

MEETINGS: Based on the response from members at the Annual Meeting, we will try to have a membership meeting every odd-numbered month. Meeting times will alternate between Sunday afternoons and work-week evenings, to accommodate various schedules.

BYLAWS. Our Bylaws were done in 1978. Since they are cumbersome, detailed, and have not been followed, the Board has drafted an updated version. They will be on the May agenda for discussion and will be available at the meeting; Let us know if you would like a copy sooner.

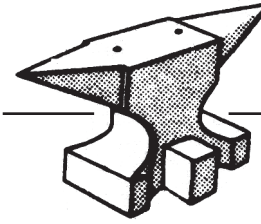
CREEKS. Our Society has agreed that our creeks are important resources that deserve protection. We have a Creeks Committee of five members plus three ex officio attendees. Recent activities include:

- Meeting with City staff to try to preserve the creek that runs through the historic Rodini homestead at 1715 Elm. A development is planned, for which the staff contemplates allowing the creek to be put in an underground culvert so that a dozen townhouses can be built over it.
- Attending a Park & Recreation commission hearing, and writing an opinion letter, regarding the creek at Huber Park. This creek is open to the sky for about 5 blocks, from the 8100 block of Terrace to Pomona, except for the short section in the City park. The City contemplates upgrades in the park, and we have asked them to study reopening that section of the creek.

THE QUARRY-FLOWER SHOP-CHAMBER BUILDING. Built in 1925 as an office for a quarry, 10848 San Pablo Avenue was used both before and after WWII as a retail florist, a part of the extensive flower industry in Richmond and El Cerrito. Until last year it was the office of the Chamber of Commerce. It is one of the most interesting structures on San Pablo Avenue, and is seen by the Society as both culturally significant and architecturally interesting. It is owned by the city's Redevelopment Agency. Among others, five members of the Society spoke at a public hearing before the Agency early this month to urge that this building be saved. The Agency contemplates clearing the former Tradeway site, perhaps including this building, for a residential-business development. So far, Agency documents claim this building has no historic significance.

HISTORIC RESOURCES ORDINANCE. Our relations with the City might not be occasionally uncomfortable if the City had a Historic Resources Ordinance and a list of all such resources. Last month a State Historian from the State Historic Preservation Office met with us and City staff and proposed a plan of action. We have gathered sample ordinances from several other cities and made suggestions as to what might be included in a draft ordinance. If El Cerrito can get an ordinance in place, appoint a commission, and become a "Certified Local Government", our city could be in line for a \$25,000 grant. This grant would need to be matched with \$16,667 from the City, which could include in-kind services provided by the Historical Society.

SAN PABLO AVENUE BEAUTIFICATION. The City proposes to place pavement markers along two miles of the Avenue from Fairmount to Potrero. Representatives of the Society attended a hearing of the Arts & Culture Commission, which reviewed a list of subject matters and places for the markers that we had submitted to the City a while back. Tom Panas has been added to the Commission's sub-committee to work with City staff.



P O Box 304, El Cerrito, CA 94530
elcerritohistoricalsociety@yahoo.com

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***OUR NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 at 7:30 PM
at Eskaton Hazel Shirley Manor. Cookies, Coffee & Tea will be served***

President's Message

PROGRAM: Preserving El Cerrito's Japanese-American Heritage: The old Quarry Building/ Contra Costa Florist. This will be an illustrated talk by Jill Shiraki, an organizer with Preserving California's Japantowns. She will discuss the rich history surrounding the many Japantowns that dot the state, from urban neighborhoods in San Francisco and Oakland to rural farming communities. Jill will also touch on the last physical remnant of El Cerrito's community of Japanese-American flower growers – the old quarry building, which later became the Mabuchi's Contra Costa Florist. First built ca. 1925 as a quarry office, it served as the Mabuchi family's home and flower shop from ~1935 to 1965, with a hiatus caused by the family's World War II internment.

The stone-faced building, a real charmer, is currently endangered by a proposed city-sponsored redevelopment. Rich Bartke and Dave Weinstein, Society officers, will discuss efforts to include the building as part of the proposed development. Rich will also bring the membership up to date on efforts to create a Historic Resources Ordinance for El Cerrito.

PATHS WALK: Save the date: Vice President David Weinstein will lead a walk on some of El Cerrito's little known paths. Meet at Shevlin Drive just north of Moeser, on Saturday, March 27, 2010 at 10:00 AM. Wear good shoes. Some of the route will be up-slope. Along the way David will point out historic spots, interesting architecture and natural features.

MAY MEETING: Will be back on Sunday afternoon in the Senior Center at 1:00 PM.

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a volunteer, non-political, non-profit organization with one agenda: to locate and preserve our local history. Anyone may join; dues are \$20 (Household member), \$50 (Sponsoring member), and \$250 (Life member).

El Cerrito's Interesting City Attorney, Tony DeLap

Betting on dog races has always been illegal in California. Everyone knows that. So how did our fair city manage to have a dog track? Well, we had a sharp City Attorney, Tony DeLap. Mr. DeLap was a principal in the county's oldest and largest law firm, Tinning & DeLap in Richmond. He served as our City Attorney from May 1, 1930 to July 2, 1942.

Black Jack Jerome had a 50 year permit for an amusement park, and asked the City Council for a dog permit. It was granted for a 10 year term.

So how was it done? In simple terms, if you went to El Cerrito's Kennel Club, you could not bet on the dogs. But before every race, dogs would be paraded, and if you saw a dog you liked, you could go to a window and for \$2 you could buy an option to purchase that dog. After the dogs chased a mechanical bunny around the track, if your dog did well, you went back to the same window and they bought your option for more than you paid for it. If your dog did poorly, the option was worthless.



Tony DeLap

In 1936 Black Jack and his new bride were indicted for mail fraud. That revealed who were his three backers, two of whom were Tom Carlson, Richmond's City Attorney, and Ed Downer, President of Mechanics Bank.

Now here's where it gets interesting. DeLap was also a powerful State legislator He defeated Orr for Assembly in November 1934 by a 2 to 1 margin, then was elected Senator representing Contra Costa County in November 1936.

The League of California Cities reported that there were at least four city officials who also held state elective office. The other three, all familiar names, were Sam Yorty, later Mayor of Los Angeles (and candidate for Governor), Tom Kuchel who later became a U.S. Senator, and Randolph Collier, a legendary state Senator for many years.

How did it all end? State Attorney General, Earl Warren, decided to run for Governor, and a strong plank in his platform was to close down gambling. He ruled the El Cerrito model of "option selling" was illegal. And, he appointed the powerful Senator DeLap as his state-wide campaign manager.

Two El Cerrito anti-gambling groups saw their chance. The Harding School PTA and the Business & Professional Women's Club got the dog permit onto the City Council agenda. What was the City Attorney to do now? Well, he didn't show up for the meeting, and the dog permit was revoked by a 3 to 2 vote of the Council, March 28, 1939.

DeLap was born in Klamath County, Oregon, and graduated high school in Woodland. He graduated from Hastings law school in 1911. He served in the artillery in WWI in France. He was a leader in many community organizations, including the Salvation Army, Chamber of Commerce, Community Chest and Richmond Health Center.

In January 1940, Senator DeLap made news by introducing a bill to return relief agencies to the counties. He accused the State Relief Agency of "favoritism, chiseling and extravagance", and cited a state study that it had been infiltrated by Communists. This angered the local Democratic Central Committee and the Richmond Progress newspaper. The Central Committee got Assemblyman Harold Sawallisch to run against DeLap that year, but it was not to be. The record shows DeLap defeated a Mr. Allinger by a 20 to 1 margin!

In 1935 El Cerrito's City Clerk, Fred Prosser, hadn't paid child support for a year, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Prosser was seen removing his personal items from his office. The next day the Mayor got a telegram from Berkeley saying Prosser went fishing up the Klamath, and to contact his attorney, (guess who?) Tony DeLap. Prosser was seen the next day in El Cerrito, and the following day the City Council ordered an audit of his books. He was arrested in Los Angeles on December 12, 1935 and held. DeLap asked the Attorney General if the Clerk could still draw his pay while in jail. (It seems conflicts of interest were more loosely defined in those days.)

In 1941 DeLap introduced a bill to allow County Clerks to destroy campaign expenditure filings one year after the winner leaves office. Amendments were offered to reduce that one year to 2 hours after filing, then to 15 minutes. DeLap said that for the amount of good the public got, he'd accept that amendment.

In an incident not atypical for the times, in El Cerrito in 1941 the Council voted 4 to 0 to purchase the site for Fire Station 3 on Arlington (now Station 72) for \$990. Councilman Pete Larson refused to vote either yes or no, and when asked why by Mayor Ira Scott, Larson refused to answer, and left the meeting. Why?

In March 1944 Martinez Mayor Cappy Ricks became a candidate against DeLap. In the December election, DeLap defeated Ricks 35,600 to 33,400. Ricks got the bulk of military votes, while DeLap got a 700 vote advantage from absentees

Mr. DeLap lived just north of Barrett Avenue. He continued to practice law in Richmond until about 1970. His firm moved to Walnut Creek in 1972. After the firm moved, his scrapbook was found in a trash can by an El Cerrito Historical Society member, and donated to the Society. The last entry in the scrapbook is in 1944. Most of the above information is taken from that scrapbook.