



OPPOSITE THE GOLDEN GATE

The Newsletter of the Berkeley Historical Society

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Spring 2009

DOWN TO THE SEAS IN BERKELEY'S SHIPS

While Berkeley has never had the maritime activity that many other cities in the Bay Area have had, we do have our little bit of shipping history. A World War II Victory ship, a ferry and a merchant ship all were named for our city. Their stories are varied, but they share one thing in common, they are all gone now.

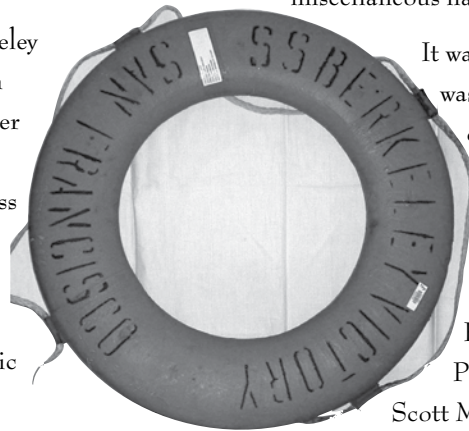
THE USS BERKELEY VICTORY

By Margot Lind

On December 31, 1944, the ship USS Berkeley Victory was launched from Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond. The keel had been laid on November 9, 1944 and it went into service in January 1945. At the time, it was ready to launch in less than any previous ship built in the Richmond Shipyards. According to the Berkeley Gazette it was "destined to sail the blood-stained Pacific." The construction of the ship was a civic venture with many Berkeley residents working on the construction.

The Victory Ships were an improvement over the Liberty Ships and were designed to be faster and safer with a much longer lifetime, so that they would be suitable for regular commercial use after the war. They were first named for each of the Allied nations;

the following 218 were named after American cities, the next 150 were named after educational institutions and the rest received miscellaneous names.



It was a momentous occasion for the city and there was a huge turnout for the launch. Many items to outfit the ship were donated by local citizens and businesses, including books, magazines, motion picture equipment, phonographs and records, candy, cigarettes and athletic equipment. Some of the donors included the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, the Berkeley Public Schools, Sather Gate Bookstore, Hall-Scott Motors, Cutter Labs, Jacuzzi Brothers, Pacific Steel Casting, and University Radio Shop.

In addition, some of the organizations that contributed were the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions. The generous members of the League of Women Voters, Berkeley Women's City Club, Claremont

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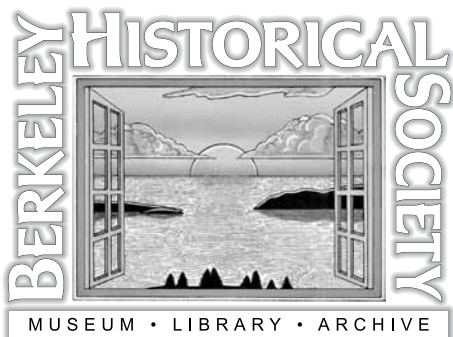
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The History Center is located in the
Veterans Memorial Building
1931 Center St., Berkeley, CA 94701
 Mailing Address: **PO Box 1190**
Berkeley, CA 94701 510 848 0181

Margot Lind
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Dale Smith
 DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

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Thank You

Barbara Beatty for her contribution to the LL Stein Endowment Fund

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Susan Schwartz, Lynne & Audel Davis, Howard & Estelle Bern, Yukiyo Hayash and Sue Austin for their Contributing Memberships of \$50.

Presidents' Message

SPRING IS A TIME OF REBIRTH for the natural world and also, apparently, for the Society's Web site. Somewhat neglected in recent years when it was occupying a cyber plot belonging to the City of Berkeley, our Web site is being redesigned by a Board committee headed by Dale Smith and will be located on its own domain, at berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org. Once up and running, the site will have information about the Society's programs and events as well as special features of historical interest. Dale and others of the Society have also completed a redesign of the newsletter that is intended to improve the format while still maintaining the traditional look familiar to readers.



ANOTHER MEANS OF communication is now being highlighted at the Berkeley Historical Center: the posters that make up the new exhibit, Up Against the Wall – Berkeley Posters from the 1960s (See article on back cover). Curated by Lincoln Cushing, the exhibit reveals how the process of creating posters evolved during the 60s to become an increasingly sophisticated means for the expression of views during that politically and socially tumultuous period.

Please come see the exhibit during Center's usual hours, from 1:00 to 4:00, Thursday through Saturday.

FINALLY, MARGOT LIND and I would like to join in the expressions of appreciation for the great contributions to the Society made by Ken Cardwell, who has recently retired from the Board (see story page 5). We are fortunate that the many facets of Ken's life will soon be documented in an oral history being prepared by Society member Paul Grunland.

Thank you, Ken.

Carl Wiklander



Tom Edwards

At the Annual Meeting Allen Stross unveiled a plaque commemorating past Board members who have passed away

Under the Shade of the Araucaria

A large, unusual tree dominates the façade of Chez Panisse, bespeaking its relationship with California Cuisine and the revolution in our food culture from the seventies.

By Oscar N. Abeliuk, MD

I settled in the Bay Area back in the late 1970s. Although my first homes were in Contra Costa County, I have always gravitated towards Berkeley. I recall being attracted to the North Berkeley area, especially the "Gourmet Ghetto," as far back as 1976.

I do not remember how and when the exuberantly tall, majestic Araucaria tree, which has grown to dominate the façade of Chez Panisse, became an integral part of my own environmental perception of Berkeley. It is by all accounts an important part of the local milieu and I'm certain it was there the first time I went to the famed restaurant. However, it became the center of my attention only some time later when I recognized it from my youth in Chile. In fact, it is known as Chile's national tree

The tree, also known as "monkey puzzle tree," belongs to the conifer genus Araucaria. Araucaria Araucana, native to central Chile, west-central Argentina and parts of Brazil, is an evergreen growing up to 40 meters tall and 2 meters in trunk diameter.



The name Araucana is derived from the native Araucano people, who for centuries used the nuts (seeds), known in Spanish as pehuen or piñon, as a mainstay of their diet. The seeds, similar to large pine nuts, are still extensively harvested in Chile. The tree does not yield seeds until it is 30-40 years old. As I looked for more information, I was amazed to learn that the indigenous Araucanos

still use many recipes based on the seeds, which have now been adopted into the cuisines of many non-indigenous people.

In my attempts to learn which type of Araucaria lives in front of Chez Panisse, I have met many people who have in different ways interacted with this beautiful tree. They include the current maître d' of the restaurant, Steve Crumley, who has been with the restaurant since the early 1970s. He is an arborist who has played a dual role with the restaurant, managing the daily food affairs and being called upon to "fix" the tree's encroachment on the building.

Steve was instrumental in taking down a small fence in the 1980s, to allow the public to appreciate the beautiful trunk of the tree. As Steve warmly explained to me, "I have been up in the tree many times, taking down the piñones, the seeds of the Araucaria, which are grouped in large bundles." The chef and owner of Ecolo, Chris

Leigh, worked for many years as a chef at Chez Panisse and also has vivid memories of the tree and the enormous amount of care that it has required over the years.

Steve has witnessed the bifurcation of the tree into two main trunks, and has carefully climbed the tree many times to take down the branches full of sharp needles that could fall on passers-by. Interestingly, Steve refers to the tree as a "Bidwilli." However, it is my understanding that Bidwillis are Araucaria trees that are recognized as "false Monkey Puzzle Trees," and grow in Australia—in the same genus, but a species distinct from the Araucaria Araucana of Chile.

The Australian Aborigines consider this tree sacred and use their piñones (pine nuts) as an important ingredient in their food, in the same manner as the indigenous Mapuche from the region of Arauco in Chile.

As a result of my several conversations with Steve, I have come to believe that he likes to link the tree on Shattuck Avenue with those that grow in the south of Chile, regardless to which exact species the tree in fact belongs. However, I believe that its symbolism as a natural food source as well as its welcoming presence for the restaurant makes precise classification unimportant.

Not surprisingly, every one of the people has had some connection with the tree has been curious and somewhat puzzled about its unusual character. The "monkey puzzle" name originated in England, as the species had no existing popular name. "A monkey trying to climb one would not be so much puzzled, as

injured by the razor-sharp leaf edges." However, monkeys are not usually found in the species' native range. Therefore, the genus name Araucaria is gaining acceptance as an alternative common name in English. The common name in the Chilean language Mapuche is Pehuen



As I became more interested in the subject, I learned that the tree that has grown to become so huge in the middle of the "Gourmet Ghetto" is not the only one in Berkeley. With the help of some friends, I have spotted at least two more Araucarias. However, none of them is as spectacular as the one in front of Chez Panisse. Steve Crumley explained that in the 1910s, these Araucaria trees began to be used as street trees in the Berkeley and Santa Rosa areas.

In February 2007 I was invited to a wedding in Pucon, Chile's lake zone, which is in the center of the area where these trees originate. The lake Villarica dominates the landscape and, as I was told by many of the locals, there are Araucarias from the area of Argentina and Brazil, as well as the "true Araucaria," which experts consider almost a fossil, having existed for over a thousand years.

Interestingly, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, considered one of the greatest and most influential poets of the 20th century and

Nobel Laureate in Literature in 1971, grew up in that environment. He was born in Parral and shortly afterward his family moved to Temuco, which is in the center of the region where these trees grow. Araucaria trees are mentioned in more than one of his poems. He considered them "towers of silence which rose from the solemnity of their roots." One of his poems from "Isla Negra" says:

*Return me, oh sun,
To my country destiny,
rain of the ancient woods.
Bring me back its aroma, and the
swords
falling from the sky,
the solitary peace of pasture and
rock,
the damp at the river margins,
the smell of the larch tree,
the wind alive like a heart
beating in the crowded remoteness
of the towering araucaria.*

Upon my return to Berkeley, I have become convinced that the tree in front of Chez Panisse is indeed a cousin of the one so revered by Chileans. It is quite similar and grows much faster. As one expert botanist explained to me, it would have been impossible for the tree to grow to that height in less than 200 years if it was the type that is considered autochthonous and unique to the Araucaria region of Chile.

And so, a large, unusual tree dominates the façade of the restaurant, bespeaking its relationship with California cuisine and the revolution in our food culture from the seventies. As we witness the struggle that occurs in the City of Berkeley between those who attempt to protect the trees that have grown there for years, one should ponder this amazing relationship between the Araucaria and Chez Panisse.

A Tribute to Ken Cardwell

By Shelley Rideout, Archives Committee

As many of you already know, Ken Cardwell is retiring from the Berkeley Historical Society Board and from his position as our Archivist. During his long and illustrious career, Ken has worn many hats: war hero, professor, author, architect and occasional beret-clad impersonator of Bernard Maybeck.

For the last 10 years, Ken has worn the hat of BHS Archivist, answering endless questions from the public, assisting patrons with their research and curating many exhibits. For several years, he wrote the column *75 Years Ago* for the *Berkeley Voice*, before Steve Finacom took over that task. Ken and his wife Mary have opened their homes; both here in Berkeley and in Inverness, for volunteer appreciation parties and Ken has staffed the History Center on many extra days so that we could be open during our designated hours.

However, Ken's most important work for BHS has been the organization and cataloguing of

our collections. It is his vision and organizational skills that have brought us into the 21st century, setting in place systems that will serve us well for many years to come.

Ken devised the classification system for our extensive photograph collection, using Berkeley's districts as the basis for organization.

He installed Past Perfect, a software program specifically designed for historical societies and small museums, on our computers and began the arduous task of cataloguing our archives, library and photograph and object collections.

Never one to keep all the glamorous jobs for himself, Ken also knows how to delegate. He has been generous with his knowledge, teaching Mark Peters to scan and catalogue photographs, Judy Wilkes to enter and update memberships



and myself to accession and catalog donations. With many more hours and a few more diligent volunteers, someday we will know exactly what items are in our collections and where to find them.

For this foresight and planning we thank him, as will future generations of students, researchers, and historians.

Ken has been the architect of our future and we thank him heartily for his many years of good and productive service.

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SHIPS

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Improvement Club, Northbrae Women's Club and the Town and Gown Club also made contributions. A special bookplate was designed by Berkeley High School student Ed Diffenderfer.

The Berkeley Victory Ship Committee consisted of such local notables as future Congressman Jeffrey Cohelan; City Council members Carrie L. Hoyt and Kent Pursel (later a county supervisor); J. Dellbert Sarber, general manager of the Chamber of Commerce; League of Women Voters member Mrs. George (Ruth) Scheer; Dr. TK Cleveland, present of the Philadelphia Quartz Company of Berkeley and the Rev. Edward Stovall, African-American minister, later president of the Alameda County NAACP and fair housing activist.

A special program was printed for the occasion (now in the Society archives). Mayor Fitch Robertson gave the welcome and an address was given by Sam B. Hume. The Berkeley High School A Capella Choir performed the official launch song, Smooth Sailing.

The ship was a material supply ship and remained in service until May 1948, after which it was transferred to the National Defense Reserve Fleet in Wilmington NC. In October 1950 it was moved to Bethlehem Steel's Boston shipyards to be outfitted for use in the Korean War and delivered to American President Lines for operation, although apparently it never sailed in Korean waters. It was sent to the Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay in 1958.

In August 1965, during the Vietnam War, the Berkeley saw service once more as part of the Military Sea Transport Service. It was deactivated in 1970 and the ship once again became part of the Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay, where it remained until sold for scrap in January 1993. The price was \$366,127.90.

When Norman Mineta (then U.S. Secretary of Transportation) was named the California Alumni Association's Alumnus of the Year in 2002, as part of the ceremony he was presented with the builder's plaque from the S.S. Berkeley by the Maritime Administration.

S.S. CITY OF BERKELEY'S SHORT LIFE

By John Aronovici

The freighter City of Berkeley led a short life. She was built at Union Construction Company in Oakland and launched in January 1920. Union Construction was organized in 1918 to build cargo ships for the U.S. Shipping Board, a government agency organized in 1917 that, among other things, subsidized private ship construction. It was abolished in 1934. The site, leased

N.C. Frey with a crew of 43, most of whom resided locally. She left San Francisco on February 12, 1920, for New York with a cargo of 800 tons of flour. Unfortunately the ship went aground off Cape May, New Jersey, near the entrance of Delaware Bay, on March 10, 1920. It was later abandoned and scrapped in 1930.

THE FERRY BERKELEY

By Phil Gale

The ferry steamer Berkeley was the first successful propeller-driver ferry on the Pacific Coast. Inspired by the new ferries then being used in New York Harbor, the Southern Pacific designed the Berkeley to be the most modern ferry on the San Francisco Bay.

At the time of her construction, most ferries had the one-cylinder vertical "walking beam" engine, a design that dated



The USS City of Berkeley

from the City of Oakland, was between Bataan and Chunking Streets in what was the Oakland Army Base. The ship's engine was a steam turbine type. The ship was chartered to Swayne and Hoyt of 430 Sansome Street, San Francisco. Swayne and Hoyt was apparently one of a number of tramp companies, some of which later developed into scheduled "lines" that operated with government-owned ships leased from the U.S. Shipping Board in the years following World War I. It was an anti-union company also known as "Sweat and Hungry."

Her maiden voyage was under Captain

back to the 1820s with side paddle wheels and a wooden hull. The Berkeley, however, had a triple-expansion engine driving two propellers, one at each end. In this way, steam was used three times before being exhausted. She also had a steel hull and electric lights. Being larger than most ferries, she could handle 1700 passengers! She had a restaurant below her main deck. The upper deck was called the "Ladies Deck," and men had to sit with the baggage carts on the main deck.

Her keel was laid on January 25, 1898, at the Union Iron Works in San Francisco and

Berkeley Historical Society

on October 18, 1898, she was launched. She was christened by Miss Ruby Richards of Berkeley and at her christening the president of the University of California, Martin Kelly, and President of Southern Pacific, Collis P. Huntington, spoke. At her trials, on October 22, 1898, she attained 12¼ knots and entered service on November 6.

The ferry faithfully plodded on her Oakland–San Francisco or Alameda–San Francisco run until the end of the trans-bay commuter runs. In 1939 she was selected as one of the three Southern Pacific ferries to remain in service (the other two were the Sacramento and Eureka).

The year 1953 saw radar installed on the Berkeley. In the spring of 1958 it was

While she didn't start a new line of propeller-driven passenger ferries for the Southern Pacific (all subsequent new passenger ferries were paddle-wheel driven), she was very much the inspiration for the new ferries built by the Key System in 1903 and 1907 and the Western Pacific's Edward T. Jeffrey, built in 1913. These were propeller-driven. "Berkeley showed the way."

In addition to naming ships after the city of Berkeley, there was also a Pullman sleeping rail car called Berkeley.

THE PULLMAN SLEEPING CAR BERKELEY

By Phil Gale

The Berkeley Pullman sleeping railcar entered service in 1926 for use on the Sunset Limited, then operating between San Francisco and New Orleans via Los Angeles. It was one of about 3,000 "12-1" sleepers, meaning it had 12 open-section berths (upper and lower with a green curtain) and one drawing room. In addition, it had a women's lavatory and combination men's lavatory/smoking room. (At that time, it was assumed that only men smoked.)

During the Depression, in order to keep employees busy, the Pullman Company upgraded many of its cars. The Berkeley was upgraded and air-conditioned in 1935. Eventually replaced by newer cars in first-class service, this car saw many miles in troop-train service during World War II. After the war, during the separation of Pullman's manufacturing and operations divisions, the Berkeley went to the Southern Pacific. It was assigned to the Southern Pacific's Texas subsidiary, the Texas and New Orleans (at the time all railroads in Texas had to be incorporated in Texas.)

In 1958, the Berkeley was retired to government storage in case of war. In 1962, it was released from storage and scrapped.



At first, and for a number of years afterwards, she was known as the "pile driver's friend" as she did not slow down in the same way as the paddle-ferries and it took her captains a long time to get to know when to reverse the engines to stop her in the slip. In 1901, she was converted to burn oil instead of coal.

As San Francisco burned after the 1906 earthquake, the Berkeley, along with the other ferries on the bay, ran 24 hours a day, bringing San Francisco residents to the East Bay.

Although she was involved in many minor collisions with piers and other ferries, there was only one accident of note in her career. On January 13, 1911, a large explosion rocked the vessel. Many passengers panicked and believed a boiler had exploded, but it was quickly determined that the explosion had come from the men's lavatory in the lower deck adjacent to the bar. Apparently a mining engineer, John O. Norbom, had left a vial of nitroglycerin in his coat pocket and it had exploded. Norbom died instantly and five others were injured.

removed from service for repairs and thus it was unavailable when the last of the Southern Pacific ferries ran on July 29, 1958.

In 1959, the Golden Gate Fish Co. purchased the Berkeley for conversion to a floating fish cannery. But Luther "Bill" Conover, a local architect and furniture designer, declared that he owned the Berkeley in an effort to save it from being converted to a fish cannery. Conover fought for two years until the Golden Gate Fish Company gave up and sanctioned the sale to Conover.

In 1961, in order to preserve the Berkeley, Conover docked the ferry at the old Northwest Pacific ferry slip in Sausalito and opened the Trade Fair, a floating retail store that sold knick-knacks and souvenirs. Unlike many ferries, she had not been rebuilt in the 1920s and still had her original stained glass and 1898 decor. When the city of Sausalito declined to buy it in 1972, Conover sold the Berkeley to the San Diego Maritime Museum where she is now. She was declared a National Landmark in 1990.

Center Hosts First Exhibit of 60s Posters

THE BERKELEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WAS honored to be the venue for an exhibit of 60s political and social posters collected by Free Speech Movement veteran Michael Rossman from the mid-

60s to mid-70s. Lincoln Cushing, a good friend of Rossman's, agreed to safeguard the posters after Rossman's passing. He spent four months cataloguing over 25,000 items. According to Cushing, "Spurred by the success of local rock and counterculture posters, political posters were vibrant public documents that promoted a wide range of social issues. This exhibition documents Berkeley's unique role in the evolution of this medium and includes examples of works on such diverse issues as gay liberation, people's health care, opposition to the Viet Nam war, support for political prisoners, demand for alternative educational models, and community control of police."

THE 60S WERE ALSO A PERIOD OF dramatic innovation in advertising and marketing efforts, with graphic designers working for musicians, film makers and publishers. A creative revolution in advertising writing and design occurred; ad agencies began employing witty headlines,



Lincoln Cushing/Michael Rossman Collection

simple layouts and clever visual images. Copywriters and art directors, working as collaborative teams, sought a synergy between word and image. These influences impacted the graphic appearance of posters. Placing ads on radio and television was beyond the economic means of most private citizens, independent art groups and activist organizations; however, they could afford to print and distribute flyers and posters and sell them to sympathizers to raise money for their causes.

Calendar of Events

Exhibit – Up Against the Wall – Berkeley Posters from the 1960s, Berkeley History Center, ongoing.

House Tour May 3, 1-5pm – Maybeck Country, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association. For more information, call 510-841-2242.

Walk May 9, 10am – Old Paths Behind the Claremont Hotel, Berkeley Path Wanderers. For more information, call 510-655-5773.

Walk May 26, 6pm – Easter Way-Cragmont Park-Pinnacle Path-Poppy Path, Berkeley Path Wanderers. For more information, call 510-848-2944.

Lecture May 28, 7pm – A House in Alameda, Alameda Museum. For more information, call 510-748-0796.

Walking Tour May 30, 10am – Berkeley Park, Berkeley Historical Society. For more information, call 510 848 0181.

Walk June 1, 7pm – Albany Hill, Berkeley Path Wanderers. For more information, call 510-848-9358.

Lecture June 11, 5:30pm – NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernist Architecture. Oakland Heritage Alliance. For more information, call 510-464-3600.

Tour June 12, 9am – Ardenwood Farm, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association. For more information, call 510-841-2242.

Walk June 21 – Daley's Scenic Park and Beyond, Berkeley Path Wanderers Association, 6pm. For more information, call 510-528-3246.

Lecture June 25, 7:30pm – Alameda, an Architectural Treasure Chest, Alameda Museum. For more information, call 510-748-0796.

Lecture July 30, 7pm – Winslow Homer and the Post Civil War Era in America, Alameda Museum. For more information, call 510-748-0796.



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