

# SHARPSTEEN MUSEUM

## OF CALISTOGA HISTORY

# NEWS

This Member newsletter is a bi-monthly publication of the SHARPSTEEN MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, a non-profit organization.

VOL. 38, NO. 6 ■ Oct/Nov 2020

Message from  
the Board:

## We're not being idle

It has been six long months since COVID-19 forced us to close our doors.

During that time we have chosen tentative reopening dates but as you know the numbers continue to rise. The moment it is safe to do so we will reopen, we can promise you that. The announcement will be posted to our website so be sure to keep checking for updates.

If you have any questions in the meantime simply use our site's Contact Page to send a message. We will respond.

The new Thollander Exhibit looks fantastic and is waiting patiently for visitor accolades. The Exhibit includes Earl & Janet's wedding picture, books writ-

See LETTER pg 3

## REMINISCENCE, PART 3

# Ben was dear, sweet gentleman

by Ruth Durbin

"The only other disagreement we had was over the outhouses. After several months Ben agreed to having them in the diorama providing I placed them "discreetly." He was such a dear, sweet gentleman and we usually thought along the same lines.

"Some of the horses and carriages were made by a woodcarver in Santa Rosa. Ben was very disappointed because the teams of horses were all



The gazebo in the main diorama.

standing still. It was appropriate to have one carriage halted at the bath-

See DIORAMA pg 3

In 1993, Ruth Durbin compiled all of her memories of constructing the miniature displays with her husband Bob, and of working with Ben and other artists on the museum in the 1970's.

We present her story entitled "Reminiscence" along with photos from the archives in installments as space allows in this newsletter.

## Big shout-out to our docents



I want to give Two Thumbs Up to the Museum Docents. I know you have been waiting patiently for the Museum to reopen. Please know that you are always in my thoughts and I cannot wait for the Museum to come back to life with your energy and smiling faces.

As soon as we get the go ahead to reopen I will be in touch to set the schedule. You are the greatest!

Jane Bennett  
Docent Chair

# Sam Brannan unmaskers winners at Covid-19 Instant Wine Cellar raffle

Sam Brannan – properly masked and gloved – visited the Museum on August 30 to draw the winning raffle tickets for this year's Instant Wine Cellar raffle.

Since the usual festive event with tastings of local wines, delicious appe-

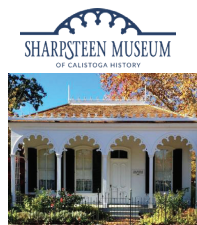
tizers, raffle baskets, and silent and live auctions could not take place, a scaled-down, COVID-19 appropriate drawing was substituted.

Shari Hanson won the Early Bird prize of three different Napa Valley wines. Gail Sharpsteen

won a 6 liter bottle of Robert Pecota 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon, and Diane Barrett won the Grand Prize of a mixed case of premium Napa Valley wines.

A handful of Board Members witnessed the drawing while maintaining a safe social distance. Special thanks to the wineries and individuals who were so generous last year that there was enough wine left over for this year's prizes.

*Pat Larsen  
Ways & Means Chair*



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except Thanksgiving and Christmas.

## BOARD MEMBERS:

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Editor: Shari Hanson

## MISSION STATEMENT:

The Museum's mission is to preserve and to provide for public exhibitions and study of the history of the community of Calistoga and the upper Napa Valley.

## Membership

June 1 through August 31, 2020

### In Memoriam

Ray Breitenstein • Eleanor Leake • Betty Heuser

### Increase in Renewal Membership Levels

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## DIORAMA

*Continued from page 1*

house, and I came up with idea of having the other team stopped to let the mother duck and ducklings cross the road. Ben was happy with that solution.

He also liked the little girl falling out of the swing while the nursemaid "makes eyes" at the gardener, and the little boy climbing up the gazebo with his mother in her hoopskirt trying to pull him down. Ben came up with the naughty little boy trying to push his sister off the bridge. You will note the agitated

father on the bank trying to stop the prank.

I was relieved when the last figure was dressed and positioned because, frankly, I was completely out of any more ideas!

Several books on Sam Brannan and his resort mention his interest in exotic plants and fish, hence the arboretum and lake in the diorama. No photographs were found of these, so artistic license was taken in constructing them.

As I mentioned before, the construction of the diorama had become a "way of life." Everywhere I went my mind was on half-inch items to

enhance the exhibit.

One Christmas, my youngest granddaughter gave her mother a box of bath powder with a plastic dome covering the puff.

The instant I saw it, I cried out "I want that puff cover." Thus, the inspiration for the arboretum, which I must say proved to be the most difficult building to construct in the entire diorama, I was very pleased with the trim on the ridge. It is a starched and painted strip of tatting from my mother's sewing box.

The lake was no "piece of cake." I was unfamiliar with resins and even

after several attempts I still came up with bubbles in the water which required more lily pads than planned to cover the imperfections.

The landscaping at first presented a problem. However, I located a shop in San Rafael that carried materials used by architects in making their models for commercial projects. As their scale is much smaller than the diorama, the material for large trees was too small for my use. My husband came up with the idea for my favorite trees- the large oaks."

*To be continued...*

## LETTER

*Continued from page 1*

ten and/or illustrated by Earl, his travel journals, the very first painting he created, photographs, art work showing the diversity of his artistic methods, and much more. Earl's studio, in part, was actually moved to the museum - all five display cases are loaded with the life retrospective of Earl Thollander. We will have prints of his famous Calistoga City Hall for sale plus an original "still life" work, signed and framed, which will be sold on Silent Auction. This will be posted on our website very soon.



**All five of the museum's display cases are filled with the art of Earl Thollander.**

Our doors may be closed for now but our work continues. Aside from catching up with basic deep cleaning, dusting, knocking down cobwebs, and working on the new lighting in the diorama, we have been involved with four important research projects

as requested by different writers, authors, professors and historians from across the country, all regarding Calistoga history.

More details will follow once all are completed.

- The Sharpsteen continues to be an important resource for historical information. Our involvement in these projects will ensure the museum's viability and integrity for years to come.

- We managed a Mini-Instant Wine Cellar this

year thanks to those purchasing raffle tickets for a chance at winning a case of NV wines. (See Pat Larsen's article for details). It was truly a fun morning watching Sam Brannan pull the winning tickets and munching on Pat's homemade scones. And yes, we were all wearing masks and standing as far apart as possible.

- Our book store is offering a 25% discount on all titles, by appt. if needed. (Please see the Book Store article for details). The sale lasts through November.

- The Annual Christmas Luncheon will need to be postponed this year.

*Notes from the Bookstore:*

## All books 25% off thru Nov., so shop your little heart out!

Even though the museum has not been able to reopen as yet, we still stop by a few times a week to visit, pick up mail, and check messages.

A few days ago a very nice woman called wanting to purchase a book. Unfortunately, she did not leave her name or call back number. This is terrible!

If you would like to shop the Bookstore or Gift Shoppe, please use our website and send a message with your name

& number. We will contact you to make an appt. to meet at the Museum so you can shop your little heart out. (Our standard books are listed in the online store, price shown for each includes tax & shipping.)

Another option is to simply call me directly to make your shopping appointment. I'll do my best to accommodate your schedule. 707-942-4213.

The best news is that all books are 25% off through November! If you know the title you



want and need it shipped, sales tax will of course be added plus \$3.50 per book for shipping.

We miss you all and thank you for your con-

tinued support of all things Sharpsteen. I'll be waiting to hear from you!

Kathy Bazzoli  
Book Store Chair



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