

# PANORAMA



JANUARY-MARCH, 2024 VOL. 35, NO. 1

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## Message from the Chairman



Dear Members of SFHS,

The New Year is upon us. It's a good time to pause for a moment and reflect on our accomplishments of the past year. 2023 was a truly momentous year! Here are just a few of our accomplishments:

- We have hired a grant administrator, Olivia Lahs-Gonzales, to manage our existing grants and write new grants with the aim of building a steady pipeline of new funding.
- We have a new tech team, Matt Grigorieff and Al Spector, founders of Strategic Development Technologies. This dynamic duo has initiated high-quality live broadcasts from 608 Commercial Street, which have brought our monthly programs into the 21st Century and cultivated a growing online audience. Matt has also made significant improvements to our membership management program so we can better serve our members.
- Through the hard work of Membership Manager Chris Griffith, in 2023 we welcomed more than 150 new members to the Historical Society.

- We welcomed Beth Roemer as our new Education and Volunteer Coordinator. She's been working hard to manage our 11 interns from ICA, put our social media strategy into action, and recruit an energetic cohort of new volunteers.
- Before adding to our staff, Lana Costantini had been almost single-handedly managing SFHS publications, education, monthly programs, special events, and the museum. In recognition, Lana has received a well-deserved promotion and will continue her work as Director of Operations.
- With great excitement (and relief) I'm pleased to announce that we have successfully negotiated a new lease for our office and the museum, meaning 608 will be our home for another 12 years.

I'd like to express our gratitude to you, our members, for your ongoing support. We wouldn't be here without you. I urge you to remain engaged with SFHS and enthusiastically take part in what's to come in 2024. It's gonna be fun.

*Thomas R. Owens*  
Chairman, SFHS Board of Directors



A visiting school group takes a peek at the brick vault on the Museum's lower level.

## In-Person Monthly Meetings

### Uncle Billy Was a Banker: The Escapades of William T. Sherman in Gold Rush San Francisco

Presented by R.J. Lank

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 6:30 PM**

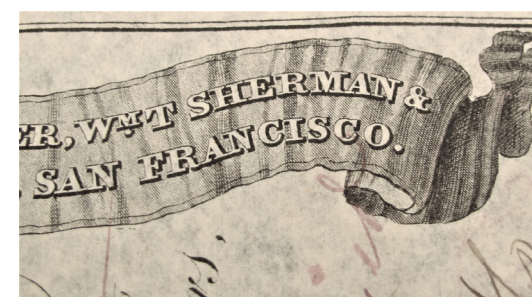
Every history buff knows the name of William T. Sherman, Union General who led the March to the Sea into the Carolinas. Few know that Sherman, as a young Army man, was in the thick of things during the Gold Rush, first dealing with mining disputes and then becoming a bank manager on Montgomery Street for the Lucas & Turner Banking House, which still stands.



He also built a home for his young family on Rincon Hill. Join us in experiencing Gold Rush San Francisco through the eyes of the young W. T. Sherman - who arrived in Monterey and Yerba Buena in the summer of 1847 at the age of 27.

R. J. (Rick) Lank is an author, researcher and enthusiastic storyteller. His research and writing focuses on the Civil War era and its impact on our money and banking system. The "Uncle Billy" story grew out of this fertile ground.

PLEASE NOTE: *This program will be presented virtually, streamed live from Rick's home in Hagerstown, MD.*



SFHS monthly programs are held in the SFHS Museum at 608 Commercial Street and are also streamed live. You must register in order to attend in person, or to view the live stream. To register, go to [sfhistory.org](http://sfhistory.org) and click on Events/Tours. Once you've registered, you will receive a confirmation email with a link to the live stream.

### Anchor Brewing Company—A San Francisco Legacy

Presented by David Burkhart

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 6:30 PM**

SFHS Museum, 608 Commercial Street

By now, most San Franciscans are well aware that one of the city's most cherished businesses—Anchor Brewing—closed its doors in 2023 after more than 120 years of operation. The SFHS Museum's newest exhibit showcases some of the artifacts from the brewery, but there is much more of the story to be told. Join us for an evening with Anchor historian Dave Burkhart, who will share stories, anecdotes, and memories from his thirty-plus years of experiences at Anchor Brewing.



We all know that Anchor Brewing became famous for its steam beer—but not everyone knows that spinoff company, Anchor Distillery, also made a variety of distilled spirits, including Old Potrero Whiskey and Juniper Gin. In addition to Dave Burkhart's extensive knowledge of craft beer, he's also an expert on San Francisco cocktails. His presentation will include a demonstration of how to make the famous Boothby Cocktail, Bill Boothby's version of a Manhattan, which he served at the Palace Hotel. A list of ingredients will be provided when you register so that those who attend online can join the fun.



Award-winning author and historian David Burkhart joined the small staff of Anchor Brewing in 1991, where he worked side-by-side with owner/brewmaster Fritz Maytag. In his more than thirty years at Anchor, Burkhart did nearly every job at the brewery, adding Anchor Brewery historian to his many titles in 2010. His books include *Earthquake Days*, *Cocktail Boothby's American Bartender*, and *The Anchor Brewing Story*.

These programs are free, but donations are gratefully accepted. Your generosity helps keep our programs free and allows us to continually add high-quality live streamed content to our archives. Programs are usually scheduled on the second Tuesday of each month. There are no programs in August or December. Programs are subject to change, so please check for updates at [sfhistory.org](http://sfhistory.org).

## In-Person Monthly Meetings *(continued)*

### Alcatraz: From Fort to Prison, Protest to Park

Presented by John A. Martini

**TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 6:30 PM**

SFHS Museum, 608 Commercial Street

Alcatraz Island's history is more than just a short-lived federal penitentiary. Join retired National Park Ranger and historian John Martini to learn about Alcatraz as a Civil War fortress, a military prison for recalcitrant U.S. Army soldiers, a political prison for Confederate sympathizers, and a lockup for Native American warriors. Other important eras covered in John's talk include the Indian Occupation of 1969-1971, Alcatraz in popular culture, the seldom-seen tunnels beneath the prison buildings, and the challenges of preserving the island's aging infrastructure.

John A. Martini is a native San Franciscan, is a lifelong researcher into the history of the American West and specializes in historic preservation. He was a national park ranger for more than 25 years and served for many years at the Presidio of San Francisco as curator of military history for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. He is the author of several books and articles on San Francisco military history. He lives in Novato, California.



*The Potrero Emergency Hospital, one of seven free emergency hospitals that once existed in San Francisco.*

OpenSFHistory.org

## A Restored Gem Gains New Life and Purpose in San Francisco's Excelsior

Today the City of San Francisco boasts a thriving network of first-rate hospitals, dozens of urgent care facilities that serve nearly every neighborhood, and a citywide 911 system. At one time, though, San Francisco's hospitals were few and far between, and emergency care was difficult to obtain. As the population grew and the neighborhoods expanded geographically, the need for free, easily accessible health services and urgent care increased.

By Lana Costantini

To meet this need, San Francisco built a unique system of small-scale "emergency hospitals" situated all over the city. The first of these, the Park Emergency Aid Station, was built on Sanyan Street in 1902. Eventually there were five main emergency hospitals: Park; Central (adjacent to City Hall); Harbor (serving the downtown waterfront); Mission (affiliated with SF General Hospital); and Alemany. Smaller emergency stations existed at Ocean Beach and at the Potrero police station.

The last one to be built was the Alemany Emergency Hospital, along with a sister facility, the Alemany Health Center, at 35 and 45 Onondaga Street, at the corner of Alemany Boulevard in the Excelsior District. Built in 1933, the Alemany Emergency Hospital would serve the southwestern part of the City. Designed by city architect Charles Sawyer, the adjoining Mediterranean-style buildings are among the few architecturally significant buildings in the Excelsior. The Alemany Health Center also once housed two WPA-era murals by Bernard Zakeim (though only one remains).

These neighborhood outposts were staffed by trained surgeons and nurses. They were open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Emergency care was provided free of charge for anyone in need of it. Doctors and nurses treated minor surgical problems such as lacerations, animal and insect bites, respiratory problems, and domestic accidents. If someone needed hospitalization, those with means were transported to a private hospital; those without means were transported to San Francisco General.

*The city's system was so unusual it received attention nationwide and became highly respected for its innovative model. It provided urgent, equitable medical care, free of charge, to people throughout the city - in their own neighborhoods. The system was the only one of its kind in the nation.*

San Francisco's emergency hospital system was shut down in 1978. Many residents of the city vehemently protested

the closures. Residents of the Excelsior and Mission neighborhoods were particularly upset. A neighborhood group called COMO (Communities of the Outer Mission Organization) staged a six-week sit-in at the Alemany Hospital, even trying to continue providing emergency services themselves as volunteers, but their effort was ultimately unsuccessful. Ambulance service continued at 35 Onondaga until 1980, but in 1982 the complex was rented out to St. Luke's Hospital and, later, to St. Mary's Hospital. The buildings were abandoned in 2011 after St. Mary's Hospital closed its Adult Day Health Center.

In May of 2015, the president of the New Mission Terrace Association successfully filed a request with the City to designate 35 and 45 Onondaga Street as historic landmarks. This designation ensured that the buildings could not be destroyed. Community members behind this effort expressed interest in restoring the buildings and one day returning them to their intended use as community centers serving the public.

In December of 2023, this dream was finally realized. After seven years of planning and a five-million-dollar renovation, Clinic by the Bay (CBB), a free health clinic for the working uninsured, opened its doors at 35 Onondaga. The clinic, a successful nonprofit, is staffed mostly by volunteer medical professionals, allowing it to provide high-quality healthcare at no cost. Founded in 2010, CBB's old home was just around the corner at 4877 Mission Street. CBB outgrew its space on Mission Street as it expanded its services, and needed a new home.

Clinic by the Bay's mission is clear: Provide health care services to the people who fall through the cracks of the City's resource-rich landscape—the low-income workers who don't qualify for government assistance but also do not earn enough for private insurance. The need for CBB's services is ever-growing as San Francisco's population grows and the cost of living increases. CBB intends to provide services for traditionally underserved nearby neighborhoods, including the Excelsior, Ingleside, and the Outer Mission—plus parts of San Mateo County.

Returning this historic gem of a building to its original use as a neighborhood health clinic is nothing short of extraordinary.

*CBB's Founder and Board President Janet Reilly said, "It's exciting to be putting on the finishing touches to our new, yet historic, facility. We're so grateful to our volunteers, donors, patients, and the City of San Francisco for their enthusiastic support of this project. They've helped bring this vision to life, and we can't wait to open our doors and welcome everyone."*

In addition to offering high-quality primary care, the clinic plans to expand services in its new location by offering dental care, extended hours, and a free pharmacy.



Clinic by the Bay's new facility at 35 Onondaga Street, site of the historic Alemany Emergency Hospital. Courtesy of Clinic by the Bay.

## PATRIOTS

A Novel by Bill Issel



1942. San Francisco. Class, ethnic, and racial rivalries intensify as the diverse residents mobilize for war. Former police commissioner Tony Bosco works behind the scenes to solve a racist hate crime while fighting off false charges that he and the mayor are fascist sympathizers. *Patriots* is

the third book in Bill Issel's series *The War at Home Trilogy*. The trilogy aims to recover the lost history of how the diverse people of San Francisco coped with the stresses of war.

William (Bill) Issel is professor of history emeritus at San Francisco State University.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*"An imaginative mix of politics and intrigue. Set in the framework of a police procedural, Patriots is as good as it gets, a narrative set in the last century with a timely message for today."*

— Rodger C. Birt, author of *Envisioning the City: Photography in the History of San Francisco*

*"Patriots is not only a fast-paced thriller situated in World War II-era San Francisco, but also an observant, lively, and disturbing commentary on race relations, policing, and racial justice in the City by the Bay. Patriots is an excellent work of fiction, and Issel's knowledge of San Francisco's black community and its key leaders is exceptional."*

— Albert S. Broussard, author of *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954*

*Patriots* is available in paperback or ebook at Amazon.com

# San Francisco Historical Society Walking Tours

## Gold Rush and Sunken Ships

Experience how San Francisco went from a trading village to a metropolis. You'll learn about the hidden remains of sunken ships and artifacts from the Gold Rush.

### Tour Dates, Times, and Guides:

*(Tours led by Thom Jackson)*

- Saturday, January 13 at 11 AM
- Saturday, February 3 at 11 AM
- Saturday, March 2 at 11 AM

## 1906 Earthquake and Fire: Chinatown's Devastation and Renewal

Before dawn on April 18, 1906, the San Andreas Fault ruptured, sending shock waves racing across San Francisco. The city was abruptly awakened to witness a firestorm that would last three days and destroy almost everything within sight. Vibrant and densely populated Chinatown was swiftly engulfed by a raging fire on Day One, its inhabitants dispersed like embers in the wind. With Chinatown destroyed, city politicians and power brokers decided that this was an opportune time to relocate the Chinese community. Powered by an irrepressible resilience, the Chinese community reimagined Chinatown and built it back better.

### Tour Dates, Times, and Guide:

*(Tour led by Jack Grippi)*

- Saturday, January 27 at 11 AM
- Saturday, February 17 at 11 AM
- Saturday, March 23 at 11 AM

## Unspeakable Vice

Starting at the San Francisco Historical Society, we'll zig-zag our way by more than a dozen lost queer bars, concluding with a round of drinks at the site of an infamous lesbian hook-up spot on Grant. Hear how the "unspeakable vice" of the Victorians found its place and, through the process, gained a voice. Starts at 608 Commercial St. and ends at Maggie McGarry's pub at 1353 Grant Ave. in North Beach.

### Tour Dates, Times, and Guide:

*(Tour led by Shawn Sprockett)*

- Saturday, January 13 at 11 AM
- Saturday, February 17 at 11 AM
- Saturday, March 23 at 11 AM

Notes: Must be at least 21 years old. Limit 1 drink per guest. Ends at Maggie McGarry's, 1353 Grant Ave, **\$30 for non-members, \$10 for members. You must register in advance.**

## Secrets and Stories of San Francisco's "Wall Street of the West"

Travel back in time to discover the stories and significance of the companies and people whose names adorn Financial District buildings. In addition to Silver Kings, the Big Four, and renowned bankers, this tour will introduce you to many others who "mined the miners" to create wealth beyond any normal imaginations.

### Tour Dates, Times, and Guides:

*(Tour led by Thom Jackson)*

- Friday, January 12 at 11 AM
- Friday, February 2 at 11 AM
- Friday, March 1 at 11 AM

## SFHS CONTRIBUTIONS BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND DECEMBER 20, 2023

We gratefully acknowledge all contributions received between January 1 and December 20, 2023. Gifts totaling \$150 or greater are presented here. We apologize for any errors or omissions and thank you in advance for bringing them to our attention.

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- Full-page ad: \$2,700
- Half-page ad: \$1,400
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- Save 20% if your ad appears in all four quarterly issues of Panorama.

Circulation of Panorama is approximately 1,300 hard copy issues at this time.

Please contact Lana Costantini (lana@sfhistory.org) for more information.

\*These prices are for press-ready ads. We offer design services for an additional fee.

## The 2023 SFHS Annual Awards Luncheon Honors Remarkable Women

On November 9, we held our 13th Annual Awards Luncheon at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. This year we honored San Francisco's first female fire chief, Joanne Hayes-White, with the William Ralston Award. Almost 300 people attended to honor Hayes-White for her leadership and exemplary service to San Francisco. Special guest Governor Gavin Newsom made a surprise appearance in a video honoring Joanne Hayes-White, produced by SFHS.



Joanne Hayes-White accepts the William Ralston Award from CEO Kevin O'Brien.



During the luncheon, Chairman Tom Owens called for a moment of silence in remembrance of Senator Dianne Feinstein, who had passed away just ten days earlier, on September 29. We then honored Senator Feinstein's life and legacy with a moving video of her many accomplishments and her devotion to the city she loved. (Scan the QR code above with your smart phone to watch the video.)



In keeping with the spirit of remarkable women, the luncheon program also honored young women leaders of tomorrow. Our 11 high school interns from Cristo Rey Academy attended the luncheon as teen ambassadors. And, the 2023 first-place Fracchia Prize winner spoke about why it is important for young people to understand our city's history and what they can learn from the leaders who have come before.



(Scan this QR code with your smart phone to watch the video.)



Luncheon guests bid enthusiastically on live auction items.

Siena Bianchi, a junior at Convent High School, speaks about the importance of understanding our history.



## The San Francisco Historical Society would like to acknowledge our sponsors for the 2023 Annual Awards Luncheon.

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SAVE THE DATE!  
**KEVIN O'BRIEN'S MUSICAL VARIETY SHOW**

Thursday, April 4, 2024  
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1025 Columbus Avenue  
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### A Peek at the Past

*The Anchor Brewing Company closed its doors permanently in summer 2023 after more than 125 years. It opened in 1894 on Pacific Avenue and moved several times until settling in this location at 495 De Haro Street in 1979. The San Francisco Historical Society is exhibiting many Anchor artifacts at the SFHS museum (608 Commercial Street) through February 15.*



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