



Clayton Chronicles

A Publication of the Clayton Historical Society

PO Box 94 * Clayton, California * 94517

(925) 672-0240

www.claytonhistory.org

WINTER EDITION 2026 Issue #190

Dear Members and Friends,

Happy New Year! Wishing you all the best in 2026.

This Winter issue of the **Clayton Chronicles** is filled with news, programs, and important dates that we are delighted to share with you.

First, we invite you to join us for our Annual Camellia Tea on Sunday, February 15th. Come enjoy cookies, coffee, tea, or punch, while visiting with neighbors and friends, and be sure to view our new exhibit "**Joel Clayton & the Gold Rush.**"

We are also pleased to welcome our new Board members and docent. The Clayton Historical Society & Museum relies entirely on volunteers to operate and grow, and we are grateful to everyone who gives their time and talents to support our programs. At our Annual Meeting in November, we enjoyed a very successful presentation, "**Diablo Valley before Joel Clayton Came**" by Nancy Niemeyer. We were also honored to recognize several outstanding volunteers with Special Recognition Awards.

Our new Kids Day programs piloted by Patti Pratt with the help of Kate Happy have been a great success and are expected to expand. Most recently, children participated in a fun and creative "Craft Day." To continue offering programs like these, we do need to raise funds. If you have ideas for fundraising or would like to help, please share them. You may call the Clayton Museum and leave a message at 925-672-0240. Please note that the Museum has no paid employees—it is operated entirely by volunteers.

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."



**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE
SEE PAGE 15 FOR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION & SUPPORT LEVELS**

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Looking ahead, the very popular Clayton's Gardens Tour will Return in the spring. Be sure to mark your calendars for Saturday & Sunday, May 16th & 17th. You can save \$5 on the price of each ticket by purchasing early; look for the ticket/flyer around April.

The Clayton Historical Society and Museum depends on membership renewals and donations to remain open and active in our community.

Clayton Historical Society and Museum wishes to thank the Clayton Business & Community Association for their generous support.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers. The Museum simply could not stay open without you, and your dedication is appreciated.

COME AND JOIN US!

Sincerely,

Linda Cruz

Linda Cruz, Editor

lindajeancruz@gmail.com



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 Museum Camellia Tea	Feb 15	1:00-4:00 p.m.
Joel Clayton & the Gold Rush Exhibit Open Sun & Wed	NOW	2:00-4:00 p.m.
Art & Wine Festival	Apr 25-26	10:00a.m.
Clayton Valley Garden Club Plant Sale, Endeavor Hall	May 9	9:00a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Clayton Gardens Tour	May16 & 17	10:00a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Clayton Library Book Sale 3 days	May 15-17	10:00a.m.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

The Clayton Historical Society is fortunate to have three new exciting Board members.



AVNEET KAHLON,
Director: Gardens Tour & Fundraising Events.

Avneet has been working on the Gardens Tour Committee for several years and was the Co-Chair in 2025. She has also been active with the 3rd grade field trips for many years. The children know her as Mrs. Buttons.



PATTI PRATT
Director: Community Youth Enrichment.

Patti has lived in Clayton for over 20 years. She raised her family here from 1998-2010, moved and returned in 2017. She founded and ran the DramaMama non-profit working with local youth from K-College and looks forward to bringing her passion to the museum. She has been a docent at the museum for over a year and hopes to broaden the Jr. Docent Program and create more opportunities for fun and education at the museum. She loves Clayton, its history, its people and hopes to help share with this amazing community.



DON "BUCK" BUCHANAN
Director: Maintenance.

Don is a long time resident of Clayton. He retired after 40 years as Director of Parks and Maintenance for the City of Pittsburg. Buck has lived in Clayton for the past 30 years and is very grateful to have raised his twins here. His family has a long history in this area. His great—great grandfather homesteaded in 1867 in the southern hills of Pittsburg. Don's great grandfather and grandfather served on the county board of supervisors for a combined 55 years. My great grandfather was chairman of the board for 30 of those years. The family has a few namesakes in the area, including Buchanan Airfield in Concord, Buchanan Road in Pittsburg/Antioch, Buchanan Park in Pittsburg. He is also a three time Past President of the Pittsburg Historical Society. Now that Don is retired, he is looking to spend more time volunteering in Clayton. Most folks know him as Buck.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST DOCENT



MAX FORHAN—Max is a lifelong Clayton resident who actually attended one of our 3rd grade field trips in 2011. Max graduated from The College of Wooster (in Ohio) with a degree in Archaeology and Classical Studies. She has been fortunate to pursue her archeological studies in Romania, Italy, & Greece. She is looking forward to using her education and experiences to contribute to the Clayton Museum.

*The Clayton Historical
Society's 49th Annual
Silver Camellia Tea*



*Sunday, February 15, 2026
1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.*

*Clayton Historical Society Museum
6101 Main Street, Clayton*

*claytonhistory.org 925-672-0240
Free Event-Free Parking*

*HONORING THOSE WHO
PUT UP OUR EXHIBITS*

The Clayton Historical Museum presents

Joel Clayton and the Gold Rush



The founder of the town of Clayton was one of the over 300,000 people who came to California during the gold rush. Come see through his eyes what life was like in 1850s California.



Admission is free.

Museum hours: Wednesday & Sunday 2-4 p.m.



During the California gold rush, Joel Clayton, the founder of the town of Clayton, traveled widely throughout California. The Clayton Historical Society Museum's new exhibit, Joel Clayton and the Gold Rush, lets visitors discover through his eyes what it was like to live in 1850s California. Unlike most California immigrants, Joel Clayton didn't come to mine gold.

He knew that the best way to get rich was to sell supplies to the miners. As an ambitious man, Joel Clayton often wrote letters, advertisements, and articles for the local newspapers in order to further his own businesses and political career. These detailed accounts let us hear in Joel Clayton's own words his thoughts, opinions, and life experiences. Unlike most founding fathers, Joel Clayton is much more interesting to us today because although he was bold, persuasive, and smart, he was also a bit of a scoundrel. So, come visit Joel Clayton and the Gold Rush for a colorful look at what 1850s California life was really like from the point of view of those who actually lived it.

Presented by Nancy Neimeyer

ANNUAL CHS MEETING

Last November, the Clayton Historical Society held the Annual Meeting & Election. We have a presentation each year. In 2025, Nancy Nemeyer gave a wonderful presentation “**Diablo Valley Before Joel Clayton Came.**” It was well received as many in attendance asked questions. Many thanks go to Nancy Niemeyer for her excellent research, presentations, and museum exhibits.

Three recognition awards were also presented by Debbie Eistetter; see photos and articles on pages 6-8.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD—KEN MITOLO

Presented by Debbie Eistetter

The Clayton Historical Society is proud to recognize someone whose craftsmanship and steadfast generosity have helped preserve one of Clayton’s most treasured landmarks: our museum on Main Street.

Ken Mitolo has been a behind-the-scenes hero of the Clayton Historical Society for over a decade. Since 2014 and well before, Ken has donated his time, talent and tools to repair and maintain our 150 year old building. From installing siding, battling dry rot repairing the porch, priming, painting and refinishing. Ken has tackled the unglamorous but essential work that keeps our museum standing strong. In addition he has restored the historic Keller Oak Tree Trunk display, (a 200 year old piece of Clayton’s history), and this past June he flawlessly installed the Rory Richmond memorial plaque onto the cornerstone boulder of the memorial garden: a first-time challenge he met with care and precision.

Ken’s connection to the Historical Society runs deep. His father was a longtime supporter and Ken has carried that legacy forward with humility and heart.

On behalf of the Clayton Historical Society (CHS) Board of Directors and our entire membership, we are honored to present ken Mitolo with the 2025 Outstanding Service Award to the CHS.

Thank you Ken for your enduring commitment.



Debbie Eistetter and Ken Mitolo

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD – 3RD GRADE FIELD TRIP COMMITTEE

Presented by Debbie Eistetter

The 3rd grade trips got started through the efforts of Mary Spryer circa 2004 for Mt. Diablo and Highlands Elementary Schools for all 3rd grade classes. The classes typically have 5 – 6 parents attending as chaperones who help the museum docents with the activities.

School Field Trips begin with a walking tour of the town that lasts about 45 minutes. Dick Ellis and Terry McCade did the first town walks. Dan Richardson took over the walks, and then Steve Pierce did the walks for a few years, before Dan Richardson took over again a few years later. Jan Hester frequently shadows Dan on the walking tour so that she can be ready to step in as a substitute if and when needed.



Pictured standing left to right: Debbie Eistetter, Lucy Hart, Adele Oldford, Jan Hester, Avneet Kahlon, Linda Pinder, and JoAnn Caspar sitting.

Following the town walking tour, the classes are broken up into three groups of about 10 children each, with each activity group lasting 20 – 30 minutes before rotating to the next activity.

One group does a House Tour and Scavenger hunt, typically led by Adela Oldford, with JoAnn Caspar stepping in as a substitute when Adela cannot be there.

A second group participates in outside activities where they learn about Pioneer Games, led for many years by Avneet Kahlon. We call that Mrs. Button's station because one of the main activities is each child making a button toy that they take with them.

The third group does our "Hands-On Stations" in the back room where they practice at a writing station, including pen and ink, a manual typewriter and an electric typewriter. Then there is a washing station, how to operate an old-fashioned adding machine, grind coffee, operate a meat grinder, roll pie dough, use a hand eggbeater and use an old-fashioned dial up telephone.

Most recent docents helping with the Hands-On stations include: Sandra Nepacena, Patti Pratt, Linda Pinder, Kate Happy, Joan Chesterman, Jan Hester, and Kerry Hill.

When time allows, each group also gets a chance to look at the jail – which is always very popular with the children. At the end of the field trip, the children and their teacher assemble on the porch for their class picture. We have older students and young adults come back to the museum talking about the wonderful time they had during their field trip, and they always enjoy looking through our photo album to see their old class pictures.

School field trips begin around the end of April through May.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD — CLAYTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY GARDENS TOUR COMMITTEE

Presented by Debbie Eistetter



Pictured from left to right : Lucy Hart, JoAnn Caspar, Avneet Kahlon, Debbie Eistetter, Linda Pinder, Dorothy Bradt Linda Cruz, and Shannon Seven

The Clayton Gardens Tour began in 1992, thanks to the vision of Eldora and Bob Hoyer. Eldora stepped back after 2 years and JoAnn Caspar took the lead for the next three decades. The Gardens Tour has been more than a fundraiser for the Clayton Historical Society & Museum as the Community welcomes this tour every year for over 30 years. In the early 2000's, the tour welcomed over 700 attendees raising more than \$17,000 in a single year which remains the CHS's largest fundraiser. Funds raised by the Gardens Tour are vital for supporting our museum and programs.

The Board honored and thanked long time volunteers for keeping the Gardens Tour going each year: Peggy Arundell, Dorothy & Jim Bradt, Joan Bergum, Tammy Cerruti, Linda Cruz, Julie Pierce, Nancy Dunn, Lucy Hart, Nancy Haley, Marsha Helstrom, Avneet Kahlon, Becky Overstreet, Shannon Seven, Linda Pinder and of course, JoAnn Caspar whose leadership and love for this tour have shaped its' legacy.

Mark you calendars for the 2026 Clayton Gardens Tour scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, May 16th and 17th. *Excerpt from Debbie Eistetter Award Presentation.*

DEBBIE EISTETTER's HISTORY NOTES

Have you ever looked at Mount Diablo's northern slopes from Clayton or Concord and wondered, "What exactly is being mined up there?" Many people will tell you "gravel" which is basically correct, but to be more exact, it is a crushed rock called "diabase." The quarries at Mount Zion and Eagle Peak began operation in 1947, and diabase rock is a construction aggregate that provides a stable foundation for roads and buildings. It is also used as a low cost extender in making concrete when added to more expensive ingredients like asphalt and cement.



DEBBIE EISTETTER

Geologists describe Mount Diablo's geologic history as complicated, so to put it simply, the collision of oceanic plates and continental plates and other conditions have resulted in the formation of many different types of rock. Diabase is only one of many materials that have been mined in Clayton and its surrounding hills.

Coal was mined in the hills northeast of Clayton in the area we know today as the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve and was at one time the largest coal mining operation in California. Legislators in the 1860's even proposed changing the name of Mount Diablo to Coal Hill. From the 1850's to the early 1900's, 4 million tons of "soft coal" was brought to the surface by mule-drawn carts and transported from the mines by railroads to landings on the San Joaquin River. Barges carried the coal to San Francisco, Sacramento and Stockton to be used in homes, factories and to power trains and boats. Miners often enjoyed spending their wages and free time in Clayton at several saloons that offered beer from the brewery on Main Street or perhaps at a play or musical event at the Social Hall. The discovery of a higher grade of coal in the Northwest and increasing use of oil as an energy source marked the end of the coal era.

In the 1920's until 1949 silica-rich sand was mined in the same area as the former coal mines. Sand from the Hazel-Atlas Mine was sent to Oakland and used in the manufacture of glass jars and bottles, and the Roberts Sand Company mined sand used in casting by the Colombia Steel Works Foundry in Pittsburg. Mining of sand ended because of competition from imported

Belgian glass sand and the closing of the steel foundry.



Limestone was quarried at Lime Ridge by the Cowell Cement Company from 1908-1946, and dust generated by this enterprise settled on the leaves of crops, raising the ire of many Clayton farmers until the company erected a large smoke-stack to contain the fallout.

Gold, Copper, and Silver were also mined but in small amounts. Cinabar is an ore from which

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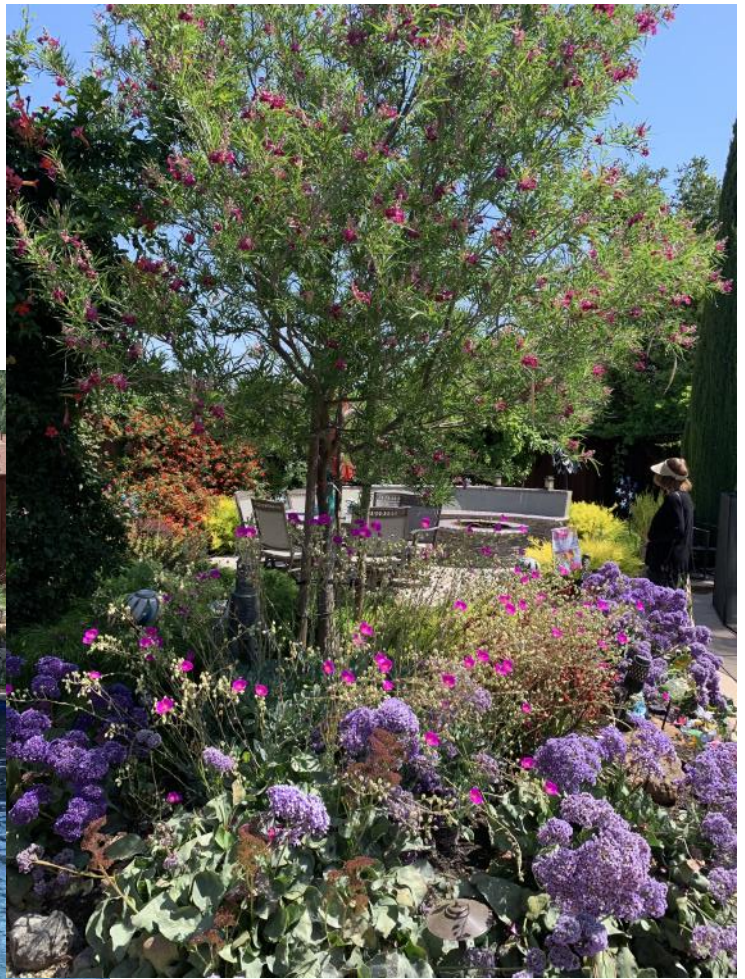
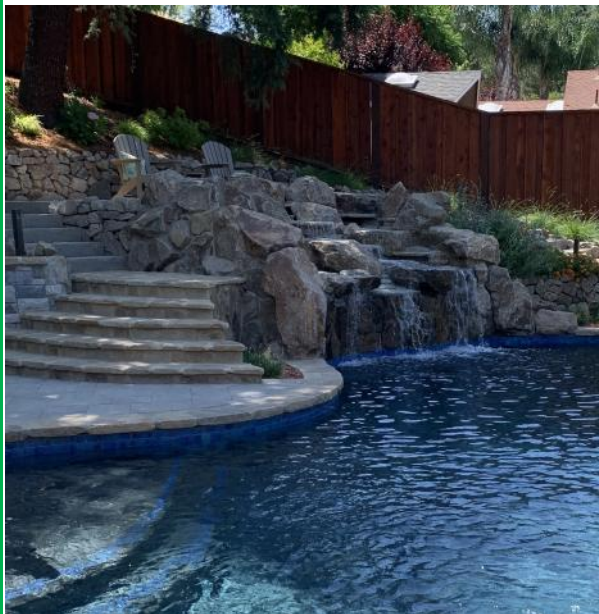
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mercury or quicksilver is derived which in turn is used to separate gold and silver from the ore that contains it. A cinnabar mine just east of Clayton was still operating at a profit in 1940. The complex nature of Mount Diablo geology has yielded many types of mining riches and presents us with the challenge of balancing the needs of our increasing population and the preservation of the beauty of our mountain and its surrounding hills.

Debbie Eistetter is a board member of the Clayton Historical Society. For more information or to become a member visit claytonhistory.org The Clayton Museum is located at 6101 Main Street and is open 2-4pm Wednesdays and Sundays. Admission is free.

CLAYTON GARDENS TOURS—COMING MAY 16 & 17, 2026

Be sure to mark your calendars for the Annual Clayton Gardens Tour. There is something for everyone whether you are looking for ideas for landscaping, pools, outdoor kitchens, hillsides, gardening for food, as a hobby, drought resistant plants, or just to enjoy the beautiful gardens. The Gardens Tour is the Clayton Historical's biggest fundraiser. Help keep the museum running by joining us for this very popular event.



LOCAL ARTIST DISPLAY & SALE

Former 2024 Garden Tour homeowners Larry & Lenka Glassner will be displaying and selling Lenka's art and her painted eggs on March 21 & 22 at their home at 715 Black Point Place in Clayton.



KIDS CRAFT DAY AT THE MUSEUM IN DECEMBER

Kate Happy reports young visitors recently stepped back in time at the museum where they learned about Victorian holiday traditions while crafting their own decorative cones and pomanders. Guided by museum volunteers, children discovered these fragrant and festive items that were once used to scent homes and celebrate festive occasions in the 19th century. Hands-on, creative, and a little bit magical, the

activity brought history to life—leaving participants with both a hand-made keepsake and a deeper connection to Clayton's past.



KATE HAPPY

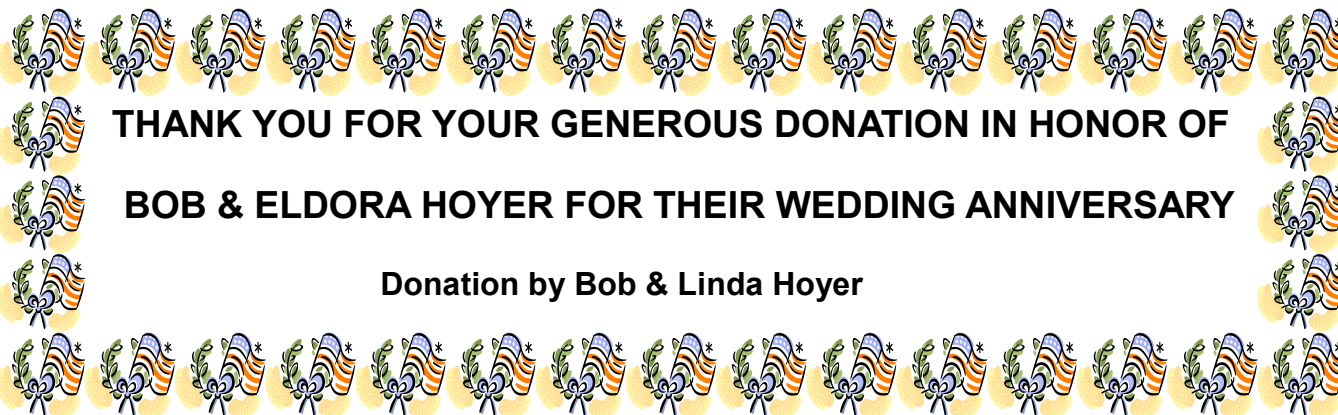




THANKSGIVING ACROSS THE POND

Our Twinning Cities friends across the pond shared photos showing them celebrating Thanksgiving and flying the California State flag in Buxworth, England; the birthplace of Joel Clayton. The placemats have turkeys and "Gobble" printed on them. Twinning cities are like sister cities and refer to partnerships between towns to build cultural and social links, often celebrating shared history, and cultures. In

past newsletters, there have been articles where Dick Ellis & Pete Lawrence have visited our sister city in Buxworth, England and our Buxworth friends have visited the Clayton Museum.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATION IN HONOR OF

BOB & ELDORA HOYER FOR THEIR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Donation by Bob & Linda Hoyer

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

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

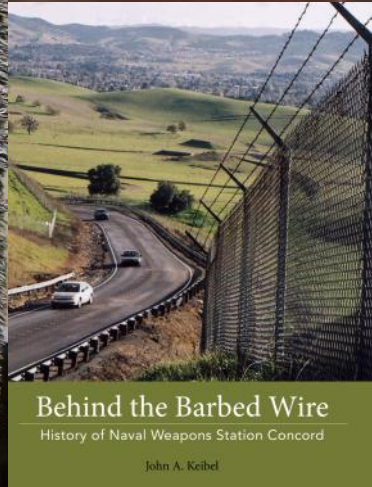
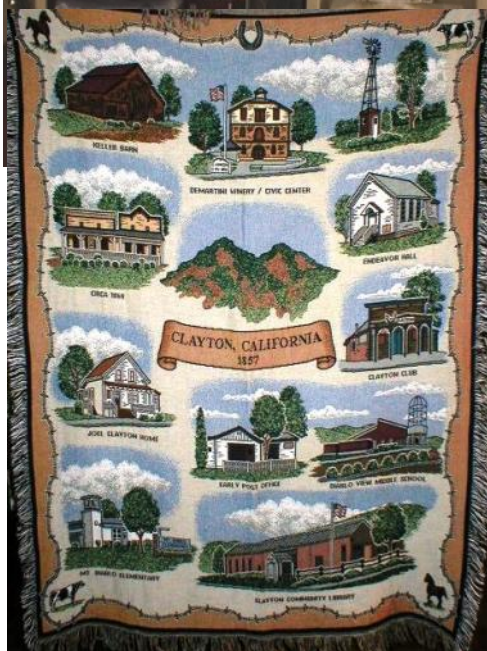
To Take Effect Monday, February 17, 1936

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF EMPLOYEES ONLY

SOUTH BOUND		STATIONS	Distance	NORTH BOUND	
No. 2	Hourly			Hourly	No. 1
6:00	0:00	Leave (PORT CHICAGO) Arrive	9:00	5:20	0:00
6:15	1:47	CLYDE	7:43	5:15	0:15
6:30	3:34	*BOLLMAN'S SIDING	5:44		
6:45	5:21	*MATHESON	1:41		
7:00	7:07	COWELL JUNCTION	7:3	5:00	
7:15	8:54	Arrive COWELL	0:00	4:50	0:00

1-Connect with Train No. 8 of The Sacramento Northern Railway at Clyde.
 2-The Regular Depot Connection with Santa Fe or S. P. Co. at Port Chicago.
 *Flag Station.
 Minimum Tonnage South Bound Train, 500 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.

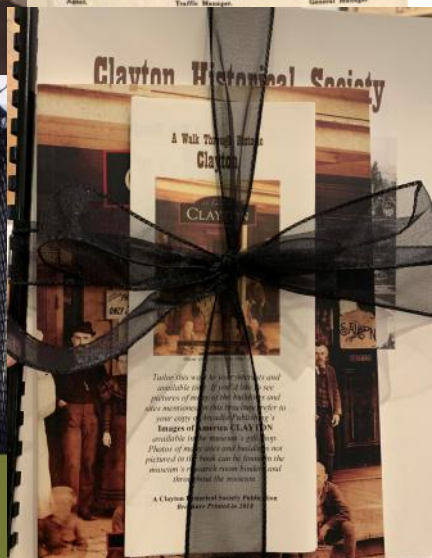
J. A. KASCH, Admin. R. B. MITCHELL, Traffic Manager. W. H. GEORGE, General Manager



Behind the Barbed Wire

History of Naval Weapons Station Concord

John A. Keibel



TIME TO RENEW!

Thank you for your past and present support and loyalty and we look forward to seeing you at the museum in 2026.



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!

Spring Newsletter articles DUE April 20, 2026



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

Clayton Historical Society Board Members

President:

Vacant

1st Vice President of Membership:

Debbie Eistetter

2nd Vice President of Museum Operations and

Donor Relations:

Linda Pinder

Secretary:

Ted Meriam

Treasurer:

Nancy Dunn

Directors:

JoAnn Caspar ~ Don "Buck" Buchanan ~ Linda Cruz
Paul Jordan ~ Avneet Kahlon ~ Steve Lane ~ Patti Pratt

Clayton Chronicles Editor: Linda Cruz lindajeancruz@gmail.com (925) 672-0503