

THE MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Richmond Museum of History & Culture

Fall 2021

SS Red Oak Victory

PANCAKE BREAKFASTS ARE BACK!

After nearly two years, the *Red Oak Victory's* famous Pancake Breakfasts have returned. COVID-19 affected so much of our lives, and we know that for our loyal supporters, one of the things they missed the most was a filling breakfast served hot and fresh on the decks of the *Red Oak Victory*.

Read the full report in **From Red Oak Victory** on page 5. On your way there, enjoy a couple photos of the days' events.



Deck Department Head Kim Abbott (L) and Volunteer Coordinator Mandy Torres enjoy working in the galley to serve Pancake Breakfasts to Red Oak Victory guests. (Photo by Angelina Aguillar)



The Blue Angels over San Francisco Bay, as seen from the deck of Red Oak Victory at our Fleet Week Pancake Breakfast. (Photo by Dori Luzbetak.)

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - SAVE THE DATE

The RMA Annual Meeting will be held February 27, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. Members please plan to attend and hear about the past year and what the future holds for the Museum and the Ship. Meeting details will be announced at a later date.

CARRIAGES AT WINEHAVEN RE-STORED

Two antique, horse-drawn carriages in the Museum's collection have been stored in a building at Winehaven for many years. A change in ownership at Winehaven and the need to evaluate building condition prompted the movement of the carriages from their location in one building to the main warehouse, the large brick building with the well-known crenellated parapets and corner turrets. Expert, careful movement of the carriages was done by Richmond resident Ben Garcia of **Ben's Towing** and coordinated by Bobby Winston, Proprietor, **Bay Crossings**, who also provided for safe storage of the carriages at Building 1. Thank you to Bobby and Ben and the several other people who helped make the move possible. Job well-done!



The carriages in the Museum's collection.



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lynn Maack

This has been a challenging year-and-a-half for the Richmond Museum of History and Culture and SS *Red Oak Victory*. COVID-19 pandemic conditions have been changing and our venues have opened and closed more than once, leading to confusion and frustration both for our staff and volunteers and the public who want to visit our facilities. The good news as of now is that our venues are open again, albeit on very limited schedules. The Ship is open only on Sundays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the Museum is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. (By appointment only from December 17 through January 6, 2022.)

On Sunday, September 26, we held a fundraiser for the RMA in the form of a silent auction in partnership with **East Brother Brewery** at its Summer Classic Car Show. The cars were the draw, and we were able to attract a few attendees to our booth and raise a little money for the cause.

Pancake breakfasts were once again a big hit on the *Red Oak Victory*. Thank you to the crew and all the volunteers on the Ship for your hard work and successful events. (You can read all about it on page 5.)



Ban Garcia's crew loading carriages for the move. (Photo by Bobby Winston.)

charge! Thanks also to Bobby Winston of Bay Crossings for making the arrangements and for providing storage for the carriages. We appreciate the excellent and gracious service!

The holiday season is fast approaching. Have a happy one and visit us soon.

Ben Garcia and crew rolling a carriage at Building 1 at Winehaven. (Photo by Bobby Winston.)



The RMA gives a huge thank-you to Ben Garcia of **Ben's Towing** in Richmond for moving two horse-drawn carriages in our collection from one building to another at Winehaven. The carriages had to be moved to facilitate building troubleshooting, and Ben volunteered his services free of

THE 1912 PREMATURE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A RICHMOND SYNAGOGUE

By Oliver B. Pollak

Unraveling this promotional news release lies in the 1st, 4th and 5th lines. "May" is not will or shall. "BOOS-TER" was the term for developers, hucksters and visionaries who wanted newly-

settled communities to grow and increase real estate prices and business. The interview was designed to promote the growth of the Jewish population. In Richmond's first decade there were Jewish merchants and real estate developers



Richmond Daily Independent, June 6, 1912, newspapers.com.

Saul Voorsanger, the editor of *Emanu-El* emigrated from Holland with his wife Sarah in 1893. He was a salesman and publicist and the brother of Temple Emanu-El's Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger who started *Emanu-El*, San Francisco's Jewish newspaper in 1895, and died in 1908. In 1912, Sol, Saul or S. visited the chambers of commerce in San Diego, Visalia, Fresno, Modesto, Kings, San Joaquin, and Dinuba soliciting advertising for a special 75,000-copy edition of *Emanu-El* to recruit thousands of oppressed, monied, well-off, middle-class Russian Jews to buy and farm land in California. It was a chimera. The plan for Richmond conformed to early 20th-century Jewish emigration theory to avoid ghettoizing Jews in Eastern seaboard cities. *Incidentally, in 1929 Sol Voorsanger led Yom Kippur services for 64 Jewish prisoners at San Quentin.*

Houses of worship dot Richmond's cityscape. Point Richmond's hills have further elevated their spires. People moving from the East and Midwest were attracted by the marks of civilization and the presence of co-religionists. Churches were a comfort factor for newcomers, immigrants and refugees who sought compatible neighbors, community, fellow religious followers to observe Lent, Easter and Christmas, Passover, Rosh

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is truly the end of an era in Richmond, California. On Monday August 23, 2021, Joshua Genser died suddenly at his home in Richmond, California. I only knew Joshua from afar and we would greet each other in passing. However, I was acutely aware of his influence and standing in the community.



Melinda McCrary, Rabbi Dean Kertesz, Clara-Rae Genser and Joshua Genser at the Opening of the "Jews of Richmond" exhibit in January 2019.

The "Pioneers to the Present: Jews of Richmond and Contra Costa County" exhibit in Spring 2021 allowed me to delve deeper into the legacy of the Genser Family in Richmond. Josh's mother Clara-Rae once said "We couldn't belong to anything and just belong. We had to get involved." Both Genser children I knew adopted this mindset (daughter Mori passed long before I arrived in Richmond).

Nearly all the organizations in Richmond have been touched by the Genser Family in some way.

The Genser name is found throughout the RMA history; in fact, Joseph Genser drafted the articles of incorporation way back in 1954. Sandi was employed at the Museum and served as an RMA board member until the time of her death in 2017. In 2018, Josh and Elaina graciously hosted a fundraising party at their home to support the Jewish exhibit.



The Genser family before the untimely death of Judge Joseph Genser in 1972. (Mori not present.)

Clara-Rae is now 103, as of November 3, and the Genser family remains in the area. Elaina (Josh's widow) will take up the reins and continue to make the Genser family proud. However, there will never be another Josh or Sandi, and without them, the community of Richmond will never be the same.

I dedicate this issue to the memory of Joshua Genser (1958-2021). May his memory be a blessing.

Sincerely,

Melinda McCrary

MY FIRST HNSA CONFERENCE

By Ashley Elieff, Marketing Dept., Red Oak Victory

If you are a history enthusiast, as I am, then there is nothing better than sharing space (and a long weekend) with equally passionate people, especially if that space happens to be in a niche genre like historic naval ships. This was my first time attending the Historic Naval Ships Association's annual conference, which was held this past September in Mobile, Alabama. I was honored by the Association as one of their scholarship winners, a program they started just this year.

Being a novice seawoman (or WAVE living history), I jumped aboard for the chance to learn more about historic ships, the people who devote their lives to their care, and what the future holds for these herculean vessels. But before we dive into the conference, here is some background on my journey with historic ships. In the spring of 2019, I attended my first event on SS Red Oak Victory in Richmond, California. As a fan of vintage events, particularly relating to the 1940s and more recently World War II living history events, I was amazed to discover the ship. I soon became a new volunteer under the Marketing Department and helped at various events.

Now that you have a brief log of my history, back to the conference. The weekend started on Thursday morning with two full days of panels presented by fellow conference attendees. The conference had a small attendance, but was nonetheless rich in personnel from historic ships across the country. We dived into such topics as 3-D scanning your historic ship and its uses; why your ship needs a YouTube channel (we have one, please subscribe!); an update on the battleship Texas and battleship North Carolina; and the USS Cod submarine going into dry dock for the first time and how nothing could go wrong. Through all of this, I was intrigued how the crew handled their ships' needs and adapted to changing tides. One such presentation discussed utilizing new volunteers. With the dwindling pool of skilled volunteer labor and the addition of Covid, many historic ships are looking at new resources for sourcing help to keep in ship shape.

Over the course of the three-day conference, I met people and chatted about our respective ships, getting into the nitty-

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Pollak (Continued from p. 2)

Hashanah, Purim, and Channukah, spiritual leadership, solace for the soul and salvation. Real estate agents might mention the advantages of a particular parish, a socially-connected congregation or the variety of synagogues and temples.

Prosperity was driven by population growth. During the second decade of the 20th century the reports of births of boys and girls by Richmond Health Commissioner Dr. Charles R. Blake were printed in the *Richmond Daily Independent (RDI)*. Blake, an ardent booster of Richmond's qualities, belonged to the Richmond Improvement Club and introduced the Boy Scouts to Richmond. Boosters, developers, sometimes speculators, the construction industry, brick and mortar, real estate agents wanted the land sold, built-upon and settled. They made plans for schools, libraries, parks, swimming pools, colleges, healthcare, and other community amenities. Newspapers were avid supporters. Increased property tax revenue supported fire, police, roads and other necessities.

Newspapers sporadically described the Jewish holidays. The *RDI* in "Old Hebrew Festival will be Held Tomorrow" discussed Chanukkah on December 3, 1912; "Special services in all synagogues of San Francisco will celebrate the festival." The *Oakland Tribune* announced plans in 1913 to construct a new Oakland synagogue. The *RDI* reported in 1914 "Many of the local merchants will attend the [New Year] services at the Synagogue, Ninth and Castro streets, Oakland." In 1919 Yom Kippur would find Jews "praying in the various synagogues about the bay."

According to 1912 Bay Area newspapers, there were several places for Jews to worship. The 1916 *San Francisco and Bay Cities Jewish Blue Book* listed eight San Francisco synagogues and temples, three in Oakland and one in Berkeley. Taking a ferry to pray was not practical, and Berkeley and Oakland were a bit of a shlep. Perhaps lay leaders or seminary students led services in private homes or in temporary rented space.

The boosterish 1907 *Richmond City Directory* editor Morris Cohen predicted that Richmond's population in the 1910 census would exceed 20,000, speculating it may even reach 30,000. The 1910 Census fell way short at 6,802. Exaggerated expectations fueled boosterism.

The 1908 city directory listed seven churches; First Methodist (1900), Christian Church, First Presbyterian, Trinity Episcopal, First Baptist, Wesley M.E., and Catholic (1902). The 1910 Directory added Seventh Day Adventist. In 1912-13 houses of worship added Calvary Baptist, Christian Science Church, East Shore Park Church, Sunday Adventist Church, Wesley Methodist Church, and Our Lady of Mercy, St Marks and St. Paul's Catholic churches, for a total of 13

No synagogue was built for decades. Perhaps the first report of Jewish worship in Contra Costa County appeared in a

newsletter published at Fort Stoneman, where Jewish troops in transit to the Pacific Theater enjoyed Passover in 1943.



The Second World War boosted the Jewish population with servicemen and women and their young families. The Richmond Jews built a home of their own in 1945, The Richmond Jewish Community Center at 45th and Macdonald, predecessor of Temple Beth Hillel at Hilltop.

From the early beginnings, fast-forward a hundred years. A google search in 2021 revealed a vastly diverse Richmond spiritual landscape with about 120 churches, three mosques, a Buddhist and Hindu temple and Temple Beth Hillel. About half a dozen churches had Spanish names. Two churches had Korean or Vietnamese in their name.



Photo of Richmond Jewish Community Center courtesy of Contra Costa Historical Society, Martinez, California.

The author thanks Victoria Stuhr and his wife Karen for their assistance. He would be interested in hearing from readers who have pre-1950 Richmond Jewish memorabilia, artifacts, ephemera or memories. obpomni@gmail.com

FROM RED OAK VICTORY

By Fred Klink, ROV Marketing Director

August 15 was a real milestone this year as we celebrated the return of our Pancake Breakfasts. A total of 224 people, plus *Red Oak Victory* crew, boarded the Ship and were served a complete breakfast with pancakes, eggs, sausage, apples, coffee and orange juice. And, for many of the adults, a Mimosa was the perfect addition to that fare. Visitors enjoyed great views of the



In spite of the typically cool San Francisco Bay August morning, The Alcatraz Islanders warmed things up with their Aloha Swing music. (Photo by Angelina Aguillar)

San Francisco Bay and, even though the weather was not what we would call “tropical,” everyone enjoyed the wonderful Hawaiian Swing sound of the *Alcatraz Islanders* combo. In fact, the band was so engaging that we even

noticed quite a few guests were dancing either on deck or on the dance floor in Hold 4. For those of you who loved the band, we will definitely have the *Alcatraz Islanders* back for another engagement.

Many visitors enjoyed a self-guided tour of the Ship after breakfast and 40 visitors took advantage of the \$5 Pancake Breakfast Special Discount on docent-guided tours.

Some of you contacted us in the weeks before, and even after, the August Pancake Breakfast to tell us how disappointed you were at missing the big event. Well, just for you, we came up with the perfect solution—another Pancake Breakfast on October



Over 30 musicians in The Rossmoor Big Band entertained visitors. (Photo by Dori Luzbetak.)

10, which was even more popular than the August breakfast. In fact, for the first time in our history, we sold out all of the breakfast

tickets a week before the event. That’s over 300 tickets! October 10 was the last day of San Francisco Fleet Week where we celebrate and thank our United States Navy with a visit by the fleet and an airshow over the Bay. *Red Oak Victory* celebrated this once-a-year special event with not only a breakfast but swing-era music by the *Rossmoor Big Band*. And we do mean *BIG!* This 32-piece orchestra has members ranging in age from teenagers to those in their 80s. They are a very special band, and everyone on board that day enjoyed their unique sound.



1940s bus from the Pacific Bus Museum. (Photo by Dori Luzbetak.)

The *Pacific Bus Museum* showcased a 1940s bus on the dock next to the Ship and offered visitors a chance to walk through an example of vintage transportation from *Red Oak Victory’s* original time.

We also welcomed, as our honored guest, a genuine Rosie-the-Riveter, **Joyce Schramek**. Joyce told us of how her family lost their midwest farm in the depression and came west so her father could find work. We also learned that it wasn’t just young men who falsified their birth date to serve their country; 15-year-old Joyce lied about her age in order to get a job at the Kaiser-Richmond shipyards where she trained as a burner and worked through the end of the war. Finally, Robert Corpus from **Spirit of ‘45 Bay Area** brought their impressive statue of Rosie the Riveter in honor of Joyce’s appearance on the Ship.



Joyce Schramek, a real Rosie, on Red Oak Victory. (Photo by Dori Luzbetak.)



Rosie the Riveter statue from Spirit of ‘45 Bay Area. (Photo by Dori Luzbetak.)

Many breakfast patrons stayed on board to watch the Fleet Week Airshow over the Bay. In one of those quirky weather phenomena that we are used to in the Bay Area, the cool, overcast August weather was replaced in October with gorgeous, clear-blue skies and pleasantly warm temperatures. In other words, perfect conditions to watch the planes, including the **Blue Angels**, over San Francisco Bay.

(Continued on p. 6)

Red Oak Victory (Continued from p. 5)

Thank you to all of our loyal patrons and new visitors for your support of the *Red Oak Victory* Pancake Breakfasts. We plan to resume our breakfasts next spring on Mothers' Day, Sunday May 8, and to have a full schedule of breakfasts throughout the summer. That, plus the return of our other events such as the Spring Swing and July 3 Independence Day Fireworks, will make 2022 a great year for the *Red Oak Victory*!

The Blue Angels over San Francisco skyline.
(Photo by Dori Luzbetak.)



HNSA Conference (Continued from p. 3)

gritty of why we do what we do and talking about the future. In the evenings, we had “after work” events, which included a cocktail hour with a cruise on a paddle boat. Saturday was the big event, touring our host ship for the conference, the battleship USS *Alabama* and the USS *Drum*. They also scheduled a living history presentation and crew drill on board. The drill displayed planes flying low over the ship and the WWII-uniformed crew manning the guns to fire back at the enemy, putting out a small fire, and tending to the injured—a role that I tried to volunteer for, as I was in the correct 1940s civilian attire, but was not successful (maybe next time!). That same evening was the closing event for the conference, a WWII Luau themed dinner on the fantail of the *Alabama*. Sitting at dinner on this historic ship, I was getting nostalgic about the weekend, the people and connections made. I took a moment to reflect and appreciate the opportunity to be in that moment and in this space. I look forward to implementing what I have learned to the *Red Oak Victory* and in my career.

STAFF NOTES

Meet Tatiana!

Tatiana Ortiz joined the Museum staff in Fall 2020 but we neglected to formally welcome her in *The MIRROR*. Tatiana is a Richmond native born into a large family as one of ten children. She is an artist and her work can be found on Instagram under Happy Chica. Tatiana teaches classes at the Richmond Art Center and has been leading our weekly enrichment program at RMHC for the last year. Recently she has taken on more responsibility at the Museum and will be coordinating volunteers and administrative duties.

More staff notes: **Maya Colbert** took a full-time position at the Walt Disney Family Museum. Good Luck, Maya!

RED OAK WISH LIST:

SS Red Oak Victory needs a lot of attention. We hope you can help. We appreciate all donations, large and small, monetary and otherwise. Here is a partial list of physical things the Ship needs; some of them are very specific—please email us at info@redoakvictory.us to get details:

- Face masks (N95 only, new, unopened)
- Starboard-side steel hull plate replacement (to donate, email us at info@redoakvictory.us to make arrangements)
- Restore the insulation (lagging) on our high-pressure turbine
- Repair Main condenser isolation valve
- Clean and re-hang the curtains in the Lois Boyle Theater
- Improved lighting for Hold 5
- Replica light shades to replace those lost or broken throughout the Ship
- New canvas covers for the two port lifeboats
- New canvas covers for the guns and miscellaneous deck fixtures
- New Ship's Name Boards Port, Starboard and Aft
- New 12-volt car battery for the portable lighting generator
- Emergency locker with lid, 3' x 4'
- AA batteries
- Seat cushions for the Theater seats
- Paint, paint, and more paint!

To donate these items, contribute to their purchase, request more information about them, or volunteer to become a crew member, email us at info@redoakvictory.us.

Thank you for your help and support!

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 continue sprucing up our garden area:

- New or gently-used hand tools for the garden including shovels, spades, hoes, claws, clippers.
- Clean garden work gloves
- Wheelbarrow
- Clean buckets
- Ceramic flowerpots and/or garden decorations
- Unopened bags of compost and mulch

If you can donate these items, contribute to their purchase or volunteer, please call the Museum at (510) 235-7387, or email Museum Director Melinda McCrary at melinda@richmondmuseum.org.

Thank you for your help and support!

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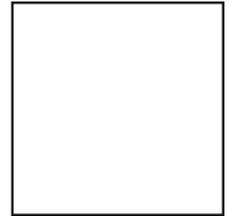
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Join the Richmond Museum Association on social media! We are on Facebook under Richmond Museum of History and Culture and SS *Red Oak Victory* (two separate pages). We are also on twitter @richmondhistory.

*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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Museum Staff

Melinda McCrary, Director
Tatiana Ortiz
Victoria Stuhr

Richmond Museum of History & Culture

400 Nevin Avenue
Mail: P.O. Box 1267
Richmond CA 94802
(510) 235-7387 for information and Tour Appointments

Directors

Rich Chivers
Steve Gilford
Demnlus Johnson III
Rebecca Riley
Lydia Stewart
Jeffrey Wright

The MIRROR

Lynn Maack, Editor
Contributors:
Ashley Elieff
Fred Klink
Dori Luzbetak
Melinda McCrary
Oliver Pollak

SS Red Oak Victory Ship

1337 Canal Blvd.
Richmond CA 94804
Mail: P.O. Box 1267
Richmond CA 94802
Email us at info@redoakvictory.us for information and Tour Appointments

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