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Capturing an Era: Planning Department Photographs
The Colorful Life of the General Frank M. Coxe

Our Mission

To inspire wonder and discovery through education about the cultural and natural history of San Mateo County.

The San Mateo County Historical Association

operates the San Mateo County History Museum and Archives at the old San Mateo County Courthouse located in Redwood City, California, and administers two county historical sites, the Sánchez Adobe in Pacifica and the Woodside Store in Woodside.

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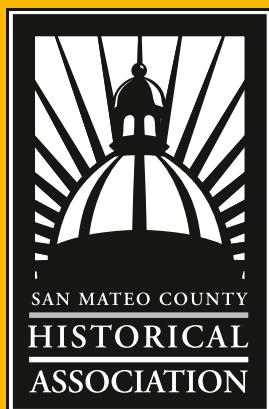


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Front Cover: Heading north on what was then called Bayshore Hwy, near San Mateo, circa early 1950s. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.

Back Cover: Aerial view of Redwood City, the area just south of and adjacent to Woodside Road, with El Camino Real seen at the top and the current Caltrain railroad tracks at the bottom. The large area with the curved railroad spur is the approximate location of the current Target shopping center. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.

Photos from the San Mateo County Planning Department Capture a Changing Face of the Unincorporated Area

by Dave Holbrook



Broadmoor area surrounded by Daly City. Garden Lane was part of the 'Garden Village' subdivision created in 1939. Relatively undeveloped for years, it finally was filling with new houses by the early 1950s. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.

San Mateo County Planning Commission records from the late 1940s through the 1950s, document land use decisions that guided the development of the urban landscape. A recently discovered treasure trove of long-forgotten negatives provides a visual record of a time when public demand for new and tougher regulations saw staff wrestling with diverse issues ranging from hog farming to real estate signage; timber harvesting to wrecking yards. Like so many areas throughout the country during the post-world War II era, the populations of San Mateo County's rural areas and small towns were expanding at an unprecedented rate.

The county's first zoning ordinance was adopted in 1933. The midcoast and much of the coastal area

were not zoned until the early 1940s. This meant that activities in those areas were not regulated by specifically adopted use permits or zoning district regulations.

Before the post-war population surge, San Mateo County was one of California's most productive agricultural regions, with 44,576 acres farmed, including: vegetables, fruit and nut crops, dairy cows, beef, hogs, sheep, poultry, rabbits, and nursery and flower stock. By 1960, the agricultural character of the bayside of the county was disappearing due to the demand for - and creation of - new subdivisions. The amount of acreage actively farmed decreased by 26%.

Between 1940 and 1950, San Mateo County's total



Shamrock Ranch, looking northeast; future Linda Mar subdivision is in the undeveloped area beyond the ranch. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa mid-1950s.

population grew more than 110%; and in the following decade another 88.6%. Developers rushed to build housing. Opportunity in Pacifica generated particular excitement. In 1953, a prominent San Francisco real estate developer named Ray Higgins, with a partner, acquired seven of the largest ranches in the San Pedro Valley area in one weekend. Referred to as Linda Mar, the area experienced such rapid subdivision that housing construction outpaced infrastructure development. When residents arrived in 1953, they had to dig their own wells for water, or buy brackish water from other landowners until the newly formed water district installed water lines. The area's only food market was the Sun Valley Dairy at Shamrock Ranch.

The photos included in this article were taken by planners to share with the commission and public. They correspond to many commission actions. They tell a story of emerging business centers, young neighborhoods and yet-to-be-developed rural landscapes. They also tell a story of growing pains; of problems that the planners and the community



Ray Higgins' real estate office, at 1227 San Francisco Boulevard, in the Sharp Park area of Pacifica. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa mid-1950s.



Construction of the County Hall of Justice & Records on the former site of the California Square Park. The photograph was taken from the old county courthouse, looking down Hamilton Street at Marshall Street towards the bay. Note the number of old houses surrounding the site; the block beyond the construction site is where the county government building would be built in 1963. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.

wrestled with along the way.

Redwood City - the county seat

Downtown Redwood City, home of county government, was also under development pressure, with the old county courthouse (with New Deal WPA additions) being far too small for handling the number of court cases and document recordings. A new Hall of Justice and Records was necessary.

Until the mid-1940s, San Mateo County's population was concentrated in and around the incorporated cities of South San Francisco and Daly City, and located along the Southern Pacific Railroad connecting San Francisco with San Jose, now Caltrain. While the county's first zoning ordinance was dated 1933, the midcoast and much of the coastal area was not zoned until the early 1940s. This meant that any uses within those areas

were subject only to complaints, not yet regulated by specifically adopted use permit or zoning district regulations.

In the decade between 1940 and 1950, housing demand drove the development of subdivisions on the peninsula. What we know today as the Bayshore 101 Freeway, grew from Bayshore Boulevard, which - at it's widest - had four lanes.

Trailer parks along the Bayshore Freeway

Mobile homes became popular for inexpensive post-war housing. Trailer parks proliferated from the 1950s, near and along The Bayshore Freeway. Most of these were eventually annexed into adjacent cities, and were regulated by them. Trailer parks had become so numerous, that in 1952, representatives from the cities of Belmont and San Carlos requested that the planning



Trailer park near Daly City in the 1950s. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.



A planning commission meeting in their original office which was on the 2nd floor of the old county courthouse, now the San Mateo County History Museum. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa 1958.

commission amend the county's trailer ordinance to prohibit trailer courts in the unincorporated area between the two cities, because residents feared the courts would attract "transients and undesirables". Once the wheels were removed from the trailers they were considered permanent homes. Not until 1954 were separate toilet facilities required in new trailer parks.

Whiskey Gulch

In the 1950s, the commercial area along University Avenue, just west of the 101 in East Palo Alto, was unofficially called Whiskey Gulch. In 1909, Stanford University officials prevailed upon state legislators to create a zone of a mile and a half around the Stanford campus in which alcohol sales (i.e. liquor stores and bars) were prohibited. Whiskey Gulch was just beyond the borders of "dry" Palo Alto and outside the state-mandated buffer zone. The area became East Palo Alto's primary business district with bars, liquor stores, retail shops and offices.

Wrecking yards

Prior to East Palo Alto's incorporation in 1983, and



Portion of the commercial strip of University Avenue in East Palo Alto from 1939-1947, just west of the present-day Bayshore Freeway. Although referred to as Whiskey Gulch, this strip in the 1950s represented a thriving retail area serving East Palo Alto residents, including the donut shop, appliance store & beauty salon shown here. This entire retail area along University Avenue was demolished in 1998 to accommodate a major hotel and office development on that side of the freeway. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.

going back to the early 1950s, the area was home to many of the county's auto wrecking yards. They were regulated, but problematic, with numerous violations. Auto repair businesses, especially in the county's North Fair Oaks area along Middlefield Road, had expanded over the years to incorporate auto wrecking for customers that preferred to scrap their cars rather than have them repaired.

Countless rural properties, farms, urban residential and industrial sites had their fair share of stored, wrecked and inoperable autos. One planning commission meeting agenda from 1946 cites the growing problem of illegal auto wrecking as so serious that a job would be created solely to cite and process such violations.

The need for a landfill

The most problematic and ineffectively regulated activities involved dumping: dumping of construction debris, trash, barrels of unidentified substances, autos, tires and more. Unauthorized dump sites proliferated: on the bay, in arroyos on the coast and along Skyline Boulevard.

Many photos in the archives show dumped autos,



Acme Salvage & Junk Co., located on Bayshore Rd (now frontage road along the east side of Bayshore Fwy). Circa: mid-1950s.



Buckley's Auto Wreckers, located at 2900 Middlefield Road, was a repetitive offender of unauthorized activity. Courtesy, Dave Holbrook. Circa late 1940s.



Kennedy Auto Wreckers & Garage at 1675 Bayshore Boulevard in Belmont, showing the problematic use of auto wrecking spilling out onto the roadway. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa: early 1950s

building materials and trash of all kinds, pushed near the crest and plummeting down hillsides into the canyons below. Trash burning with dense smoke is commonly shown. What became of all this dumped material when regulatory ordinances were enforced is unknown. The planning commission was asked to authorize a full-time inspector. The primary landfill in the county, Ox Mountain, was not created until the mid-1950s, and it gives one pause to wonder what became of all the debris generated prior.

The end of large-scale timber harvesting

In the late 1940s, the last harvesting of old growth redwoods was occurring. Until 1956, logging was allowed in any rural zoning district with only use permits. In 1968, the planning commission considered and denied, a new request to log 30 million board feet of lumber. Objections to logging were raised by the Committee for Green Foothills and the Sierra Club. Then, in 1973, new requirements to obtain specific timber harvesting permits with environmental protection



Entry to Skyline Dump, off Skyline Boulevard. Such rural dumps were often operating illegally or with minimum regulatory control. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa: late 1950s



Dumped trash and debris within ocean inlet, likely near Half Moon Bay. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa: late 1950s



Logging in San Mateo County in 1963. Courtesy, San Mateo County Historical Association.

criteria and restrictions to ensure minimal impacts to water quality, loss of habitat, fire risks from remaining logging slash and protection of old growth groves were adopted. This later evolved into the creation of the Timberland Preserve Zoning District, that acknowledged and better regulated where the largest tracts of harvestable timber existed. Since then, the Heritage Grove within Sam McDonald County Park represents one of the last remnants of virgin redwoods that were preserved just before they were to be harvested. Portola State Park may have some virgin redwoods. Butano and Big Basin State Parks also had some, but they were likely lost in the devastating Lightning Complex Fire in 2020, that burned over 86,500 acres in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties.

Grading and Quarry Excavation

Grading and quarry excavation pictures were taken to accompany planning staff presentations to the planning commission. They provided visual evidence of uses that, in the early 1950s, had not yet been entirely regulated by ordinance, use permit requirements and /or their location within a zoning district. Grading was a massive and ever-increasing activity associated with new subdivisions, that leveled



Timber harvest in 1963. Timber harvest permits would not be required for another ten years. Courtesy, San Mateo County Historical Association.



Massive grading for a large subdivision in the mid-1950s, likely in the San Mateo or Pacifica area, showing the clearing and filling of vegetated valleys and other areas. Courtesy Dave Holbrook.

and transformed canyons and hillsides, some full of dense trees and habitat to native species. Prior to the mid-1960s, the grading ordinance had been focused on geotechnical engineering principles, drainage and erosion mitigation. It was finally revised to take into consideration the environmental impacts of such grading. Where subdivisions could number into the hundreds of lots, the impact on environmental and biological resources was considerable.

Signage history tells a story

Many photos in the planning archives provide a record of businesses now long shuttered. In the early

1950s, county planners were drafting tougher signage regulations. Photos taken captured the many bars, taverns, inns and motels (especially the then-popular motor lodges), all of which are now long gone. There are photos of “stand-alone” advertising signs along roadways, including billboards and real estate signage, that were common in the area that eventually became Pacifica. These signs directed drivers traveling through rural areas to businesses - like building and garden supply businesses - that were in relatively isolated locations. We can enjoy these photographs now as a homage to San Mateo County small business.



Billboards and business signage in the very undeveloped area along East Florence Street near the intersection of Marsh Road, in the East Menlo Park area. Besides the Scotty Campbell's billboard, other signage includes Homeowner's Supply Company, Lerer Bros. Truck Parts & Can't Bust 'Em Work Clothes. This photo was taken to support county planners' work to better regulate off-site signage. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa: late 1950s.



Callan Realty Co. is still located here at 2790 Junipero Serra Blvd. at the corner of 91st St. in Daly City. Beyond Callan Realty can be seen the marquee of the Serra Theater (built in 1950 but now the site of a hotel), which shows the movie "Sabrina", dating the photo to 1954 (around the time that the PLN Dept was considering new signage regulations).



Peek-A-Boo Lodge was located on La Honda Road, between San Gregorio and La Honda. Courtesy Dave Holbrook. Circa: mid-1950s

Dave Holbrook was a Senior Planner working in the San Mateo County Planning & Building Department for 33 years. A native of Southern California, he got his undergraduate degree in Urban Planning from Cal Poly, Pomona and a Masters from San Jose State University. A lifelong history buff, Dave spent years finding and assembling old negatives and photos from the planning section basement, detailing development of all kinds that the department had overseen and regulated since the late 1930s. Upon his retirement in 2019, he proceeded to cull through 1000s of negatives, choosing, printing and researching image background and locations that best represented San Mateo County in its very early years from a development perspective.

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These photos illustrate either problematic zoning uses and/or illegal signage for businesses in the early 1950's

The Colorful Life Of The *General Fank M. Coxe*

by JoAnn Semones



Charles Ward Engineering Works built the steamship General Frank M. Coxe in 1922. The Vessel was used in San Mateo County for 43 years (West Virginia History Center).

Launched in 1922, the steamship General Frank M. Coxe carried passengers, mail and supplies to strategic military bases in the San Francisco Bay area. After becoming an excursion vessel in 1946, the ship was turned into a floating restaurant. From 1955 to 2009, the vessel had many owners and incarnations until being berthed in Burlingame.

Preserved on a scenic canal along the bay shoreline, the ship became a local sight-seeing spot and then a restaurant with a small museum highlighting the ship's history. She spent 43 of her 98 years in San Mateo County.

The Barge Age

The early decades of the twentieth century have been referred to as the "The Barge Age" in America. During that period, immense traffic in natural resources and other freight moved along the nation's inland waterways. Though rarely thought of today as a maritime state, West Virginia's rivers were among the most crowded in the nation at the time.

A small West Virginia engineering firm played a leading role in developing the technology that powered this era. Based in Charleston, the Ward Engineering Works revolutionized river navigation in America. Born

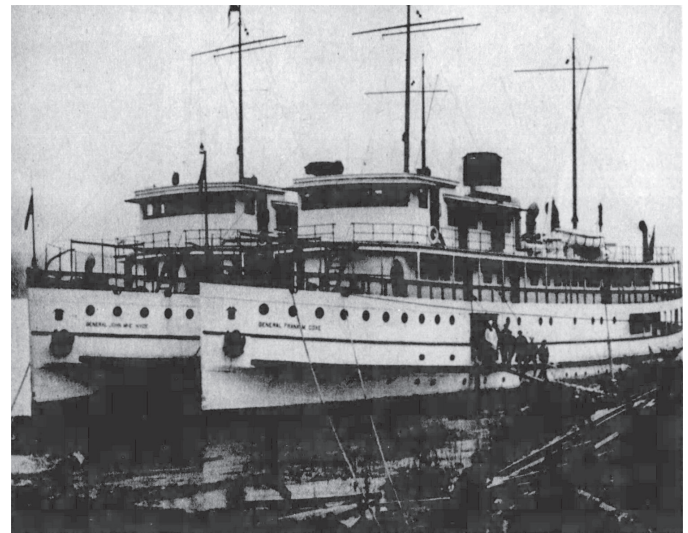
a shoemaker's son in 1841, Charles Ward grew up in Leamington, a small village in the west of England. At age sixteen, he was apprenticed to a pipe fitter. After working for gas and iron companies in Leamington and Liverpool, he emigrated to America in 1871 with his wife and young son.

Settling in Charleston, he received employment supervising a new gas works and also opened a store that sold gas fittings and provided plumbing services. Ward soon left the gas company to concentrate his efforts upon designing and manufacturing steam boilers for transportation use. He positioned his new business on the south bank of the Kanawha River, a tributary of the Ohio River. It was the largest inland waterway in West Virginia.

Traditional boiler designs used coils of hot air to bring drums of water to a boil. Ward developed a method in which coils of water were heated in a chamber of hot air. His innovation resulted in a dramatic increase in heat production. Ward tested his new design on a steam packet called the Wild Goose with mixed success during the late 1870s. When he finally patented the Ward Water Tube Boiler in 1879, his new invention was met with skepticism by most river boatmen who were accustomed to the old design.

Yet, gradually over the next two decades, water tube boilers built by Ward and his colleagues came to dominate the industry. During the 1890s, Ward faced similar skepticism when he advocated the elimination of the bulky, if picturesque, paddle wheel as a means of propulsion in favor of the screw propeller. After testing screw propulsion on small family yachts, Ward built a towboat for the U.S. Engineering Service. Although acceptance came slowly, he continued manufacturing stern wheel vessels while simultaneously developing and building propeller-powered craft.

Ward continued to expand his company, designing and building many steam and diesel powered vessels, both paddlewheel and propeller driven. Customers included the Army, Navy and Coast Guard. As time went on, Ward's health began to fail. His son,



The General Frank M. Coxe served as an Army transport, ferrying military personnel and supplies within the strategic harbors of San Francisco. (Army Ship Photo Index)

Edwin, assumed stewardship of the company in 1909. In the ensuing decades, Edwin developed Ward Engineering into a major supplier of shallow draught vessels producing barges, ferries, lighthouse tenders, packet boats and towboats for service throughout the United States and beyond.

Growth of Pacific Ports

Ward also built the steamship USAT General Frank M. Coxe, a military transport intended to ferry army personnel within strategic harbors. The vessel was designed by the New York firm of Cox & Stevens who were renowned naval architects specializing in yachts and small commercial and military craft.

The ship was named for Frank Morrell Coxe who was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1842. During the Civil War, he served as a commissioned officer in a variety of infantry units and finished his wartime service as a Brevet Colonel. Coxe spent the remainder of his career in the Paymaster Corps, serving primarily as Paymaster of San Francisco. After thirty years of service, he retired at his own request in 1904 with the rank of Brigadier General.

The General Frank M. Coxe was launched on March 3, 1922. She was 144 feet in length, 28 feet wide and measured 539 tons. She was assigned to carry

passengers, mail and supplies to strategic bases in the San Francisco Bay area. Prior to today's system of bridges and highways in and around San Francisco, mobility on the water was critical. The Army ran the ship on a routine timetable between Fort Mason and Fort McDowell (Angel Island), stopping on the way at Alcatraz Island.

As the westernmost port of the continental United States, San Francisco has served as a vital military stronghold since the 1840s. San Francisco and its development as a center of maritime trade, were both shaped by the city's location at the entrance to a large natural harbor. The area's growth was spurred by the gold rush of 1849 and the Civil War in the 1860s.

During World War I and World War II, the tactical locations of Pacific ports were seen as having increased military importance. During this period, the three installations saw a formidable increase in the amount of soldiers and material shipping. The General Frank M. Coxe made as many as eight trips per day between the bases.

Fort Mason

Situated on nearly seventy acres overlooking San



The General Frank M. Coxe sailed from the piers at Fort Mason, making as many as eight trips a day to Fort McDowell and Alcatraz. (San Francisco Public Library History Center)

Francisco Bay, Fort Mason is defined by two distinct areas: Upper Fort Mason and Lower Fort Mason. The rocky spit of land was first occupied as a Spanish military installation in the late 1700s. In 1850, the U.S. Army established a U.S. Military Installation at Point San Jose, also known as Black Point. Renamed Fort Mason in 1882, the site was one of the primary maritime military defense posts for the city.

In 1910, the area became the headquarters for the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, where army personnel and supplies were filtered to and from Hawaii, Alaska and the Pacific. The piers and warehouses were designed by Philadelphia architects Rankin, Kellogg and Crane in a Mission Revival style featuring red-tiled roofs and white stucco facades.

During World War II, about 1,650,000 passengers and 23,600,000 tons of supplies moved into the Pacific from this port. "From the early days of the campaigns in the Southwest Pacific, when men and supplies were but a trickle, to the time when added resources enabled us to mount increasing offensive operations," wrote Gen. Douglas MacArthur, "the U.S. Army's San Francisco Port of Embarkation gave magnificently of their full support which in no small measure contributed to victory."

Fort McDowell (Angel Island)

The U.S. military history of Angel Island began in 1850, shortly after the Mexican-American War, when President Fillmore declared the island a military preserve. In 1863, the U.S. Army was concerned about Confederate naval raiders attacking San Francisco and constructed artillery batteries on the island. A military post and immigration station were also established, known as Camp Reynolds or the West Garrison.

In 1900, the post was renamed Fort McDowell. Between 1910 and 1911, the fort was expanded into a major facility for receiving recruits and processing military personnel for overseas assignment. In 1918, the site was used as a debarkation and discharge point for



Mae Capone, wife of mobster Al Capone, was one of the unusual passengers who boarded the General Frank M. Coxe. (Bureau of U.S. Prisons)

troops returning from World War I. In the 1920s and 1930s, the fort handled the transfer of about 40,000 men per year, more than were processed by any other U.S. military post during those years. The General Frank M. Coxe supported much of this activity.

After the outbreak of World War II, part of the area was turned into a prisoner of war processing facility. Before the war was over hundreds of Japanese, German and Italian prisoners were temporarily detained here. At the same time, Fort McDowell itself served as a major point of embarkation for troops headed toward the Pacific war zone. The post was decommissioned in 1945.

Alcatraz Island

Alcatraz Island is separated from the main land by more than one mile. In the 1850s, California had seen the beginning of a massive gold rush, opening its doors to swarms of adventure seekers. The first West Coast lighthouse was also established on the island, leading the way for a multitude of ships bound for the bustling city of San Francisco.

In 1859, the U.S. Army fortified the island's harbor entrance with strategic batteries including a fort. During the Civil War, Alcatraz became the largest American fort west of the Mississippi River. The army began sending soldier-convicts to the Alcatraz fort in early 1860.

Over the next forty years, the island gradually became obsolete as a fortification and more important as a prison. The U.S. Army removed

the fort's guns and in 1907 formally designated Alcatraz as a military prison. In 1915, it became a prison for soldiers undergoing punishment and retraining. Army prisoners built most of the buildings on the island. This would be the final military role for the island until the last soldiers departed in 1933.

Unusual Passengers

From 1934 to 1963, Alcatraz was a federal penitentiary. A warden's report noted, "We control the launch McDowell, which operates on a regular schedule between the island and San Francisco. In addition, we have the benefit of the service rendered by the steamer General Frank M. Coxe operated by the Army on a regular schedule between Fort Mason, Fort McDowell and Alcatraz."

On a normal run to Alcatraz on August 1, 1945, an unusual passenger made his way aboard the General Frank M. Coxe. A prisoner attempted to use the ship in a getaway scheme. John K. Giles had worked as a prison dock stevedore for the last eight years. Wearing an Army Staff Sergeant's uniform, he was hiding under the dock armed only with a flash light. The convict jumped aboard the ship through a freight hatchway below deck.

However, information was relayed to the guard on the Alcatraz dock. Gazing nonchalantly out to sea, Giles seemed unaware that he was under close surveillance during his brief voyage. At the Fort McDowell dock the Assistant Warden of Alcatraz snapped a pair of handcuffs on him.

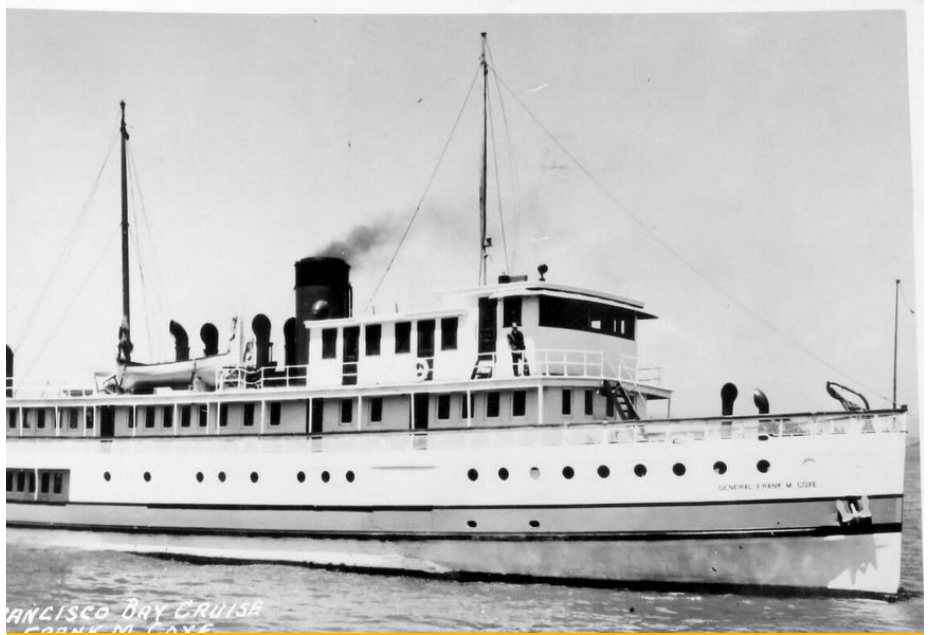
Another unusual passenger aboard the General Frank M. Coxe was Mae Capone. She was the wife of notorious gangster Al “Scarface” Capone who was incarcerated at Alcatraz prison from mid-August 1934 to January 1939. Of course, the only transportation available was via the steamship. Mae visited Al several times, usually trying to obscure her face in order to avoid the press.

While in prison, Al Capone began to show increasing symptoms of long-term exposure to syphilis. When the disease began affecting his brain, he began to show signs of serious dementia. Mae pleaded with officials to send her husband to a low security prison. In 1939, he was transferred to Terminal Island Prison in Southern California to complete his sentence. He was released in early November and died eight years later. According to one report, “Al Capone ended his days in a mental fog.”

Scenic Cruise Ship

In 1946, the Red and White Fleet purchased the General Frank M. Coxe as an excursion vessel with its Gray Line. The ship, now called the SS General Frank M. Coxe, began offering service around the San Francisco Bay Area from Fisherman’s Wharf.

“When you see the Bay from the decks of the General Coxe, you’ll see more, you’ll see it better and you’ll see it in comfort,” one of the cruise brochures declared. “Whether you choose a vantage point on the wide-open sun deck or in a snug, steam-heated observation room, you’ll have the quiet, vibration-free ride that only a steamship can give.”



In 1946, the General Frank M. Coxe became a scenic cruise ship, sailing to points of interest around San Francisco Bay. (Army Ship Photo Index)

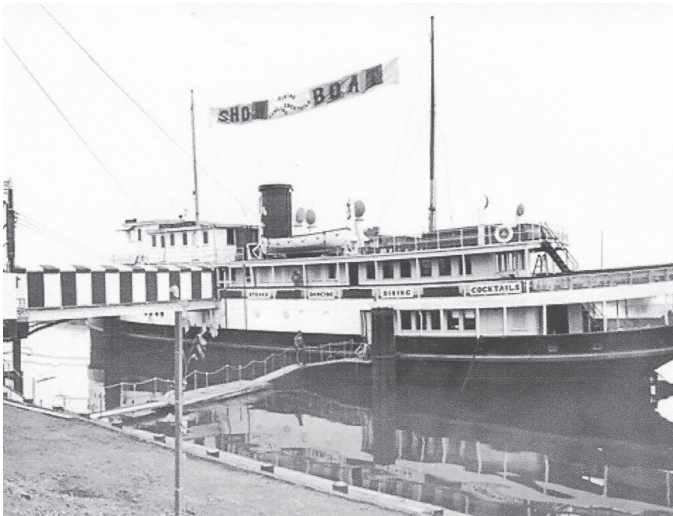
On short cruises, passengers were shown points of interest that included Fisherman’s Wharf, the Marina, the Presidio, Fort Point, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Marin shore, Angel Island, Alcatraz, Treasure Island, Yerba Buena Island, the Bay Bridge, the Ferry Building and the San Francisco waterfront.

Long cruises covered all the points on the short cruise as well as Sausalito, Belvedere, Raccoon Strait, the Net Depot, San Quentin Prison, Red Rock, the Brothers, Richmond and the East Bay areas of Berkeley, Oakland and Alameda.

A cocktail lounge was located on the ship’s Main Deck with beverages, soft drinks and cigarettes. A restaurant offered a snack bar as well as bar service. Roast beef sandwiches cost 50 cents while hot sandwiches were 85 cents. The Cabin Deck (center) featured glass-enclosed observation cabins and a souvenir booth with post cards, binoculars and cruise information. The Boat Deck (upper) was the open air deck which provided passengers with panoramic photo opportunities.

Floating Restaurant

After retiring as an active vessel, the General Frank M. Coxe was moved to Stockton and stripped of its engines, copper and brass. She debuted on July 1, 1955 as the Showboat Restaurant and Wheelhouse Lounge. The Showboat was described as Stockton’s “only floating restaurant in operation.”



In 1955, the General Frank M. Coxe was renamed the Showboat, operating as a floating restaurant in Stockton, Oakland and Burlingame. (Stockton Record)

The owners, Sam Kampschmidt and Lloyd Bothwell, offered high-quality food at reasonable prices. They also hired a chef who specialized in seafood. The menu featured “deluxe dinners” for \$3 to \$4.50. Bottles of wine were available from \$2.50 to \$6.50 and a piece of apple pie was 25 cents. Sam’s wife, Ellie, noted, “The opening was pretty big. For the first six months that we were open, people were standing in line for dinner.”

All went well until 1959 when financial disagreements ensued between the owners. The Showboat was moved to Jack London Square in Oakland and was operated by Lloyd and Mercedes Bothwell. In 1966, Terry Fogarty took over general management of the Showboat. According to one report, “He worked day and night to make the venture a success, mastering everything from washing dishes to tending bar.”

Hard Times

The early 1970s provided hard times. The number of restaurants in Jack London Square reached the over-saturation point. In 1971, the Showboat pulled up anchor, was taken across the bay and re-docked in Burlingame. A new owner, Ben Carter, took over the business.

The Showboat offered lunch as well as dinner with entertainment every night of the week. The menu included seafood dinners as well as a weekly “spaghetti feed” for 75 cents a plate. On Wednesday nights, cocktails were offered to the ladies for a mere 75 cents.

Beginning in 1974, the restaurant went through a series of owners and leases. Over time, the vessel was operated under several names including Baywinds (1975-1976), Lucky Lady (1978) and Diamond Showboat (1978-1979).

In 1978, James “Jim” Katsaras, the owner of the ship (sometimes referred to as Diamond Jim’s Showboat), was shot to death on the ship by a disgruntled business partner. After stabbing a legal researcher at a law office with a pen knife, Giacomo Messina boarded the vessel and shot Katsaras five times at close range with a shotgun. Detectives said that Messina had been a partner in the business venture and wanted out. Messina would later be acquitted for reasons of insanity.

In the 1980s, the vessel continued changing hands. She was known as Showboat 7 (1980-1981), Valentino’s (1981-1982) and the Pattaya Princess (1983-1987). In January of 1987, a high wind sank the ship in twelve feet of water.

The Sherman

A sale failed and the ship sat in disrepair for over a decade. During that period the vessel was vandalized and survived an onboard fire which caused \$50,000 to \$100,000 of damage to its storage area. The vessel was a vacant hulk, until local restaurateurs bought the ship where it remained berthed in Burlingame.

The new owners obtained an extended lease from the City of Burlingame and renovated the ship. She was painted a striking forest green and white with a red stripe at her waterline. Her name was changed to The Sherman in honor of a previous owner. On December 13, 2007, she opened as a restaurant and featured a small museum on the ship’s main deck.

Among other offerings, the gourmet menu included: Caesar salad or mixed organic field greens; filet mignon



After changing hands and names several times, the ship was rechristened The Sherman. (Author's Collection)

with Bernaise sauce, fingerling potatoes and spinach with ship-cured bacon; Alaskan halibut with roasted garlic, white spiced bean puree and brandy-olive tapenade; and a myriad of tasty desserts such as lemon-raspberry cake. Both domestic and French wines were also available to enjoy.

"The Sherman is a very well designed restaurant on the water," a local newspaper commented. "Everything from the lighting, wooden floors, private dining room, curved wooden bars and glass steps are very tastefully done. Highly recommend the food too! Beautifully cooked and nicely served. This restaurant is a special Burlingame gem."

The following year, an economic recession led to the ship's closure. Once again, it sat neglected. In financial default, the ship was sold to a Stockton group of investors. In June of 2014, the vessel was towed to Stockton's marina to be operated as a floating seafood restaurant called The Queen Stockton. One of the investors, William Bills declared, "We're trying to bring something here that's historical."

Sadly, the vision failed to materialize. One local official noted, "It would be nice to have a nice riverboat in our town. I just don't think that was the ideal one. That or they just didn't have a good plan in place."

Final Disposition

In 2017, The Sherman was towed by the tug American Eagle to the Vallejo Municipal Marina. The ship's new owners, Sacramento River Resort, Inc., announced they were preparing to open it as a floating restaurant. However, Vallejo was not the owners' first choice. They said they had plans to restore the ship to its former glory and then open it as a floating restaurant and entertainment venue, The General, in Old Sacramento.

Yet again, the plan failed. The owners abandoned the ship and left the city with a deteriorating vessel. "Essentially, the handlers of the boat misrepresented themselves to our staff," one city official revealed. "They said they'd get the boat worked on in the area and just needed a temporary place to dock the boat. That was a ruse."

The city tried to no avail to sell The Sherman, or donate it to a nonprofit group or museum. Finding no other alternatives, they were forced to have it towed. "The Sherman is just one example of a Bay-wide problem," another city official acknowledged. "People buy boats they can't afford to maintain or repair, then



In 2019, the historic ship was taken to Mare Island Dry Dock and was broken up for scrap. (San Francisco Chronicle)

abandon them, and the boats gradually fall apart and pollute the Bay.”

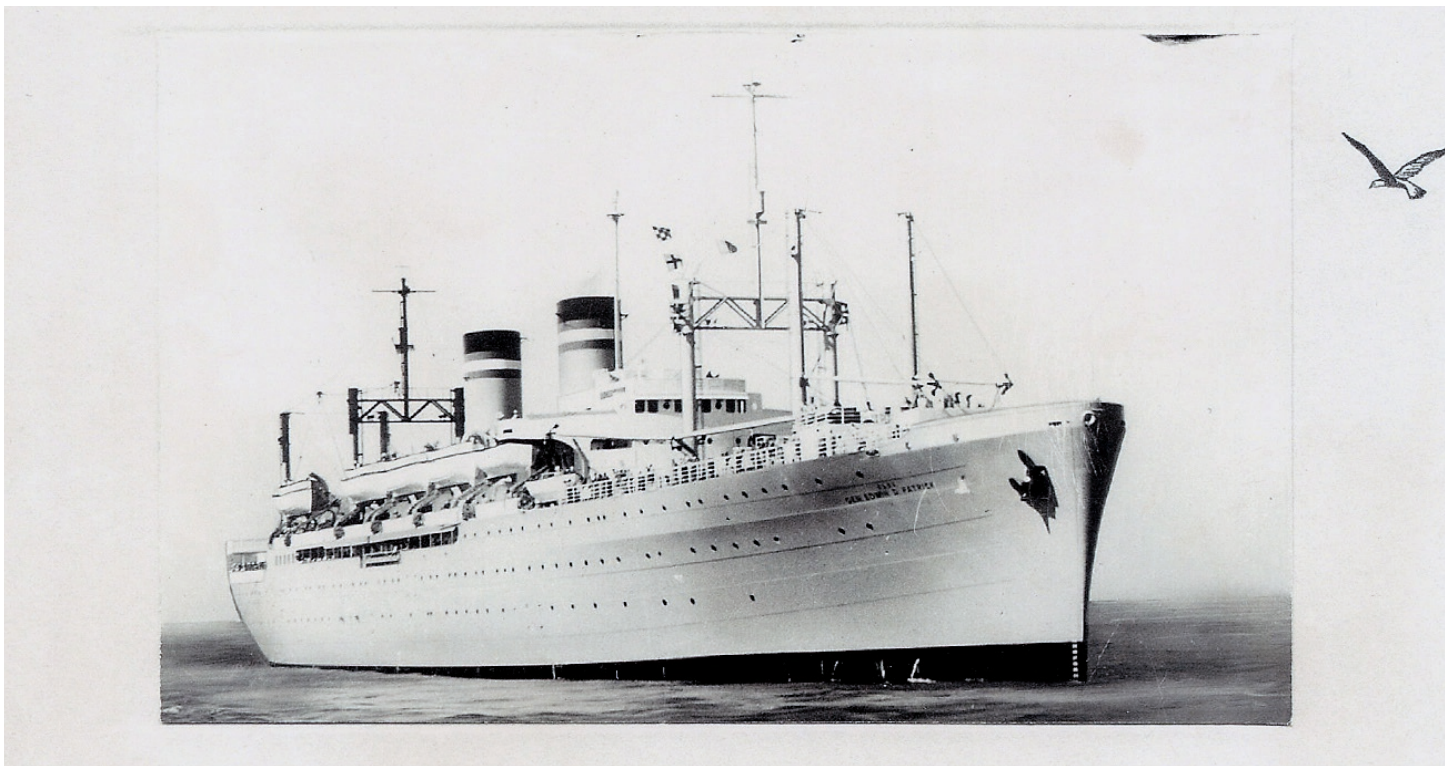
On November 26, 2019, the City of Vallejo paid \$500,000 to tow The Sherman to the former Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo. Historic Mare Island was the site of the first United States Naval installation on the west coast. Over 500 ships were built at the shipyard during its 142-year history

There, The Sherman, a historic ship in her own right, was broken up for scrap. During the process, the vessel underwent environmental abatement, dismantling and recycling. The work was completed on January 19, 2020.

“It’s an ignominious end to The Sherman’s colorful, if checkered, past. It had such a glorious, glamorous life,” Christina Snyder, executive vice president of Mare Island Dry Dock, recalled. “She was a war vessel, a fancy restaurant. Just to see this kind of end is sad. But all good things must come to an end.”

Remembering The General E.D. Patrick

by JoAnn Semones



Charles Ward Engineering Works built the steamship General Frank M. Coxe in 1922. (West Virginia History Center)

I clambered aboard the General E.D. Patrick for the first time in October of 1949. I was three years old and it’s my first memory. Strewn with colorful balloons and confetti, the ship departed San Francisco’s docks to strains of a military band’s rendition of “Far Away Places.” My mother (Grace) minimized any mischief by

fastening me and my younger sister (Vicky) into little pink harnesses.

Bound for Japan, we would cover more than 4,500 miles of open sea. My father (George), an officer and a bombardier during World War II, was stationed there as part of the Occupation Forces. We’d been waiting for

him for six months. During the separation, he made recordings, telling us about his adventures in a far off land and singing little songs to keep up our spirits.

Just before we docked at Yokohama, I celebrated my fourth birthday. I was aboard the E.D. Patrick once again when we all returned from Japan in December of 1951.

Years later, I learned that the E.D. Patrick was still afloat as part of the Bay Area's "Ghost Fleet." In 2003, I contacted officials at the Maritime Administration's Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet. I followed up with a formal request to board this special ship, take photos and prepare a story. Touching the ship's spirit once again was an emotional and unforgettable experience.

Sadly, The General Patrick was withdrawn from the fleet on April 15, 2010 for dismantlement, which was completed on January 25, 2011.



My father and I in 1945 (I'm one month old).



A 1949 passport photo of my mother with me and my sister (you can see the passport stamp).

JoAnn Semones, Ph.D., is a San Mateo County resident, maritime author and historian. She was aboard the *Sherman* in August 2008.

JoAnn is best known for her series of books about shipwrecks at lighthouses along the central California coast. To learn more, visit her website at: www.GullCottageBooks.com



A 1949 photo of me and my sister in life jackets aboard the Patrick (you can see the name of the ship imprinted on her jacket).

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Dr. Stanger Legacy Society



Dr. Stanger at Millbrae excavation site, 1944.

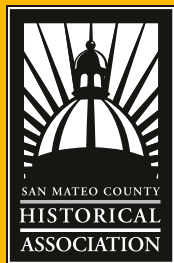
Dr. Frank Stanger was the first executive director of the San Mateo County Historical Association. Among his accomplishments, he opened the organization's first museum and started publishing *La Peninsula*.

Some of our thoughtful supporters have joined the Dr. Stanger Legacy Society by including the Association in their wills or trusts. Their gifts, and yours should you choose to join them, help us preserve and interpret the history of San Mateo County.

Members of the Dr. Stanger Legacy Society receive invitations to annual events. For more information, please contact Gail Rudolph at 650.299.0104.

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North Fair Oaks area, circa mid-1950s; Taken between CalTrain (formerly Southern Pacific) RxR track line at bottom, with El Camino Real at top, just south of Woodside Rd.