



Clayton Chronicles

A Publication of the Clayton Historical Society

PO Box 94 * Clayton, California * 94517
(925) 672-0240

www.claytonhistory.org

FALL EDITION 2025

Issue #189

Dear Members and Friends,

Thank you Patti Pratt for piloting new programs this year including the Junior Docent Program, including Living History Day, and Kid's Day programs. The first Kid's Day will be held on October 8th. See article on pages 4 & 5.

The Clayton Historical Society was founded in 1974 to "research, collect, record, preserve, display, borrow, share, and interpret local history information and memorabilia, and to promote understanding of Clayton origins and development."

The Clayton Historical Society relies on donations and our fundraisers to keep the museum operational. We are all volunteers. We do need to raise funds to pay for electricity, water, building maintenance and programs such as those just mentioned above. Currently we are hoping to have a Christmas Tour fundraiser. If you have ideas for other fundraisers, please them share with us. Call the Clayton Museum at 925-672-0240 and leave a message. Last year we held a successful Halloween Tour. Each year we hold the very popular Clayton Gardens Tour. We also rely on volunteer docents. Let us know if you would like to join us.

We would love to hear from you!

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2025 CLAYTON CHRISTMAS TOUR

If you or you know of someone who would enjoy sharing their lovely home decorated for Christmas, please call the Clayton Museum at 925-672-0240.

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The Clayton Historical Society & Museum's Annual meeting will be held on November 13th. The doors will open at Endeavor Hall at 6:30 p.m. for wine and snacks. About 6:55, we will open the meeting for the Annual Election of the Board of Directors. About 7:00 we will have a presentation by co-Curator, Nancy Niemeyer. Nancy will present a program "Diablo Valley before Joel Clayton came." Have you ever wondered what was going on in the Diablo Valley before Joel Clayton arrived? Nancy will talk about who lived here and what life was like back then.

As always, we wish to thank all of our Clayton Historical Society volunteers, supporters, and members for helping to keep the Clayton Museum open to the public.

Sincerely,

COME AND JOIN US!

Linda Cruz

Linda Cruz, Editor

lindajeancruz@gmail.com



**BE SURE TO VISIT THE MUSEUM AND ENJOY THE CURRENT EXHIBIT
FEATURING THE RHINE GENERAL STORE AND PRODUCTS
AVAILABLE OVER 150 YEARS AGO.**

YouTube Channel

We are pleased to announce the [Clayton Historical Society YouTube Channel](#). Volunteers at the Clayton Museum are looking to promote Clayton's rich history in new ways. From the safety of your home, please check out our channel to see videos on Clayton history, recordings from meetings past and present, and new content published monthly.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Clayton Oktoberfest	Oct 4—5	
Kids Day at the Museum	Oct 8	2:30—3:30 p.m.
Clayton Community Library Book Sale	Oct 19 & 20	10:00am—6:00
Clayton Valley Garden Club Plant Sale at the Library	Oct 19	10:00a.m.
Clayton Historical Society Annual Meeting & Election	Nov 13	6:30 p.m.
Presentation by Nancy Niemeyer, Endeavor Hall		7:00 p.m.
Christmas Tour (anticipating we have enough participation)	Dec 14	TBD



Clayton Historical Society

PO BOX 94 • CLAYTON, CALIFORNIA • 94517

(925) 672-0240

www.claytonhistory.org

Proposed Board Member Slate | 2026

As Recommended by the Nomination Committee

September 18, 2025

After reviewing the current board makeup, the Nomination Committee is pleased to propose the 2026 slate of Officers and Directors for the Clayton Historical Society.

Executive Board (these are Board Members who also act as Officers for one calendar year):

Person	Officer Position for 2025	Director's Term	Election?
Vacant	President	Jan 1, 202X - Dec 31, 202X	
Debbie Eistetter	1 st VP of Membership	Jan 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2026	Officer: Yes Director: No
Linda Pinder	2 nd VP of Museum Operations and Donor Relations	Jan 1, 2026 - Dec 31, 2027	Officer: Yes Director: Yes
Paul Jordan	Treasurer	Jan 1, 2026 - Dec 31, 2027	Officer: Yes Director: Yes
Ted Meriam	Secretary	Jan 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2026	Officer: Yes Director: No

Directors (these are Board Members who serve two calendar years):

Person	Focus Area for 2025	Director's Term	Election?
Linda Cruz	Newsletter	Jan 1, 2026 - Dec 31, 2027	Yes
JoAnn Caspar	Emeritus	Jan 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2026	No
Don Buchanan	Maintenance	Jan 1, 2026 - Dec 31, 2027	Yes
Steve Lane	Museum Garden	Jan 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2026	No
Avneet Kahlon	Gardens Tour – Fundraiser Events	Jan 1, 2026 – Dec 31, 2027	Yes
Patti Pratt	Community Youth Enrichment	Jan 1, 2026 – Dec 31, 2027	Yes

We are following this timeline per the Bylaws and Constitution:

- Nomination Committee Appointed: August 26th
- Slate Shared with Board of Directors: September 18th
- Slate Shared with Membership via Newsletter: October 13th
- Annual Meeting Election: November 13th

Respectfully: Linda Pinder, Nancy Dunn and Debbie Eistetter (2025 committee)

Living History Day & Kid's Day with Junior Docents

by Patti Pratt

LIVING HISTORY DAY

This year I piloted a Junior Docent program which culminated in a Living History Day at the museum. We made butter, pies, recreated a local Native American game and learned about how it was used in tribal life. I would like the Junior Docents to plan a game, activity or project once per month on a Wednesday afternoon when we could invite the Elementary students as they have early release on Wednesdays. We may request a donation to participate that could potentially fund the program.

Also, I have spoken with Stardust Sanctuary (a local 501(c)3 nonprofit), dedicated to creating meaningful connections between people and the natural world. StardustSanctuaryca.org Photo is from Stardust Sanctuary Facebook.

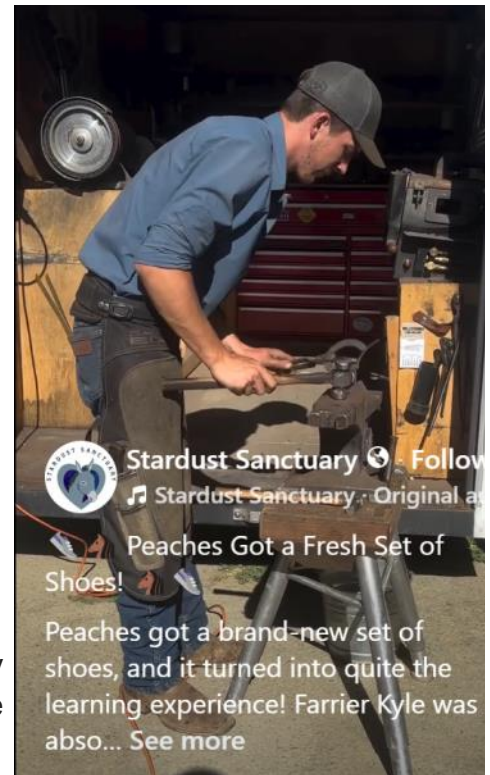
We are discussing for occasional collaborative programs. One would be focused on farriers starting at the Sanctuary and moving to the museum afterwards to look for tools that are similar to what they use today.



Our living history "actors" are Steve Pratt, Patti Pratt, Kate Happy, Madison Thurman, Anya Majumdar



PATTI PRATT



The Junior Docents would like to do a quarterly Living History Day which the Farrier program would be part of.

For the training, I would run a program each summer where we train new Junior Docents as I did this year.

KIDS DAY AT THE MUSEUM

After an amazing Living History Day with our Junior Docents, we will be hosting the first of many Kids Days at the Museum. On Oct. 8 from 2:30-3:30 p.m.. we will make Corn Cob Dolls and a Jack O Lantern Craft. Did you know that the Jack O Lantern was transitioning from a prankster lantern to a Halloween decoration in the 1880's? The first Halloween traditions came to the United States in the 1840's? I am currently drying a ton of corn husks donated from Isaac R Montanez Elementary in Brentwood. They celebrated the corn harvest there with the kids so I swooped in and asked for some husks. They have also asked for information on the dolls. I promised photos, and if the project is successful, to come next year and assist in a project with their students.

I plan to serve some cider and apple cider donut holes. It keeps the kids busy when waiting and certainly draws them in. Information will be provided to Mt. Diablo Elementary School and posted on Clayton social media sites. Docents are welcome to come and help out. Please let me know. It will be a fun day!



Students reenacted a day in the 1880's including household chores. Here they are beating the rug for cleaning.



Students finish up their day at school and learned to "start with a clean slate," a saying we still use today!

DEBBIE EISTETTER's HISTORY NOTES

By the 1920's E Clampus Vitus, (ECV), the fraternal organization that had provided support and fellowship to its members during California's Gold Rush, had no active chapters. Its demise was primarily due to mining operations having been shut down or moved to other states and the entry of the US into the First World War.

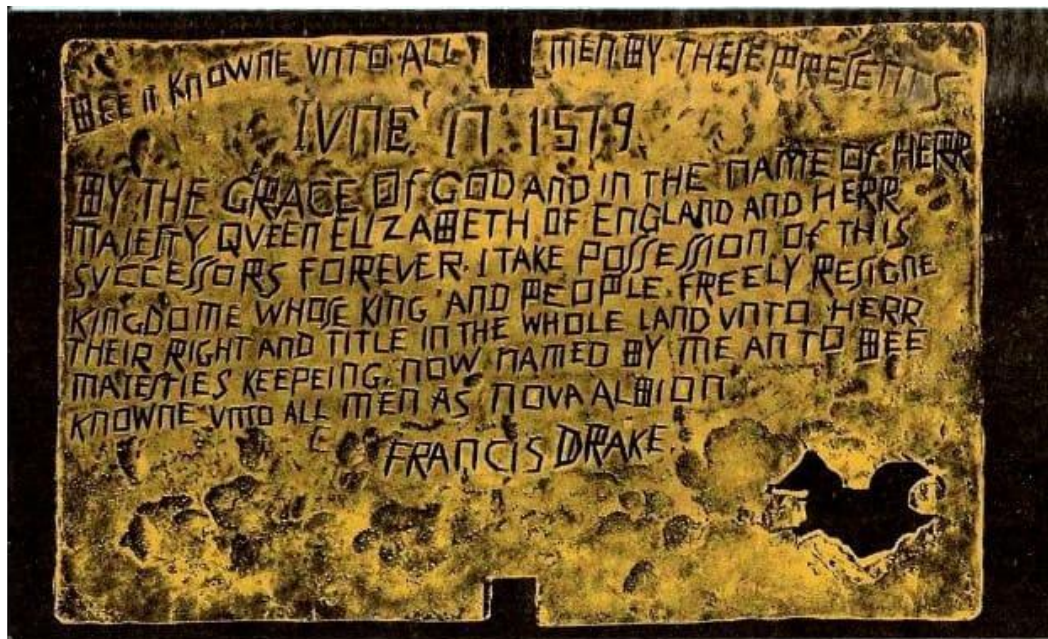
Carl Wheat and George Dane were attorneys who had been friends since their undergraduate days at Pomona College and they shared a love of California history. In 1930 they were exploring small towns in the Sierra Foothills and became curious about ECV as they conversed with Clampers of the old order. With their friend, Leon Whitsell, they proposed reviving the organization at a Clift House luncheon the next year. The reaction was favorable, and old-time ECV members provided the words and rites they remembered to begin the revival. New members were required to have an interest in preserving the history of California and the American West.



DEBBIE EISTETTER

Carl Wheat became known as the "Revivifier" and eventually became the Noble Grand Humbug of the San Francisco Chapter #1 and Los Angeles Chapter #2. Playing pranks on fellow members had always been a treasured tradition in Clamperdom, but one prank in the 1930's went completely haywire. It was instigated by Clamper George Dane and others, and its victim was Clamper Herbert E. Bolton, the Director of the Bancroft Library and a professor of American History at UC Berkeley. Professor Bolton had a special interest in finding a brass plate mentioned in the writings of Francis Pretty who was a member of Sir Francis Drake's voyage to Alta California in 1579. The old journal described the details of the plate that was left behind as evidence of Drake's claiming the land for the British Crown. Bolton always made mention to his students to look for it if ever they were at Drake's Bay.

In 1933 a chauffeur was waiting for his employer who was hunting at Drake's Bay. He found a



brass plate and tossed it into the car for later inspection but threw it out the window near San Quentin several days later deeming it rubbish. It was found again in 1936 on the side of the road and eventually made its way to an excited Professor Bolton.

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He believed the plate could be authentic except for the fact that it was not found near Drake's Bay. The chauffeur came forward to tell his tale, metallurgic experts at Colombia University tested the plate, and by all indications it seemed to be the real thing.

Dane had made several indirect hints to it being a fake; for one, the letters "ECV" were written on the back and could have been seen under a black light. But the plate's discovery was quickly heralded in newspapers and journals throughout the world, and so, its true origin was kept a secret to preserve Bolton's reputation and to hide the perpetrators' extreme embarrassment.

There had always been a healthy number of historians who doubted the plate's authenticity. They were vindicated 40 years later when further testing showed its edges to have been cut with modern machinery and having certain trace metals consistent with modern American brass. A UC Berkeley press release on February 18, 2003 revealed who did it.

However, it is no joke that E Clampus Vitus is serious about history. Part of the Clamper Creed reads, "... may I never forget the stout-hearted men who settled a great western wilderness and the heritage we have today. May I never fail to appreciate a bit of western lore." "Plaquing" is their way of acknowledging people and places significant to our area. ECV Joaquin Murrieta Chapter # 13 serving Alameda and Contra Costa counties has erected 8 stone monuments and installed 9 plaques in Clayton alone. Many thanks to the gentlemen in the red shirts!



Saturday, August 11, 2019: ECV members who volunteered their weekend to build a new Agricultural History / Tractor Info Cobblestone Monument in the CHS Museum Educational Garden:
(L-R): Jason Arthur, Ex Noble Grand Humbug (XNGH); Phil Good, XNGH; Tyson Freeman, XNGH;
Travis Denten, XNGH; Ilias Pico; and Eric Sorensen, XNGH / All photos: Steve Lane



Dick Ellis

Celebrating 50 years of the Clayton Historical Society (CHS) - Part 5 The Conclusion 2024 Annual Meeting at Hoyer Hall

Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Dick's presentation were posted in the Holiday Issue 2024, in the Winter, Spring, and Summer issues of 2025. If you missed previous articles, go to www.ClaytonHistory.org/newsletters. Below are key points from Dick's presentation covering 50 years.

A Look Back at the Mid 2000's to Today

In 2006–2007, Janet Easton served as President. During her term, she raised the funds to place a headstone at the Live Oak Cemetery in Concord, marking the graves of Joel Clayton and his wife. This cemetery is the resting place for many of Clayton's earliest pioneers.

Janet and I also represented the community on the Contra Costa County History Board—she for the City of Clayton and I for the Society—serving two years. Together with Janet and Mary Spryer, I contributed to the writing of an Arcadia Publishing book titled *Clayton*, which became a major fundraiser for the Society.

In 2010, Ted Meriam became President, launching serious planning for the museum's showcase garden. Landscape design was led by Anna Wendorf and Steve Lane, with strong volunteer support from the Clayton Valley Garden Club under Linda Cruz's leadership. Linda Cruz and Steve Lane were able to obtain several donated native plants for the new garden. After years of navigating city permits and regulations, the project moved forward with generous support from the community and the Clayton Business & Community Association (CBCA). Today, many personalized bricks laid there honor that effort.

In 2013, JoAnn Caspar became President. That same year, Linda Pinder took on 3rd grade visits, coordinated museum purchases, and served as Docent Coordinator. Linda Cruz became the Newsletter Editor for the Clayton museum newsletter, the *Clayton Chronicles*.

Beginning in 2014, Debbie Eistetter enriched the community by writing monthly historical articles for the Clayton/Concord Pioneer, our local newspaper.

In 2016, Mary Spryer retired as Curator and moved to Wisconsin, with Renee Wing stepping into the role.

By 2019, Ted Meriam had returned as President, modernizing our Society and Museum with a website, email communication, and upgraded technology. If something was needed, Ted made sure it happened.

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In 2022, Bob Hoyer and Dick Ellis were honored with the title of President Emeritus. That year, Renee Wing also retired as Curator. Curatorial responsibilities were carried forward by Linda Pinder, Debbie Eistetter, Nancy Niemeyer, and others.

In 2024, Nancy Niemeyer became Exhibit Chairperson, preparing a five-year plan of exhibits. Her thorough research continues to uncover new insights about Joel Clayton and his family. Nancy has also donated several native plant species to our Educational Garden.

Challenges and Support

The COVID-19 pandemic put many activities on hold, leading to a decline in volunteers, membership, and funding. Reigniting interest in the museum and the history of Clayton remains a top priority.

We are deeply grateful to the CBCA, the Clayton Women's Club, and many individual donors whose annual support sustains our mission.

By the Numbers – 50 Years of the CHS

Presidents served: 15 total (10 women, 5 men), including 5 residents of Concord

Longest-serving Presidents:

- Dick Ellis – 11 years
- Ted Meriam – 7 years
- Andrea Blachman – 5 years
- JoAnn Caspar – 5 years

Largest Board: 17 members (1980–1990)

Smallest Board: 8 members (2025)

Total Board Members over 50 years: ~150

Walk-in visitors: 45,000–50,000

Student visitors: over 3,000

We thank Dick Ellis for sharing this history.

Maintenance Report

Thank you Paul Jordan, 2025 Museum Maintenance Chair, for having the following maintenance done in September: The Front door and porch floors were lightly sanded and stained. The white picket fence and arbor; the front, side and rear porch floors including the spindles and columns were painted.

Thank you for your support of the Clayton Historical Society. We depend on membership dues and community donations to pay for our operating expenses. A gift of any amount to our Memorial Fund is a lasting way to honor someone who has done something special for you, or the Museum, during the past year, or someone who has passed away. Please also consider making a donation for a birthday, wedding, or for the holidays. Donations can also be made in honor of one of the third grade students from Mt. Diablo Elementary, or one of the scouts or students from local private schools who come to the Museum Field Trips to learn about the history of our great town and area. We operate totally on the generosity of our members and the community of Clayton and the surrounding area. Thanks to your continued support – we are able to make improvements to our Museum and programs because of you! To make a donation, send a check made out to Clayton Historical Society, P.O. Box 94, Clayton, CA 94517 or come by the Museum on Wednesdays or Sundays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. or go to www.claytonhistory.org and select gift shop.



Memorial Funds

A gift of any amount to our Memorial Fund is a lasting way to honor someone special. Their names will be placed in the “**Book of Memory**” that is permanently displayed at the museum.

I would like to make this contribution of \$_____ ☐ In Honor of ☐ In Memory of (check one)

Name of Person(s) to be honored or memorialized:



Please send acknowledgments to:

DONOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

HONOREE or FAMILY OF HONOREE

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Memorial donations should be sent to Clayton Historical Society – Attention Memorials, PO Box 94, Clayton, CA 94517

MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

At the Clayton museum gift shop there are several items for sale that might be of interest. There are coffee mugs, historic-style soaps, license plate frames, train whistles, tee shirts, aprons, books, cards, paintings of Clayton sites, Christmas ornaments, and beautiful woven Clayton throws.

Available online at giftshop. www.ClaytonHistory.org

Although the museum has reopened, purchased items can be delivered to your doorstep, (within a 10 mile radius of the museum), or picked up at the museum by appointment. Call 925-672-0240 for arrangements.



Bay Point and Clayton Railroad Company

TIME TABLE No. 8

To Take Effect Monday, February 17, 1936

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF EMPLOYEES ONLY

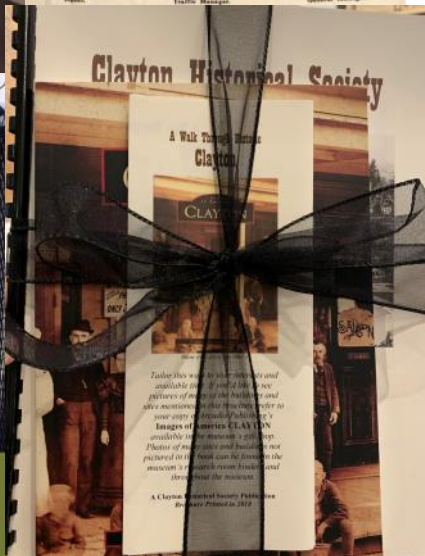
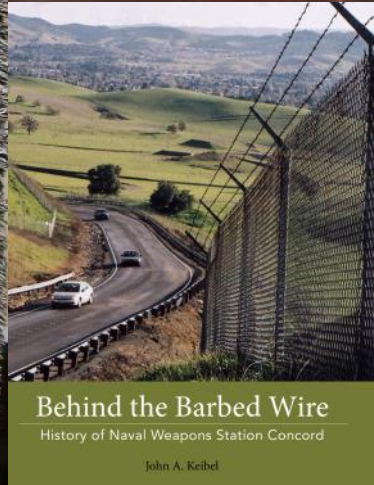
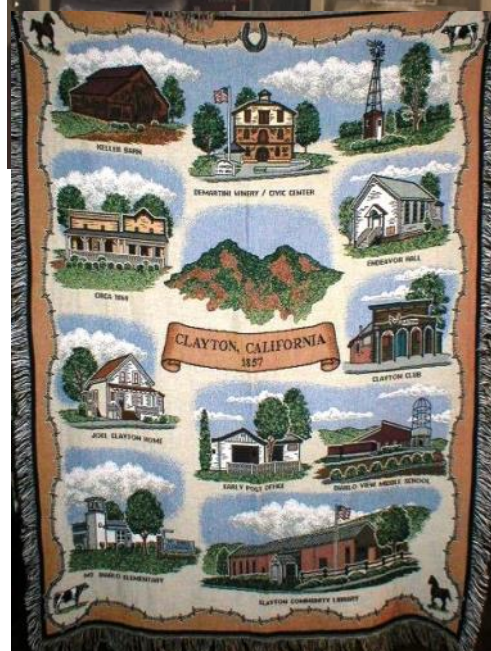
SOUTH BOUND		STATIONS	NORTH BOUND	
No. 2 Miles (Approx.)	Distance		Distance	No. 1 Miles (Approx.)
0-00	0.00	Leave (PORT CHICAGO) Arrive	0.00	0-00
0-12	1.47	CLYDE	0.83	0-12
0-24	2.94	*BOLLAM'S SIDING	0.84	
0-36	4.41	*MATHESON	1.41	
0-48	5.87	COWELL JUNCTION	.73	0-48
0-60	7.34	Arrive COWELL	0.00	0-60

1-Connect with Train No. 8 of The Sacramento Northern Railway at Clyde.
2-The Regular Depot Connection with Santa Fe or S. F. Co. at Port Chicago.
*Flag Station.
Minimum Timetable South Bound Train, 100 Tons.
Maximum Speed of All Trains Will Be Twenty Miles per Hour.
North Bound Trains Have Right Over South Bound Trains.
All Trains Must Stop Before Crossing Sacramento Northern Railway at Clyde.

J. A. KASCH,
Agent

R. B. MITCHELL,
Traffic Manager

W. H. GEORGE,
General Manager





Clayton Historical Society Support Levels

Your monetary donation helps to fund the society's activities and provides the finances required to maintain our museum. As a supporter, you will receive our quarterly newsletter, the Clayton Chronicles via email.

The society is a 501 (c) (3) organization, and your donation is fully tax-deductible.

Support Levels:

☐ Twin Peaks + \$25 ☐ Mt. Zion + \$50 ☐ Eagle Peak + \$100 ☐ Mt. Olympia + \$250

☐ North Peak + \$500 ☐ Mt. Diablo + \$1,000 ☐ Other: _____

Donations can be made ONLINE at: www.claytonhistory.org OR at the museum during open hours, Wednesday and Sunday from 2:00 – 4:00 PM.

BY CHECK: payable to Clayton Historical Society and mail to: P.O. Box 94, Clayton, CA 94517
If donating by check, please fill out the following information:

Name(s): _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email Address: _____

FOR ANY QUESTIONS: Call the museum at 925-672-0240 and leave your name, phone number, and questions or email museum@ClaytonHistory.org and someone will contact you.



A note from CHS Clayton Chronicles editor:
THANK YOU TO ALL THAT SUBMIT ARTICLES!

If you have suggestions or input for future
"Clayton Chronicles" please contact Linda Cruz at
(925) 672-0503 or
lindajeancruz@gmail.com

Your ideas are welcome.

**Also, we would appreciate your stories and/or photos
from Clayton's past or other personal history.**

Please do share with us!

Winter Newsletter articles DUE JANUARY 20, 2026



**Clayton Historical Society
PO BOX 94, Clayton, CA 94517**

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Vacant

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