

Orinda Historical Society Seeks Volunteers

By Chris Lavin

History is gaining ground on the Orinda Historical Society, with stacks of documents and photographs that need to be cataloged gathering dust.

“We have a lot of them,” said Erik Anderson, a software engineer who serves as vice president of the society. “We’re in the process of trying to find them all and cataloging them.”

To do that the OHS is using volunteer senior citizens and sometimes even high school students who receive training on the society’s new photo digitizing equipment and put to work in the society’s office on the ground floor of the Orinda Library. The scanners and software were purchased with a grant from the Rotary Club.

In a second “call to action,” Andersen said, the public is now able to purchase the best of the photos over the Internet at www.orindahistory.org. Board members hope that local merchants will begin displaying more scenes of Orinda’s bucolic past in restaurants and office



This photo shows the Theodore Wagner house. Wagner loved the scenic beauty of the valley, and he built an expensive house in 1882 on what is now the Wagner Ranch Nature Area. The grounds included barns, a dairy, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a brick-making kiln, and the first telephone in Orinda. He built a platform where a band would play on Sunday afternoons for all of his neighbors who came to enjoy his elaborate grounds. Wagner became famous for his parties and festivals, and was instrumental in creating the image of Orinda as a pleasant, scenic retreat.

space – even private hallways at home.

“We’re on a shoestring budget, and we’re all volunteers,” Andersen said. “We can use a lot of help.”

And there are boxes upon boxes to be dealt with.

“We get all kinds of stuff from all kinds of places,” Andersen said. “We’ve had donations from newspapers, from private estates, the city, and even just private individuals who find stuff.”

Some of the documents are used in displays, but the ultimate goal is to have photographs sorted and scanned and filed under intuitive categories. To volunteer, call the OHS at 925-254-1353, or stop by when the society is open from 3-5 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.



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