

Contra Costa County's maritime history helped boost San Francisco's economy



Photo Vera Kochan

"Maritime Contra Costa County" author Carol A. Jensen

By Vera Kochan

Although Lamorinda is landlocked, it does belong to Contra Costa County where a successful maritime industry helped to shape the wealth of San Francisco, thanks to the joining of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers near Suisun Bay.

Carol A. Jensen, Brentwood resident and author of "Images of America: Maritime

Contra Costa County," was a Moraga Historical Society guest speaker on May 12 at the Moraga Library. She discussed the highlights of her book with the aid of a slide presentation documenting how the county provided deep-water ports with which agricultural, mineral and manufactured goods could be shipped worldwide. The 70-100 miles of Contra Costa shoreline has helped make the area the fourth largest inland estuary in the

United States; and has been attributed to helping California become the fifth largest economy in America.

Over 2,000 years ago, the early residents who lived along the Delta were the Bay Miwok. They used the then crystal-clear waterways for fishing and transportation, which allowed them to travel over to what is now San Francisco Bay.

Fast forward several hundred years to the 1840s, when the shipping of goods to S.F. began, eventually via steamboat and wind-driven ships. The rivers provided jobs for many living in the area.

The 1850s saw a population boom in California thanks to the Gold Rush. Since there was a lack of decent roads many traveled long distances by water. Contra Costa County became rich in agriculture and was positioned in an ideal location for export and import by river. The fishing industry along the Delta also offered folks a prosperous living. With a growing population, mail service was transported along the river on a daily basis along with passengers.

After the initial Gold Rush, Chinese migrants came to the Delta in the 1860s to try their hand with the shrimping industry and were immensely successful. Immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales came to work in the Black Diamond Mines (Antioch), which transported coal

via the river.

As industry of all kinds of goods began to use the river ways, larger steamships and ferries were built to traverse the Delta. The "Solano," built in 1879, was the biggest railroad ferry steamer in existence for over 35 years. It transported entire railroad cars between Benicia and Port Costa. To this day, there remain two smaller ferries that transport autos from one side of the river to the other -- creating a shortcut route for drivers.

During the 1880s farmers began to extend their landings in order to simplify the process of shipping crops by river. Peaches, nuts, asparagus, pears, prunes, apricots, potatoes and wheat all made the riverboat trip.

As San Francisco's housing market grew, the early 1900s brought the lumber industry to Pittsburg, Calif., for milling and eventual shipment across the Bay. Concord, Calif., had a large port that Lamorinda residents/farmers would have used. Up to a point, most goods

were produced in Contra Costa County and financed in S.F. However, tired of paying the city's shipping fees, eventually goods were sent through Port Costa and shipped worldwide.

During the prohibition era (1920s), "booze boats" took the rich and famous up and down the river between Sacramento and San Francisco for a good time that was not under the watchful eye of the law.

The 1940's "party boats" would often take people up and down the river to spend a day of leisure on the water, or to take Contra Costa County residents over to Stockton for some serious shopping. During World War II munitions factories popped up along the river which provided speedy transport of armaments. Point San Pablo was home to the last whaling station (1956-1971) in the U.S.

To this day, the Delta continues to be a source of water and transportation within Contra Costa County, in addition to recreational enjoyment with many opportunities for watercraft rentals to the public.

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Cal Shakes presents bilingual adaptation of Shakespeare's most iconic tale of young love



Set design

Photo Jay Yamada

Submitted by Kevin Kopjak

California Shakespeare Theater Artistic Director Eric Ting and Managing Director Sarah Williams on April 19 announced the full cast and creative team for "Romeo y Juliet," the world premiere bilingual adaptation of William Shakespeare's most iconic tale of

young love.

Adapted by acclaimed playwright Karen Zacarias and directed by Cal Shakes favorite KJ Sanchez, "Romeo y Juliet" imagines these starcrossed lovers as two daughters from feuding families before the backdrop of Alta California, as California was known during Spanish Colonial and Mexican rule. "Romeo y Juliet" performs in Orinda at the Bruns Am-

phitheater May 25 through June 19.

"Following a two-year delay, we are thrilled to present Shakespeare's timeless story of star-crossed lovers to the San Francisco Bay Area," said Sanchez. "By interweaving English and Spanish text, we bring an intensity and depth to the production while staying accessible. I think Karen's translation will resonate with audiences long after the curtain comes down."

"Romeo and Juliet has been adapted countless times, in countless ways for hundreds of years," adds Zacarias. "It is exciting to present this bilingual adaptation of Shakespeare's rich, colorful language that gives audiences a different way to hear and feel it."

Ting says he's honored to welcome back director KJ Sanchez "who moved so many

of us with her production of 'Quixote Nuevo.'

"We started talking about a bilingual Shakespeare before that production even opened and had hoped to make that dream come true in 2020 before we, like so many of our sister institutions, had to cancel our season," Ting adds. "Together with Karen Zacarias (whose Destiny of Desire had me laughing so hard I cried) and an extraordinary ensemble of artists, this team has worked tirelessly to imagine this quintessential story in a way that evokes both the history of this place we call home, and the undeniable ability of love to close the distance that separates so many of us from each other."

Originally scheduled for

Cal Shakes' 2020 Season, "Romeo y Juliet" features a cast of Latinx artists led by Sarita Ocon (Romeo) and Vero Maynez (Juliet) in the title roles and the creative team includes Tanya Orellana (Scenic Designer) and Jessie Amoroso (Costume Designer).

Single tickets (ranging from \$30-\$70) are available now online at calshakes.org or by calling 510-548-9666 (Tuesday-Friday from 1 to 5 p.m.). Ticket prices are subject to change without notice. Performances of "Romeo y Juliet" will be held evenings at 7:30 p.m. Matinees (Sunday) at 4 p.m.; select Saturdays at 2 p.m. May 25-June 19 at Bruns Amphitheater 100 California Shakespeare Theater Way, Orinda.

For information on Cal Shakes' COVID safety policies, visit calshakes.org/cal-shakes-2021-covid-19-safety-precautions/.

Assistance League of Diablo Valley awards over \$206K in scholarships



Assistance League of Diablo Valley 2022 Scholarship recipients. Photo provided

Submitted by Betty Miller

Since 1999, Assistance League of Diablo Valley's Scholarships program, presently co-chaired by Susan Klipfel and Carol Johnstone, has provided financial and emotional support to high school, community college and university students as well as returnees to the academic community. Each applicant has expressed a desire to advance through education by maintaining a designated grade point average, volunteering in campus and community projects and charting an academic timeline.

Additionally, the required Interview component encourages each candidate to explain what he or she wants to accomplish, why and, as important, how to implement their commitment. This process touches on the candidates' significant touches of their lives, information that might be sensitive and, therefore,

held in confidence.

On May 11, Assistance League of Diablo Valley held its Scholarships Awards Presentation at Boundary Oak Golf Course Clubhouse, Walnut Creek. Recipients ranging from ages 17 to 68, supported by family members and mentors alike, realized their dreams.

Following the awards ceremony presentations, Klipfel and Johnstone acknowledged the generosity of foundations, individual donors (chapter members included) and revenue earned at the Assistance League Thrift Shop at the Way Side Inn, the chapter's primary fundraiser, located in Lafayette. The combined efforts resulted in \$206,200 in scholarships granted to well-deserving applicants for 2022-23.

To learn more about the Scholarships Program, as well as Assistance League of Diablo Valley's other philanthropic programs, visit assistanceleague.org/diablo-valley.

In Memory

Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances
 If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to story-desk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.