

# Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2013

## SAUSALITO SETS SAIL

This summer the Sausalito Historical Society will launch two new exhibits called *Sausalito Sets Sail*. One will be a self-guided interpretive display along the waterfront and the other, in the traditional gallery space, will display sailing artwork and artifacts from the Society's collection. Both are themed *Sausalito Sets Sail* to complement the biggest sailing event in the Bay Area for decades, America's Cup 2013.

The brainchild of Board member Donald Sibbett, professional exhibit designer, and Jessica Brainard of the California Academy of Sciences, the open-air exhibit will greet visitors and locals where they are—out walking the waterfront of Sausalito. With the approval of the City Council, the cooperation of the Sausalito Parks and Recreation Department, and several private landowners, a selection of graphic panels will inform walkers about Sausalito's sailing history and present day maritime activities.

There is a big Sausalito sailing story to share. San Francisco Bay and Richardson's Bay were natural harbors for the first Spanish explorers and whaling ships. After settlement, early workboats, including fish-laden feluccas and cargo-hauling scow schooners, moved commerce across bays and up rivers. Toward the end of the 19th century, pleasure yachts began to replace working sail vessels. Boat builders in Sausalito started designing class boats such as the *Bird* and *Bear* for racing. In addition, before 1900, the San Francisco Yacht Club and the Pacific Yacht Club, both centers for recreational sailing, were founded in Sausalito. And, finally,

Sausalito remembers famous flagship vessels such as *Zaca* and *Wanderbird* that berthed here for long periods. Today, Sausalito's sailing tradition stays alive through yacht and sailing clubs and educational endeavors committed to sharing the experience of sailing on San Francisco Bay.



Starting in the 1920s, Madden and Lewis Boatyard began building the first of a San Francisco Bay class boat called the *Bird*. It was adapted to Bay conditions and continues to be associated with Sausalito sailing today. "Nothing sails like a *Bird*."

To celebrate Sausalito's sailing history the *Newsletter* is featuring two locally built wooden sailboats that have helped keep the tradition of handcrafted boat building alive in Southern Marin. Although *Freda* (1885) and *Elizabeth Muir* (1991) were constructed 125 years apart, each came from a vision to sail the challenging waters of San Francisco Bay with grace, comfort and safety. Although both builders used East coast designs for their boats, they also both made original adaptations of their craft to local waters. And notably, neither builder was a million or billionaire. They were men of modest means supported by communities that loved boats and craftsmanship.

It is well known that boats are often named after a woman. There are various theories about why, including the advantages of goddess affiliations. One common practice was for a captain to name his boat after a beloved woman, implying the special regard and care the boat deserved. Henry Cookson, who built *Freda* in 1885 on Belvedere Island, named the lovely sloop after his daughter. Babe Lamerdin named his graceful 48' schooner after his wife, Elizabeth Muir (aka Liz Robinson). Gratefully, at present both boats are receiving the special care they need to sail into the future.



By the mid-1950s, the *Bear* was the biggest one-design racing fleet on San Francisco Bay. In all, 69 *Bear* boats were designed and built by the Nunes brothers.

## FREDA—Ambassador to the Bay

In this part of the world, we don't really build a boat on a beach any more. But in 1885, Harry Cookson, a bartender and "back yard" boatwright, found it convenient to set up on a beach next to Stone's Boat Yard near present day Beach Road in Belvedere. Here, in his off hours, he constructed a 33' on deck, gaff rigged sloop resembling a New York or Noank Sloop. About 60 similar, wooden gaff sloops were built in the late 19th century, but today Cookson's has the notoriety of being among the only surviving private sailing yachts of this type on the West coast. Those made on the East coast were commonly used as workboats, for fishing or to carry cargo. Cookson's idea was to use his boat for fun.

Prior to this time, only the most elite had racing yachts for sport and they had professional crew. The common man's

pleasure yacht began appearing in the 1870s and '80s and started a tradition of yachting that was open to a fellow like Cookson who had some skills, some wood, a boat design and a dream. He named his dream *Freda* after his daughter who was a nurse in San Francisco and the boat began winning regattas for the Corinthian Yacht Club almost as soon as she hit the water.

Although speed was a desirable result of small yacht design, it was not necessarily the first priority. Coming from a tradition of workboats, *Freda's* design retained a common sense stability with a spacious cockpit set in an elliptical transom, a signature of the day. The wide stern was a perfect feature for frisky, local sailing conditions. Cookson steered his boat with a large wooden tiller and a centerboard to adjust for conditions.

Along with the tradition of stability in *Freda's* design was an appreciation of good looks. The designer of *Freda* and other similar boats of the period intentionally referenced a Victorian aesthetic: attention to detail in the interior and the exquisite curves of the hull and dramatic straight angles in the rig. It was meant to be a beautiful sight to behold. If she sailed swiftly too, well, that was a welcome bonus.

While *Freda* made a name for herself on the local race circuit, she had another important function in society. According to Bob Darr, presently in charge of her restoration by the Arques School of Traditional Boat Building at the Spaulding Wooden Boat Center in Sausalito, such yachts provided an "escape from home"—a kind of floating clubhouse where the guys could smoke and swear and generally carry on without censor. The Delta was a common destination where perhaps sleeping on deck was a bit warmer than at fog-swept Angel Island.

Around 1917, *Freda* left the Bay Area for La Jolla where she was owned for two years by Harvey Miller and then sold to James Garvey, owner of Covic Diesel Engine Company. He installed a 15-18 Covic diesel engine, *Freda's* first auxiliary power, and had the tiller replaced with a wheel creating more room in the cockpit. The centerboard was removed and replaced with an iron keel for ballast. Finally, in the spirit of innovation, her rig was changed from sloop to yawl. To complete the transformation, *Freda* was renamed *Seawolf* and swathed in fictitious sea stories related to Jack London. A generation of sailors on San Francisco Bay grew up and passed away without knowledge of the little beauty named *Freda* born on a Belvedere beach.

But that was not to be forever. In the 1940s, Joseph Redman of Belvedere brought her home and renamed her *Joire*. Over another 60 years, she cycled through sailing regattas, disrepair, and restorations. Famed tug boat captain and boatwright Har-



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SPAULDING WOODEN BOAT CENTER

*Freda* as she looked in the 19th century. She is gaff rigged with a top sail. Notice the very long boom extending over the stern and the 11-foot bowsprit that positions the jib forward. This jib position balances the enormous aft sail area allowing for better control at the helm. Four people can be seen fitting easily into the capacious cockpit.



old Sommer owned her for 14 years in the 1960s and '70s. He restored *Freda's* name and sloop rig while retaining the wheel steering and iron ballast modifications. Devoted owners Jerry and Diane Brenden subsequently raced her in 11 Master Mariner regattas over 12 years. But as owners eventually changed again, responsibility for the old gal became inconsistent. *Freda* sank in March 2004 at her berth in San Rafael.

If age (and neglect) had taken *Freda* to the bottom of the Bay, it had also singled her out as a significant piece of sailing history. All her sibling boats had disappeared and if a 19th century San Francisco Bay small sailing yacht was going to survive, it was going to have to be *Freda*!

She was refloated and temporarily repaired. At that point the Master Mariners Benevolent Foundation began negotiations with the owner. The sale was finalized in June 2004 much to the credit of Lowrie's Yacht Harbor that forgave a large labor and berthing bill. *Freda* was donated to the Spaulding Wooden Boat Center and was towed to her new home on July 4, 2004. Since then, the Spaulding Wooden Boat Center and the Arques School of Traditional Boatbuilding have cooperated on a careful restoration and plans for *Freda's* future.

Above all, *Freda* needed a viable, long-term plan and the Board of Spaulding Wooden Boat Center set about to create one. Who would do the restoration work? After so many changes to Cookson's original boat, what should the restored boat look like? Once back in the water, what would she be used for and by whom? What sustainable financial support could be put together?

The answers fell into place around the central concept of *Freda* as an ambassador to San Francisco Bay representing the 19th century in the 21st. She would serve as a "teaching platform" for traditional block and tackle-era sailing with only a few 21st century amenities. No radar and no GPS, but a few battery-run safety features such as running lights and a hidden radio. She would generate funds for her up-keep from special charters or a dinner party for eight in the intimate saloon lit by oil lamps and furnished with 1920s plates and old flatware (thanks to eBay searches). But in full respect of her "common man's heritage," she would always be available to certain underserved groups (for example, veterans, homeless youth, cancer survivors, care providers) without charge.

Under Director Bob Darr's supervision, students at the Arques School of Traditional Boatbuilding have been working on the restoration over the last eight years. The Spaulding Wooden Boat Center Board of Directors concluded that the restoration should not try to restore the boat to the Cookson original, but to Harold Sommer's version which retained the steering wheel, kept a gaff sloop rig (with a slightly shorter boom) and added a lead keel.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SPAULDING WOODEN BOAT CENTER

*In this photograph, Freda sails comfortably close on the wind. The rigging that pulls the gaff upward and holds it in position is clearly visible. Also, the use of ropes through dead eyes to hold the standing rigging can be seen on the port side. This feature will be duplicated exactly in the restored boat.*

Today, in the final stages of *Freda's* restoration, Jim Linderman, grandson of boatbuilder John Linderman who worked on both *Wanderbird* and *Elizabeth Muir* (as did Jim Linderman for one year), is overseeing restoration of the rigging back to original 19th century design. While almost all rigging materials are new, most of the original hardware from the standing rigging (such as mast bands, dead eyes and chainplates) has been retained. The new standing rigging will be galvanized steel "parceled and served and slushed" with pine tar, linseed oil and turpentine while the running rigging will be made of "Hempex", the modern equivalent of manila or hemp. Since a gaff rig such as *Freda's* tends to have a weather helm (the boat's tendency to head into the wind and stall), Jim will include rigging for an additional "flying jib" to balance her out and ease the weather helm. With consummate professionals such as Darr and Linderman in charge, *Freda* promises once more to become a stunning performance boat of her kind.

The Matriarch of the Bay, as *Freda* was affectionately dubbed at one point during her long career, is on a mission—even broader than teaching and beyond historic restoration. She is going to offer a 19th century sailing experience with simplicity and elegance. Her destiny is to set sail again from Sausalito into Richardson's Bay, San Francisco Bay and beyond. She'll provide another 100 years of exceptional sailing pleasure. She'll be an ambassador from the past—to the present—and into the future.

—Margaret Badger

## ELIZABETH MUIR

In the 1980s, *Elizabeth Muir* slowly and patiently came to life at Bolinas Marine, an off-the-beaten-track boatyard that had to cut down some trees to make room for Babe Lamerdin's 48' schooner project. Lamerdin, a career boatwright and sailor, chose to fashion her after *Altura*, designed by Eldredge McInnis of Boston and built in the 1930s. In the 1940s, Lamerdin owned and lived aboard *Altura* and, as he told Annie Sutter in a 1992 interview in *Wooden Boat Magazine*, "I just thought *Altura* was such a neat boat. Notice the little knuckle in the bow and the tumblehome back aft and the cutaway forefoot—that's fisherman type. Real handy going to windward—the way she sailed, her appearance, the whole thing."

Perhaps the urge to build a boat similar to *Altura* would never have arisen had she not come to a mysterious end off the coast of southern California never to be seen again. And perhaps the urge to build the boat would never have come to reality if it had not been for the help of Lamerdin's friends and community: Ed Letter, the willing boatyard owner; John Linderman, a career boatwright, and a host of others. "Other people heard about the project and they started coming around." A group of regulars formed itself, from pros to beginners:

boatwrights, carpenters, lookers-on all with energy, materials and enthusiasm to donate to the project."

"*Elizabeth Muir* was an old boat built new." While the benefits of modern materials and technology were used, the methods of traditional boat building and perfect craftsmanship resulted in "one of the finest examples of a traditional, hand-crafted yacht afloat today." Without question, the name *Elizabeth Muir* is synonymous with a work of art. At the launching at Anderson's Boatyard, Sausalito, described by Annie Sutter, "champagne corks popped and the Bolinas Rod and Boat Club served up hot dogs." "It was a very big event," according to Babe's wife, Elizabeth Muir Robinson. "Many,

many people had contributed to crafting the boat and to donating materials and needed parts from forgotten corners of their workshops. It felt like their boat too."

Yet for all her elegance and the lore associated with her creation, *Elizabeth Muir* was crafted first and foremost to go sailing. The Lamerdins were able to enjoy the special features Babe customized into the boat for the type of local Bay sailing—stable, dry and sociable—he, his friends and Liz preferred. She recalls today, "After *Elizabeth Muir* was launched, everyone asked us where we were going to go in the boat. Babe answered, 'First, we are going to circumnavigate Angel Island. Then we'll see.'" After a lifetime of maritime adventure on

the ocean, Lamerdin was content to sail on San Francisco Bay. He frequently reefed the main and balanced the boat with a working jib and staysail. "It was easy on the boat. There was no weather helm." And it was easy on all aboard.

To achieve what he wanted in the boat, Lamerdin had modified the McInnis design in several ways. He eliminated an aft cabin, moved the galley slightly aft and increased the size of the cockpit by 2½ feet to make it comfortable for day sailing. In addition, to strengthen the rig he added a permanent back-

stay that attached to a boomkin off the stern and then shortened the boom length to reduce the amount of sail. "That is why," say present owners Peter Haywood and Ivan Poutiatine, "we can sail comfortably on the Bay in 25 knots of wind and even heavier."

*Elizabeth Muir* was designed as a Marconi schooner and today competes in annual schooner races on the Bay in that category. The gaff rigged schooners form a different racing class because they carry more sail area. Interestingly, the foresail mast of *Elizabeth Muir* can be rigged with either a staysail or a gaff rigged foresail. While Lamerdin wanted the gaff rig option on his boat, he and his sailing peers found the heavy sail



*Gaff rig. This is a stunning aerial view of schooner Elizabeth Muir sailing with the gaff rigged foresail, the rig preferred by her present owners. The "gaff"—the wooden spar at the top of the (center) sail—is used to hoist it up. It provides more sail area and therefore more speed on certain points of sail than the staysail (triangular shaped sail not pictured here). The spacious cockpit is also shown. (Photo courtesy of Peter Haywood)*

demanding to employ because, as Liz suggests, “They were more than a decade older when they finished the boat than when they started.” The present owners have enjoyed sailing with the hefty gaff foresail for the last two years, but also foresee a day when it may be more work than it’s worth. It can be changed back to Lamerdin’s foresail rig. “To change it is a bit of a deal,” says Haywood. “It takes about a day to switch.”

Haywood and Poutiatine like to sail *Elizabeth Muir* “pretty hard.” They routinely use the 110% Genoa jib and only reef the main if the winds sustain over 25 knots. The cutaway bow allows for “very maneuverable” tacking and she handles sea conditions, even storms, with confidence. “Her hull was designed for ocean sailing. That she is used for inland sailing shows her adaptability.” Her owners say that a sail to Pt. Reyes, to the Farallon Islands or down the coast is well within her capability, reminding us all that the beautiful *Elizabeth Muir* has a willing wild side that thrills on setting out the Golden Gate.

—Margaret Badger



*Staysail rig. Heading out to the “slot” where the wind blows directly in the Golden Gate from the ocean, Elizabeth Muir looks perfectly balanced using the staysail rig for the middle sail. Her guests or crew seem comfortable sitting out of the cockpit. (Photo courtesy of www.pressure-drop.us and Peter Haywood)*

The articles about *Freda* and *Elizabeth Muir* would not have been possible without the assistance of many people. My thanks to Annie Sutter for sharing her articles about *Freda* from the 1980s and '90s; to Andrea Rey, Sharon White and Jim Linderman at the Spaulding Wooden Boat Center; to Bob Darr, Director of the Argues School of Traditional Boatbuilding; to Liz Robinson and to present day owners, Peter Haywood and Ivan Poutiatine; and, finally, to Tom List of List Marine and to Mike Douglas of Master Mariners Benevolent Association. They share a knowledge and passion for traditional sailing boats that is truly inspiring. —MB

## SHS UPCOMING EVENTS

### CALEDONIA STREET FESTIVAL

**Sunday, May 26, 2013 from 11:00am–6:00pm**

As the featured booth at the City’s festival, we are celebrating Sausalito history and introducing our upcoming exhibit *Sausalito Sets Sail* about the history of sailing in Sausalito. There is a special piece of Sausalito historical artwork for raffle, our publications for sale, a kid’s activity table, and information on our events, schools program and membership. Thanks to the many volunteers who are helping to make this Memorial Day weekend event a success.

### 4TH OF JULY PARADE

**Thursday, July 4, 2013 from 10:00am–12:00pm**

Last year we were a hit and this year we plan to be so again! We are in the planning stages and would love your help either

coming up with ideas, costumes and props or signing up to march with us in the parade. If you would like to volunteer to help plan or march in our parade entry, please call the Society at 415-289-4117 and leave a message for Angela Wildman.

### SAUSALITO SETS SAIL LAUNCH PARTY

**Date to be Announced**

We are proud to announce a special community-produced exhibit, *Sausalito Sets Sail*, celebrating the history of sailing in Sausalito. This two part exhibit features a historic waterfront walking tour and art exhibit. The walking tour will start at the Ice House Information Center & Historical Display and the art exhibit will be on display at the Society’s exhibit room in City Hall.



# SPRING SCHOOLS PROGRAM



*Jim Scullion of Bayside Elementary*



*Maya Creedman of Willow Creek with students*



*Vicki Nichols observing students drawing cartoons*

This spring, the Sausalito Historical Society Schools Program continued its fourth year of working with the third grade classes from Bayside School and Willow Creek Academy. A half dozen docents made classroom visits to each school to introduce an interactive student workbook about notable people who lived in Sausalito approximately 100 years ago. Within weeks, students, teachers and parents enjoyed a field trip to the Phil Frank Research Room where they learned about the many ways to research local history. Students also visited the Fritz Crackers exhibit in the Art Gallery and were then treated to a tour of Sausalito City Hall by staff members Adam Politizer, Debby Pagliaro



*Ann Huerlin explains census data on the computer.*

and Abbot Chambers. After sitting in the chairs of council members, they began to experience what representing their community in government might feel like. On May 31st, students will receive a framed photograph of themselves and the Sausalito historical person or historic building they researched at a special awards ceremony at Bayside School.



*Ann Siskin of Willow Creek Academy*



*Susan Frank interpreting Phil Frank's art process*

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MICHAEL MOYLE



*(Left) Cartoon admirers*

*(Right) Debby Pagliaro addresses future civic leaders*



# HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

## “BACK TO THE TRIDENT” FUND RAISER, JANUARY 2013

PHOTO: BOB WOODRUM



Nearly 200 Historical Society members and friends attended a benefit party hosted by the Trident Restaurant that in the 1960s was owned by the Kingston Trio. Josh Reynolds, son of Nick Reynolds of the original Kingston Trio group, performed in the world premier of The Lion Sons. The group, comprised of musicians Chris Rowan, Josh Reynolds, Mike Marvin, and Tim Gorelangton, played favorites of the period.

## ANNUAL MEETING MAY 2013

The annual membership meeting was held on May 14, in the City Council Chambers. In the **Treasurer’s Report**, Teddie Hathaway summarized the Society’s financial profile. The SHS ended 2012 with \$24,000 in cash plus two CDs totaling \$43,500. During 2012, the Society received donations of \$6,300, membership dues of \$7,200, grants of \$3,500, and event income of \$7,100. Sales of items at the Ice House brought in \$4,400.

In the **State of the Society Report**, President Larry Clinton listed 15 civic and government organizations in the community with which SHS continues to cooperate. Larry also

thanked major **Historical Society supporters**: Sausalito Rotary Club, the Art Festival Foundation, Supervisor Kate Sears, the Hospitality Committee of the City of Sausalito and Society members.

In the **annual election** of Board members, Robert Woodrum, Robin Sweeney and Donald Sibbett were re-elected to additional two-year terms. Teddie Hathaway and Dana Whitson were elected to the Board for the first time.

The meeting concluded with an entertaining presentation by **James Martin**, author and publisher of *The Islands of San Francisco Bay*. If you missed the informative talk, you may inquire about the book at [www.islandsofsfbay.com/marinij.htm](http://www.islandsofsfbay.com/marinij.htm). If you are curious about how many islands there are in San Francisco Bay and where the biggest bird colonies are, well, it’s all in the book.

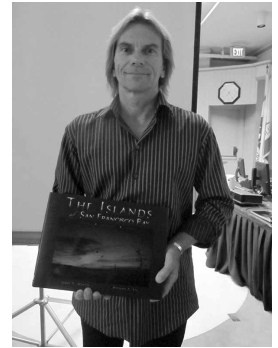


PHOTO: JANE CLINTON

**The Society gratefully acknowledges** the following recent renewals of membership at the Sponsor/Business, Patron and Benefactor Levels:

**Sponsor/Business:** Diane Alper, Linda and Wayne Bonnett, Herbert and Sisi Damner, Jim and Cathy DeLano, Chris Donges, Mickie and Doug Lloyd, Ross Lovington, Joan McArther, Alan Olson, Shelby and Peter Van Meter

**Patron:** Jim Meyer

**Benefactor:** Mary Foust



PHOTO: JANE CLINTON

SHS Board (Back row, left to right): Larry Clinton, new Board member Dana Whitson, incumbent Board members Bill Kirsch, Robert Woodrum and Sharon Seymour; (Front row, left to right) Ann Heurlin, Angela Wildman, Teddie Hathaway, Robin Sweeney and Susan Frank. Not shown: Donald Sibbett.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Digital Newsletter:** Several members have taken advantage of our offer to send them this newsletter (and/or other SHS announcements) by e-mail rather than snail mail. The e-mail option saves time, paper and money, and gets the information out to you faster. If you'd like to join the modern wing of the Historical Society and switch to e-delivery, please e-mail us at [info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org)

**Rotary comes through.** Thanks to the efforts of outgoing Board member Steve Fabes, the Sausalito Rotary Club helped provide additional storage space for our growing collection of artwork and books. Rotarian Ed LeBarre and SHS Board Member Bill Kirsch installed the new storage units this Spring.

**Ice House now open Mondays.** While the information kiosk at the Ferry Plaza is being renovated, the Ice House has expanded its hours to include Mondays, from 11:30-4:00 from May through October. Long-time SHS member Cindy Roby is the new Monday docent, just in time for tourist season. Thanks to the Chamber of Commerce for arranging to cover the additional expenses these expanded hours will incur.  
—Larry Clinton, *President*

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Directors 2012

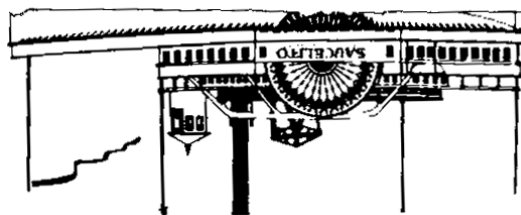
- Larry Clinton . . . . . President, Fundraising, Newsletter, Public Relations
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- Sharon Seymour . . . . . Secretary, Membership, Collections Management, IT, Docents
- Teddie Hathaway . . . . . Treasurer, Finance
- Susan Frank . . . . . Schools Program
- Ann Heurlin . . . . . Catalog Digitization
- Bill Kirsch . . . . . Accessions, Facilities
- Robin Sweeney . . . . . Ice House
- Angela Wildman . . . . . Events, Merchandising, Public Relations
- Dana Whitson . . . . . Fundraising
- Bob Woodrum . . . . . Website, Schools Program

420 Litho Street                      Wednesdays & Saturdays  
 Sausalito, CA 94965                      10AM–1PM  
 Tel: 415-289-4117  
[info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org)

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Editor: Margaret Badger  
 Production Design: Alice Merrill

Sausalito Historical Society  
 P. O. Box 352  
 Sausalito, CA 94966  
 Address Service Requested



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