Reed Clanny in 1815. Over subsequent years, gas and flame analysis and experimentation with different lamp designs and fuels resulted in a design that allowed outside air into the lamp to oxidize its fuel without allowing the flame to ignite explosive gasses. The key, discovered by Sir Humphrey Davy, was the use of wire mesh or gauze around a carefully-controlled flame. The mesh prevented the oil-fueled flame from escaping from the lamp and dissipated its heat, thus minimizing risk of explosion. Although not without explosions, these controlled open-flame lamps were significantly safer than the alternatives even well into the 20th century.

Safety lamps were large and unwieldy and gave weak light, so despite their inherent safety advantage, miners preferred

headlamps, and for two reasons: convenience and pay. The safety lamp slowed work, and since miners earned by the pound, safety lost out to higher pay. Disastrous mining accidents in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in which hundreds of miners died prompted Congress to create the U.S. Bureau of Mines in 1910. In 1915, the Bureau approved the first electric miner's lamp and started the move away from open-flame lighting. Mining accidents declined greatly as a result.

Made of brass and glass, the Museum's lamp measures 15" tall and about 3" in diameter. On top, the inner chimney is a wire mesh and the outer shell is a carefully-ventilated shield protecting the mesh. The wick-type burner is behind the glass in the center, below which is the fuel font. A winding-type key adjusts the flame height by turning a square peg connected to the burner.



View of the burner unit.

According to the accession record, the lamp was used on a ship. The donor stated that the lamp was lowered into a ship's fuel bunker to detect the level of fuel oil. A handwritten sticker on the lamp says it was owned by Tom Ryan, USMMA. Presumably, USMMA stands for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Given this attribution and the gaseous environment in which safety lamps were originally used, it is conceivable that the Museum's lamp might be suitable for use in fuel bunkers. However, it was more likely used to check for gasses, rather than fuel level; the level of oxygen in a fuel bunker would likely be insufficient to sustain a flame and enable visual determination of a fuel level. In any case, this lamp is of the mining variety. And we won't try it on the *Red Oak*....

Donated in 2013 by Kathleen Vinci, Richmond resident.

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RED OAK ON THE MOVE

by John Rodgers

To the Members of the Richmond Museum Association,

Thank you for the opportunity to volunteer as Director of the *Red Oak Victory Ship*. I have the honor to work with a very determined, talented and dedicated group of volunteers. To the person, they all wish to see the *ROV* become operational. I have no doubt that this wish will become an exciting reality because of these determined *ROV* volunteers and their accomplishments!

For the 2016 year coming up, the projects for the *ROV* are:

◆ Moving the Ship to Graving Dock No. 5: The City and Port of Richmond are putting the *ROV* in a location that will offer more protection from the elements and vessel traffic. The volunteers are working very hard to make this move happen.

◆ Evaluating, planning and estimating for the full operation of the *ROV*: This will start the first of January. It will involve all department heads and various volunteers. The goal is to have the planning and estimates complete and to start a full campaign of fundraising by the first of May.

◆ Getting the *ROV* operational: With the good progress made by Chief Greg Blasquez and his volunteers, the Engine Room of the *ROV* should become operational this year. The full operation of the *ROV* will depend on how quickly funding can be raised to do necessary hull and engineering work. Time will tell, but the hope by all is that we can do it within a two-year period.

◆ Adding a second gangway to the *ROV*: This will allow better access to the *ROV* during events.

Thank you, members of the RMA for your support and help. Please know that the *ROV* and its volunteers are working very hard to make taking a ride on the *SS Red Oak Victory* on San Francisco Bay a great reality! I look forward to giving you updates!

Best to All,
John Rodgers
Director, *ROV*

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UPDATE ON THE ARNAUTOFF MURAL

The Fall 2015 issue of *The MIRROR* reported that a historic mural that once hung in the Main Post Office on Nevin Avenue had been rediscovered by a team led by Richmond Museum of History staff and will soon be on display. The mural remains at the art conservator's studio where it will undergo the first round of treatment to consolidate loose paint before it can be flipped over to remove the lead adhesive.

As you can image, the restoration process will not come cheaply but will be well worth the cost when the mural is back on view for the public. The Richmond Museum of History is fundraising from a variety of sources so we can accommodate the cost in our modest operating budget. If you are interested in learning more about the mural or would like to donate towards the restoration project, please call Melinda at (510) 235-7387. In the meantime, enjoy the photo from the Museum's archives of the mural in its original location in the Post Office.

Thanks to former Museum Director Donald Bastin for calling our attention to the photo. Thanks, Donald!



MUSEUM WISH LIST

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

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

RED OAK WISH LIST

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

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

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

THE GOINGS-ON ON THE RED OAK

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

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

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

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

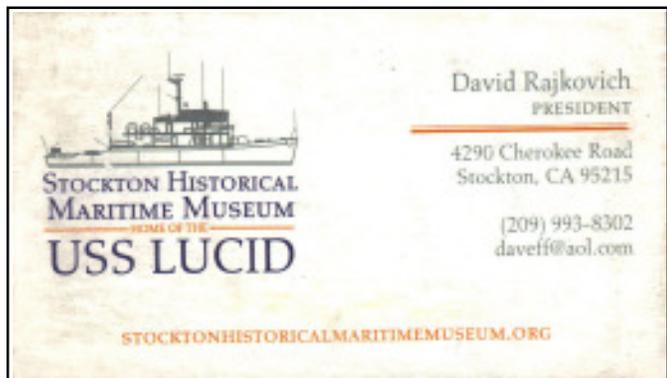
REMEMBER THE RICHMOND MUSEUM ASSOCIATION IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS

A simple way to give a gift to the Richmond Museum Association is to make a bequest by including language in your will or living trust naming the Richmond Museum Association as the recipient of a testamentary gift. The gift can be a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate or what remains after other bequests are made. The donation can be earmarked for a special project of your choice, the newly reestablished RMA endowment, or the general operating fund.

A bequest is ideal for individuals who seek to:

- contribute after their lifetime to a cause close to their hearts,
- keep control of their assets during their lifetime, and
- redirect dollars from taxes to a cause and/or community organization.

Speak with your financial advisor about including the RMA in your estate plans. Feel free to contact the Museum at 510-235-7387 for sample language to include in your will or living trust. The Richmond Museum Association is a 501c3 charitable corporation (#94-6095083) and all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.



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See story, page 1.

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

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Red Oak Victory Ship

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