

# Petaluma Museum Association

## Petaluma Historical Library & Museum

Preserving the Unique History of Petaluma and Providing Educational and Cultural Services to the Community

Quarterly Newsletter  
Digital Edition

FEB 9 - MAR 31, 2024

### AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE ARTS

ON VIEW AT THE PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM  
20 FOURTH STREET  
PETALUMA, CA

PETALUMAMUSEUM.ORG

OKIN CARPENTER

ROSE HILL

EDMOKIA LEWIS

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DENSE WALD

TINA ROSEBER

OSCAR MICHEAUX

HENRY OSSAVA TANNER

EBBIE CLARSON

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KEVETTE MINOR

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2024

Thank you to our sponsors: Petaluma Arts Center, the City of Petaluma, Museum of Sonoma County, Sonoma County, the Eames Institute, and the Healthy Petaluma District and Foundation.

Learn more at [www.pbd4us.com](http://www.pbd4us.com) and on Instagram at [@pbd4us](https://www.instagram.com/pbd4us).

Winter/Spring 2024

Volume 34, Issue 1

## On the Cover

### *African Americans and the Arts*

In alignment with the Association for the Study of African American Life and History's 2024 Black History Month festival theme, Petaluma Blacks for Community Development presents *African Americans and the Arts*, an exhibition at the Petaluma Historical Library & Museum, February 9-March 31. The exhibition will celebrate African American expression across several genres, including music, dance, literature, film, architecture, and the visual arts. Works from artistic and cultural movements such as the New Negro movement, Black Renaissance, hip-hop, and Afrofuturism will be featured.

*African Americans and the Arts* will showcase local contemporary artists Denise Ward and Orin Carpenter, and will also highlight the artistic achievements of acclaimed African American painters across the decades, including Joshua Johnson, Alma Thomas, and Faith Ringgold. The exhibition will also highlight the accomplishments of award-winning science fiction writer Octavia Butler, groundbreaking dancer Misty Copeland, pioneering architect Norma Merrick Sklarek, and lauded filmmaker Spike Lee. Additionally, the exhibition will recognize the 50th anniversary of hip-hop and honor the contributions of numerous Black American musicians.

An opening reception for the exhibition will take place at the Museum February 9 at 6:30 pm. The event will include a performance by special guest Makeda Kumasi, a multi-talented dancer, storyteller, teacher, and much more. Kumasi will dance and play African drums. The opening ceremony is \$10, but no one will be turned away.

Petaluma Blacks for Community Development will kick off Black History Month at the Petaluma Historical Library & Museum with a sold-out annual jazz concert featuring Dorian Mode on February 2 at 7:00 pm.

Other Black History Month events organized by Petaluma Blacks for Community Development and partners include the following:

- Feb. 4: Art in Conversation with Denise Ward and Orin Carpenter at the Petaluma Arts Center
- Feb 15: Tina Rogers will perform two 30 minute hip-hop sessions at the Polly Klaas Community Center
- Feb 17: Keenan Webster will share music of the banjo related instruments at the Petaluma Library
- Feb 18: Art in Conversation with Denise Ward and Rose Hill at the Museum of Sonoma County
- Feb 24: Annual Black History Program at the New Life Christian Church

Please see [petalumamuseum.com](http://petalumamuseum.com) for exhibition information and visit [pbcd4us.com](http://pbcd4us.com) for additional information and programming details.

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The Petaluma Museum Association Newsletter is published quarterly and distributed to its members.

Thank you to all the contributors and special thanks to Carl Molesworth, copy editor. If you would like to contribute any news or items of interest to our newsletter, email [mrowe@petalumamuseum.org](mailto:mrowe@petalumamuseum.org)  
Deadline is April 1, 2024

**Petaluma Museum Association  
20 Fourth St.  
Petaluma, CA 94952**

## A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

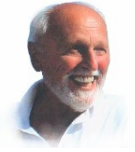
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The Petaluma Historical Library & Museum is a place for our community to be inspired, to learn, and to gather year-round. As we begin to emerge from winter and look ahead to spring, I am excited to unveil our extraordinary 2024 lineup of special exhibitions and permanent collection installations that amplify a variety of voices and celebrate the rich history of Petaluma and our region.

- Leading off our 2024 calendar, Petaluma Blacks for Community Development presents *African Americans and the Arts*, on view until March 31. See page 2 for additional Black History Month programs!
- We'll have much to celebrate in April with the launch of *Cornerstone: Building Community*. In commemoration of the 120th anniversary of the setting of our historic building's cornerstone, this exhibition will show how community enthusiasm and support was instrumental in bringing a Carnegie library to Petaluma in 1904, and later was key to the building's evolution into the Petaluma Historical Library & Museum.
- In July, we'll illuminate the hardships, joys, and lives of female pioneers with *Her Side of the Story: Tales of California Pioneer Women*. This exhibit, developed by The Society of California Pioneers and traveling through Exhibit Envoy, highlights first-person stories from the women who traveled by land or sea to settle in California prior to statehood.
- In September, we are honored to present *Telling Stories of Mexican California: Real Life & Myth Making*. The exhibition shares the real stories of nineteenth-century California families of Spanish Mexican descent -- stories that were often ignored in favor of a new, exaggerated, or fictionalized lore. The exhibit was developed and organized by the California Historical Society and is touring through Exhibit Envoy. Institutional support was provided by San Francisco Grants for the Arts and Yerba Buena Community Benefit District, and the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation supported the first three bookings of this exhibition, including ours!
- Come October, we'll welcome back our partners at El Dia De Los Muertos Petaluma to host an exhibition of ofrendas and artworks in celebration of Dia de Los Muertos, the annual holiday in honor of the deceased that is traditionally observed in parts of Mexico and in other Latin America communities.
- We'll finish off the year with our annual exhibition, *Vintage Toys*, just in time for the holidays!

Along with our exciting exhibition line-up, watch our online calendar for additional events and programs, including living history walking tours, special presentations by historians and other experts, and much more! In the coming months, I look forward to meeting many of you -- our valued members and supporters -- and sharing with you my optimism for building meaningful community connections through top-quality exhibitions, engaging programs, and important initiatives that are bringing history to life, right here in Petaluma.

Warm regards,  
Stacey Atchley  
Executive Director



## Petaluma History & Commentary

by Skip Sommer, Historian

### THE END OF CALIFORNIA'S 'WILD WEST'

**T**HE FIRST ADVENTURERS coming west across America were a tough crew. Many were misfits, escaping society, bad marriages, or military service. Some were deserters. Others sought gold, though few found it. They were mostly male; they were non-conformists wishing to live outside the binds of the civilized world. Some of those men came to the verdant Petaluma Valley, and among them were many of our important pioneers. In the early "Old West" there was less regard for personal property, which made carrying weapons a necessity of protection. Theft of a cow or a horse could mean death to those left without it, and quick justice called for hanging as a punishing lesson. (Hanging also was practical because it saved on bullets.)

By the early 1880s, however, the wildest of the "Old West" had almost died out. "Wild Bill" Hickok had taken two bullets to the back in '83, The Earp brothers and Doc Holiday had just had their gun fight in the OK Corral, Pat Garrett had shot "Billy the Kid," Jesse James had been killed in '82, Bat Masterson had his last shoot-out, and "Black Bart" was captured in '83. Chief Sitting Bull surrendered in '82, and the vast buffalo herds, a major symbol of the American West and food-source to Native Americans, had been reduced to just 10,000 animals by '83. "Buffalo Bill" Cody had gone East that year, to form a traveling "Wild West" show. Cody found himself competing with 1883's newly formed Circus, Barnum & Bailey,



Photographer: Lewis Dowe  
Sitter: Harrison Tyler Mecham Sr  
Owner: PHL&M  
ca 1875-1882  
Photo on [petalumapioneers.org](http://petalumapioneers.org)

which featured an elephant named "Jumbo" and a little man named Tom Thumb.

No one took a census of outlaws then; however, the genre actually was quite small. But the world considered the outlaw to be the standard of life in our American West. Many still believe that way of life exists here today. There was no question, however, that The Gun

was still the law in the California of the 1880s, and strangers in Petaluma were not trusted until proven to be trustworthy. Vigilante groups had formed, sheriffs and marshals had been elected, and posses appointed. Bullets and powder were still hard to come by here, though, and few folks practiced shooting enough to be much good at it.

Most of the arrests in the Petaluma of those days were for drunkenness, fighting, and petty thievery, as doors were usually left unlocked, animals left out on the range, tools left where they were dropped. Sexual offenses were common too, but rarely reported. Many women carried knives, though, and there were an unusual number of corpses that had been mysteriously emasculated in our "American West."

But Petaluma seemed to be going pretty well in 1882. We were (officially), just 24 years old with a population of 5,200. We had a school, churches, four lawyers, six dentists, three doctors, four hotels, and a bunch of saloons. Our big-name founders were industriously building their fortunes: The McNears and Hiram Fairbanks were milling, Harrison Mecham had switched over from longhorns to dairy cattle, Ezekial Denman had built our county's first creamery, Isak Wickersham and William Hill were banking, and a young man named Lyman Byce was in the second year of merchandising his new invention, The Petaluma Chicken Incubator.

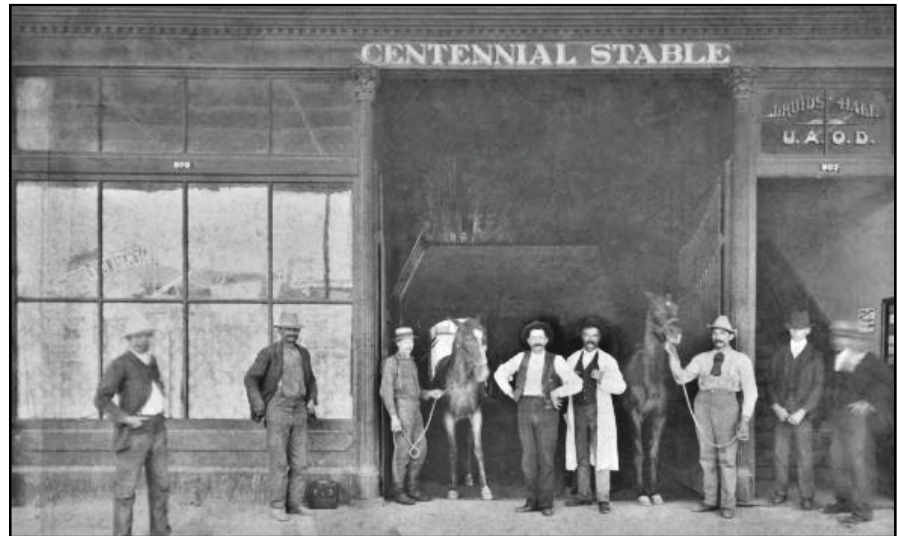


Sonoma County Library digital collection

It seemed Petaluma was on its way to a normal small-town existence here. On Main Street, one could purchase “carriages, buggies and wagons” from Zartman & Co. or buy one of the just-patented “Petaluma Carts” from D.W.C. Putnam. You could finish out that rig by buying “Harness, saddles, bridles, whips, brushes and blankets” at Palmer & Holm, on Main St. If just renting a rig was your aim, you could do that at The Centennial Stables, which featured: “The finest single and double turn-outs.” And, if you needed a place to stay, you could find that for “\$5./week, lodging and board” at The City Hotel, where their Hotel Hair Dressing Salon offered a: “Hot Bath, 25 Cents.” (Zowie!)

However, it wasn't ALL rosy then. Here are some examples of crime reported in The Petaluma Courier: “Thieves broke into Hesse's Saloon on Main Street. Marshall Blume is on the trail” (1878); “Citizens of East Petaluma ask for more police protection, claim tramps and thieves roam with impunity” (1878); “Brooklyn Hotel Manager catches chicken thief in act. Thief sent to jail by Justice Cavanagh” (1879); “Buggy stopped on Bodega Avenue by armed robber. gold watch and \$100. taken. Police advise that a pistol should be carried in a man's pocket for quick access, not in his satchel.” (1880); “Indian found murdered near Haynes Ranch. Police believe he and another Indian were illegally served liquor by a certain local saloon” (1880). (This, a reminder of the unwritten law to NOT provide alcohol to the Native Americans).

And, just when you thought it would be calmer in the next decade, this national headline, in July of 1891: “The Country was shocked by news that President Garfield had been shot in the back today. The weapon



*The Centennial Stable and Druids Hall in the Centennial Building, late 1890s  
(photo Petaluma Historical Library & Museum)*

used was known as a ‘California Pistol’ of heavy caliber.” Garfield survived until September 19, but the doctors then had no way of extracting his bullet. The President was seceded in office by his V.P., Chester A. Arthur.



*The City Hotel, c. 1875  
(photo Sonoma County Library)*

It seems that industrialization, which was sweeping the nation then, was not for everyone. The great depression of 1873-80 hit the American laborers and farmers hard. Bloody fights and killings sent thousands running away into the western states to seek new

opportunity, while agricultural prices plunged, sinking family farms into crisis. In 1879, The Petaluma Courier published the names of 720 Sonoma County foreclosures pending! Crime rates soared here.

The infamous “Old West” of banditos, cattle drives and shoot-outs was indeed fading fast in the 1880s, but the “New California” was still in trouble. Cattle competed with sheep for grazing, and the open and free range was becoming fenced with something NEW called “Barbed Wire,” as population and mistrust of neighbor grew. Many were then saying there wasn't enough range to go around. The L.A. Times, (a new publication in 1881), complained: “Too many people moving to California!”

(Sound familiar?) Ironically that same year, 142 years ago, our U.S. Congress ratified the Chinese Exclusion Act that cut-off ALL immigration from Asia. However, the “Too many people moving to America” argument, was to remain a much-debated issue for generations to come. ... It still is, it seems.

## In Memoriam



### *Evelyn Pedroni*

We remember museum volunteer Evelyn Pedroni, who passed away in August 2023 at age 98. Born Evelyn Bayless, she spent her early years in Novato and Tiburon, where her Italian grandmother taught her to garden. Her father was a station agent for

the Northwestern Pacific Railroad. The family moved to Petaluma's Cherry Street after he was assigned to the Petaluma depot in 1936.

After graduating from Petaluma High School in 1942, Evelyn trained as a nurse at Children's Hospital in San Francisco. She remained in the city, working at SF General Hospital while earning a bachelor's degree at San Francisco State. During this time, the Bayless family relocated closer to downtown. Upon his return from WWII Army service, John Pedroni noticed the new girl living directly across from his 5th Street family home. John and Evelyn were married in 1950 and raised three children.

As a young wife and mother, Evelyn began her years of engagement with community organizations. She was very active with Parent Nursery School and the St. Vincent's Mothers Club. She was a Campfire Girl troop leader and helped found the Petaluma Swim Club.

Evelyn grew beautiful roses and was a talented cook and baker who frequently gifted her cookies or pies. She played bridge and took up golf with a passion in her forties. She loved competing and

taking golf trips with John. She once scored a hole-in-one at the Incline Village course.

Evelyn joined the Petaluma Garden Club, where she led their City Beautification efforts for many years. She would entice club members to garden work projects with her homemade baked goods. While attending exercise classes at the Petaluma Senior Center, she noticed the poor condition of their garden and took on revitalizing it. At the Petaluma Historical Library and Museum, Evelyn was a front desk docent where she delighted in greeting visitors. Evelyn enjoyed museum activities and contributed to exhibits, including family photos and her wedding day going-away outfit for the "I Do" exhibit and her father's enlistment and discharge papers and footlocker for a World War I exhibit. Evelyn also maintained a small garden around the palm tree behind the Museum.



Evelyn's husband of 68 years, John Pedroni (co-owner of Pedroni's Delicatessen), passed away in June 2019. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the museum, contributing photos, stories, and exhibit items. He was remembered in the Summer/Fall 2019 newsletter. Born in Petaluma, John enjoyed

perusing the museum's collections and loved recalling and writing stories about the Petaluma he knew.



**Lots of exciting events are happening  
at your museum!**

For all the latest updates for events and exhibits please visit us on our website  
at:

**<https://www.petalumamuseum.org/events>**

## What's New in Collections

by Solange Russek, Collections Manager

*A big Thank you for all the recent donations we have received for Petaluma Museum's archival collections.*

Sandy Standley donated a vintage mechanical "One Trick Pony" piggy bank. Put the coin in the pony's mouth and it will drop it on the box and move.



Laure Reichek's donation of the "Woodsman" pull toy.



Teresa Vast and her sister Laura Chenel donated Cinnabar Pottery.



**Cinnabar Pottery**  
**Workshop**  
 has classes, red clay, glazes,  
 mold making and firing  
 service  
 RT. 1, BOX 183-B  
 ZIFF LANE OFF 101  
 2 Miles North of Petaluma  
 SEE EXHIBIT THIS WEEK AT  
 MORWEAR PAINT STORE  
 143 KENTUCKY ST.

Ralph and Jean Smith, who own and operate the ceramic shop, known as The Cinnabar Pottery, will place an exhibit of their work in the show. This pottery, which has exhibited in San Francisco, is unique for the quality of its glaze. The glaze is created by the use of unusual wood ash. Their muted green and gray color tones are distinctive.

The Smiths specialize in making their own glazes. They will demonstrate "throwing" on the potters wheel during sessions of the art show. This will be a special attraction for those attending the show.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith operate a complete pottery north of Petaluma where they fire in their kilns many attractive and unusual pieces of the ceramic art.

Collections.....from page 7

Erv Peterson donated photos of his family's Chicken ranch on Marshall Ave. along with Christmas artwork designed by Tess Sweed, daughter of Philip Sweed.



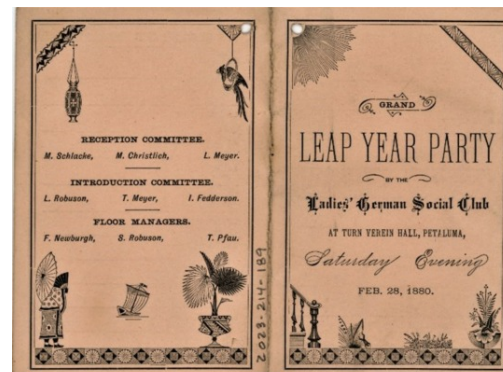
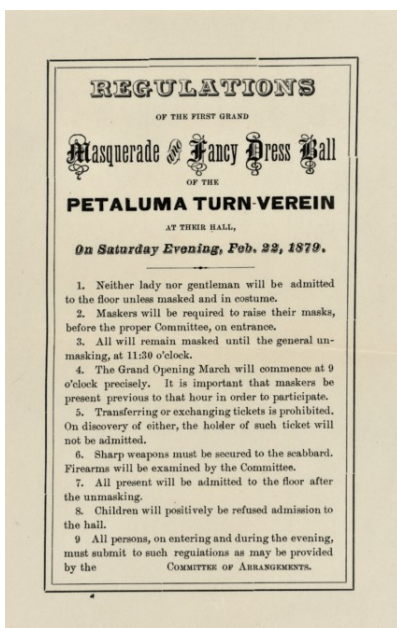
Sweed home on Keokuk



Tess Sweed

From the Barbara Webster Collection:

Party like it's 1879! Petaluma loved to party! Masquerade balls occurred on the Evening of Thanksgiving and other months of the year. Note the rules and regulations.





# Petaluma Skyways Airport on North McDowell

## Fourth in a Series

By Carl Molesworth

Petaluma had lacked a functioning airport for a decade when World War II ended in 1945. With veterans flowing back into the community and a postwar economic boom sure to come, Petaluma was a prime location for the development of new aviation facilities.

One of the drivers of this effort was the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill, a law that provided a range of benefits for most of the returning World War II veterans (commonly referred to as G.I.s). Benefits included low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business or farm, one year of unemployment compensation, and dedicated payments of tuition and living expenses to attend high school, college, or vocational school. (Wikipedia)

Under the G.I. Bill, air-minded veterans would have the opportunity not only to learn to fly, but also to establish the flight schools that would make this possible. The first two proposals to build a new Petaluma airport were rolled out at a Chamber of Commerce board meeting less than two weeks after the signing of the armistice with Japan on September 2, 1945.

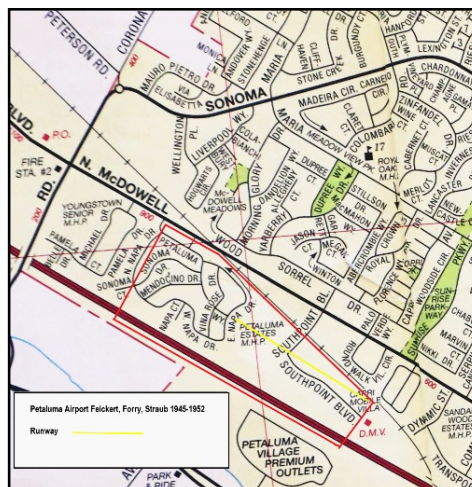
Three local businessmen presented the more substantial of the two plans. Paul Straub, a Petaluma contractor, and Ross Forry and Joe Feikert, owners of Forry and Feikert Garage, were the partners. They were not yet pilots, but all three were eager to learn how to fly. "I want to fly NOW," Forry said at the meeting. To that end, Forry told the chamber board on Sept. 11 that they had broken ground for a runway the previous evening on

farmland owned by Straub near the railroad crossing on North McDowell Road, and it would be ready for airplanes soon. It would have been



*Petaluma Airport Skyways ca1952*

a simple matter for them to create the strip, since Straub not only owned the land but also had the construction machinery needed to clear space for the runway. An ad in the newspaper about that time touted Straub's specialties as: "ditching, road work, land leveling, land clearing and dam construction."



*Petaluma Airport Feickert, Forry, Straub Runway 1945-1952*

Construction continued into November, by which time the partners had obtained a sanction from the Civil Aeronautics Administration (forerunner of the FAA) for their airfield. They also had formed a company, Petaluma Skyways, with veteran pilot J.A. "Al" Norton as manager. The airport had an 1,859-foot single runway, probably oiled dirt surface. It was located west of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks where they cross North McDowell Avenue. The runway ran parallel to McDowell where Southpoint Boulevard now exists, starting close to the DMV building and extending west to just inside the boundary of the present-day Petaluma Estates mobile home park. Access was via a road running next to the railroad tracks from their crossing at McDowell, then turning west to meet the runway at about its midpoint. Several hangars, a repair shop and restrooms were on the east side of the runway at its east end.

In December 1945, Petaluma Skyways was approved as G.I. Bill flight school, and twenty-two students had already enrolled for flight training. The company also obtained franchises to sell Luscomb and Taylorcraft aircraft in California. In April 1946, 17-year-old Joan Watson, a senior at Petaluma High School, became the first female student pilot to solo at Skyways. Clifford Skoog, a former U.S. Army Air Force pilot, was her instructor. Straub also soloed, Forry already was flying a plane he had purchased, and Feikert was still in training. The co-owners started building a repair shop and restrooms, but hangar construction was being held up by a shortage of



1941 Taylorcraft BC-12-65 - Mark Baxter

materials due to the postwar building boom.

Paul Straub bought out his partners Forry and Feikert, and in September 1946 he leased the airfield to Norton, who took over Petaluma Skyways as well. A newspaper ad that month listed Norton as owner with Johnnie Johanson manager. Offerings included airplane sales, service and rentals, pilot training, and charter service. Aeronca, Taylorcraft, Piper Cub, Luscomb and Stearman aircraft were listed. Norton also announced he was opening a flight school at Sonoma County Airport, where Ross Forry was now basing his new Bellanca low-wing monoplane.

Flight training under the G.I. Bill continued to be a popular program, and in January 1949 Norton announced that fifty-nine student pilots had signed up at Petaluma Skyways since his school obtained VA approval. He added another service that July when Petaluma Skyways began advertising round-trip charter flights between Petaluma and Reno for four people at a cost of \$98.50.

The first sign that flight training under the G.I. Bill might be endangered came in February 1948, when U.S. Rep. Bernard Kearney introduced a bill in Congress to eliminate flight training as "vocational" training from G.I. Bill. Norton and his cross-town competitor, George Justman of Justman Flying Service on the other end of McDowell, joined an effort by the California Aviation Trades Association to defeat the bill. Norton said he stood to lose \$30,000 if the

flight trainees to telegraph their congressmen in opposition to the bill to kill G.I. Bill funding for flight training. That tactic was successful, as Norton received a letter from the CATA later that month thanking him for helping to maintain the status of VA flight training as "vocational."

November 1948 was notable, as G. Kephart of Petaluma became the one-hundredth flight student to earn a private pilot's certificate at Petaluma Skyways. Norton also announced that his newest service was consignment sales of airplanes for private owners and that he now owned Napa Sky Ranch along with his Petaluma operation.

Petaluma Airport maintained a healthy level of activity, and a report in July 1949 contained the following details: Bill Combs flew his new Beechcraft to Ohio; two Petaluma men flew a Cessna to Fort Bragg to collect abalone from the rocks; postal worker Gene Bell chartered a flight to Marysville that took 45 minutes, while a bus would have taken four to five hours. Local businessman Ralph Fitzpatrick was the newest flight student., and several pilots applied for flight instructor courses under the G.I. Bill. Late in the month, Gil Avila, an aircraft mechanic for Petaluma Skyways, injured himself when his pocketknife slipped while he was cutting aircraft fabric and inflicted a deep cut in his abdomen. He was treated at Petaluma Hospital.

A renewed effort to remove flight training from the G.I. Bill succeeded, and in April 1950 Norton issued a reminder to would-be student pilots that time was running out to use their benefits. Perhaps connected to this, a group of soldiers stationed at Two Rock formed a flying club and bought a

## PETALUMA AIRPORT

NOW UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

### AIRPLANE SALES & SERVICE —RENTALS—

**Pilot Training — Charter Service**

**Aronca - Taylor-Craft - Piper Cub  
Luscombe - Stearman**

J. A. NORTON, PROP.      JOHNNIE JOHANSEN, MGR.

## RT. 1, BOX 81-A, McDOWELL ROAD

PHONE 2116-W-1

bill passed. Not only would he have to sell six or seven of his ten planes at a loss, but he also would lay off three instructors, two mechanics and one office staffer. The fight in Washington went on throughout the spring. In June, Norton urged all

## Petaluma Skyways.....from pg 10

Piper Cub, which they based at Petaluma Airport. Lewis Eckman and Gil Avila serviced the plane. Several members already had their licenses, and the rest planned to use the Cub for flying lessons. A report in June 1950 stated Petaluma Skyways had taught more than three hundred students to fly since the end of the war. Twenty aircraft were based at the field, and a helicopter often used it, too. A crop duster, Art Newman of Kelseyville, used the field during mosquito spraying season.

With Cold War tensions building, in April 1951 Petaluma Airport and Justman's Sky Ranch were designated as Control Airports for smaller fields (such as the Waldo Rohnert strip at Cotati) by the California State Aeronautics Commission as part of the CAA's civil defense plan. But the end was near Petaluma Skyways and Petaluma Airport.

On April 29, 1951, Al Norton and a passenger, Leonard "Penn" Donovan, suffered critical injuries in an airplane accident at Petaluma Airport. After emergency treatment in Petaluma, Norton was sent by ambulance to Franklin Hospital in San Francisco on May 2 for further treatment. He was released from the hospital and returned to the airport, where he and his wife had a residence, on July 26 with a heavy cast on one leg.

Further tragedy struck in the early hours of April 10, 1952, when Norton awoke at 4:45 a.m. to see the large hangar aflame. The Penngrove Fire Department responded quickly, but the crew was too late to save the hangar, the three airplanes stored inside, or Norton's car. Paul Straub, who leased the airport land to Norton and owned the uninsured hangar, estimated the loss at \$20,000. The cause of the fire was not determined. For all intents and purposes, the fire was the end of Petaluma Skyways.

There were no further mentions of Norton or Petaluma Skyways in the press. A 1952 aerial photo shows the Petaluma Airport runway is still there, but by 1956 the land had reverted to farming. Also, there was no listing for Petaluma Skyways or Al Norton in the 1953 Petaluma telephone directory. As a final note, when Paul Straub died in December 2000 at the age of eighty-seven, there was no mention of Petaluma Airport in his obituary.

These days, several office buildings and a storage facility on Southpoint Boulevard stand alongside the former site of the Petaluma Airport runway.

**Note:** Thus far, the museum has found only one photograph showing this airport, the aerial mentioned above. If anyone has further photographs or information concerning Petaluma Skyways to share, please contact the museum.

## RESEARCH LIBRARY UPDATE

### *A New Tool*

**Ed Fratini**, an employee of Wells Fargo Bank's real estate department, obtained over six thousand documents including deeds, mortgages, bank books, insurance policies, stock certificates, civil suits, wills, and estate settlements, from the bank which were going to the dump in 1966. The research staff began in June 2023 to catalogue and put the collection, which spans from the mid 1840 to the 1930s, into circulation.

The first phase, which includes over 1,700 deeds has been completed and will assist the research staff with requests for the history of an ancestor or

location. Elyse Singleton, a research staff volunteer, entered the deeds into a spreadsheet.

The sheer number of documents created a challenge for entry into the museum's PastPerfect database program. Elyse acquainted herself with the use of a spreadsheet to bulk load information into PastPerfect which greatly reduced the entry time and increased consistency. The deeds took about two hours to load with a resulting savings of about four hours. Elyse created instructions and a spreadsheet template which can be used for future collections.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



### *Debbie MacKinnon*

Debbie was born at Petaluma General in 1953. She has lived here all her life, attending all the local schools.

She started to volunteer at the museum in June of 2023 after seeing a request for docents to greet visitors and answer their questions. She thought that would be something she would love to do.

Debbie says she was a regular Saturday morning visitor in the '50s and '60s who came to the museum to hear Miss Cole tell her stories. She has wonderful memories of those times.

The Petaluma Museum Association is very grateful to have Debbie join our team of volunteers and bring her personal knowledge of growing up in Petaluma.



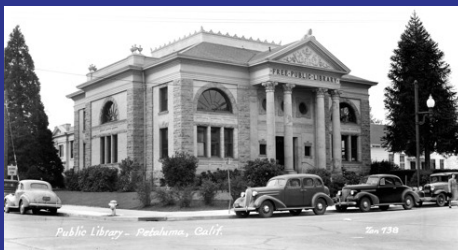
We are excited to announce the launch of the Petaluma Historical Library and Museum's archival website! The website broadens access to the Museum's vast collections, making high-quality digital versions of photographs, documents, and artifacts available to researchers, scholars, and the public.

This milestone marks a new opportunity to preserve and share Petaluma's historical legacy through an easy to navigate, searchable site. Additionally, the public will have the opportunity to purchase and download digital copies from the entire archive.

The project, funded by a grant from Sonoma County Supervisor David Rabbit's office, was led by collections manager Solange Russek, along with the efforts of data content manager Amy Hogan and web designer Martin Ferrini. As there are thousands more collections to digitize and upload, the team continues adding content as it becomes available.

You can check out the site here:

<https://www.petaluma-historical-library-and-museum-archive.org/>



Alexander J. "Zan" Stark (1889-1967)  
"Public Library - Petaluma Calif."  
Real photo postcard #738, March 1941

You have made the Petaluma Museum a part of your life. Now, we hope you will consider making the Petaluma Museum Association a part of your lasting legacy by leaving a gift in your will or trust.

Your bequest will ensure that the PMA remains a vibrant organization that welcomes our community in the historic Carnegie Library Building and passes down our history to the next generation of Petalumans. Petaluma Museum Association is a 501c3 tax-exempt organization.

To make the PMA a part of your estate plans, contact your financial planner. To find out more about how your will or trust might sustain our educational mission, contact Stacey Atchley, Executive Director, PMA at 707-778-4398.

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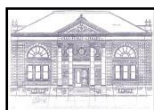
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- Invitations to previews & receptions

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