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“BART Mural” Becomes Orinda Community Center Fixture

Dedication ceremony scheduled for September 4

By Laurie Snyder



The mural formerly known as “the BART mural” has found a new home – on the exterior wall of the kinder gym building at the Orinda Community Center.

Photo Ohlen Alexander

A new, brightly colored work of art is catching the eyes of visitors to the Orinda Community Center and its neighboring park – the Orinda Historical Landmarks Mural.

The painting is a replica of the mural that has been located, for more than 30 years, to the left of the entrance to Orinda’s BART station. That BART art, done by a local sign com-

pany, was based on a smaller painting created originally in 1975 by Lonie Bee. The BART mural was later granted Historic Landmark status.

By the mid-1990s, the mural became so weathered that a group of concerned Orindans worked to restore it, but dripping water and further weathering damaged those repairs. So in 2011, a new crop of community

leaders, including representatives from the Orinda Historical Society (OHS), Historic Landmarks Commission, Arts Council, and other supporters took action to save the mural before it was destroyed.

Funds were provided by the Orinda Community Foundation and the City of Orinda, and local muralist Ellen Silva (www.ellensilva.com)

was brought on board. Initially, planners had hoped to move the mural to a location better protected from the elements; however, the damage was so extensive that the committee doubted that a new restoration would last. Additionally, BART managers did not want the mural moved until they could install something to replace it. So, the decision was made to have

Silva replicate the mural at its new location.

Silva scanned Bee’s original painting, magnifying key sections to document the mural’s details, and painted the new work on a more durable backing. She then added coats of varnish to further protect the replica.

The colors – much brighter than what BART viewers grew accustomed to seeing – reflect Bee’s early vision. His original painting, now in delicate condition, remains in good hands with OHS. Says Silva, “I’ve been honored to work with this wonderful group of Orinda residents to bring Lonie Bee’s original art back to life.”

City leaders anticipate that the attraction will become increasingly popular as student groups touring Orinda’s historic sites begin using the mural as their starting point when exploring the community.

A dedication ceremony will begin at 5:30 p.m. September 4 at the Orinda Community Park.



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