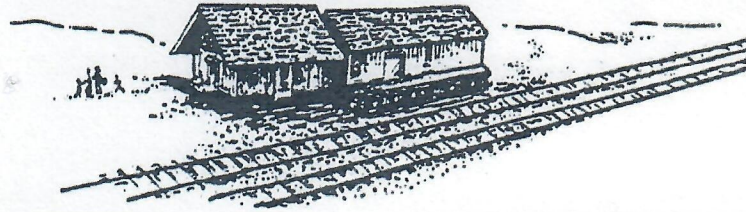


NEWS & NOTES
FROM THE
COLMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION **Founded 1993**



1500 Hillside Boulevard, Colma, California 94014
(650) 757-1676 museum; (650) 757-1616 fax

Website: www.colmahistory.com
Email: cha@colmahistory.com

January-February-March 2026

Newsletter #152

CHA President's Message

Sending you Best Wishes for 2026! We are now into the 2nd quarter of the 21st Century!

I have a New Year question for CHA MEMBERS who receive the newsletter via email only. Do you find time to download and read the newsletter? If not, would you like to receive hard copy by US mail? Please let me know: cha@colmahistory.com or 650-756-0153.

Our next quarterly meeting will be on Sunday, February 1 at 2:00 PM at the Colma Community Center, 1520 Hillside Blvd. Our speaker is John Petrovitz, a highly regarded model railroad builder known for his intricate and detailed N Scale layouts. He will focus on the Southern Pacific line that ran through Colma down to South San Francisco until the 1970s. John grew up in Colma, and his model is a tribute to the history of this area. You can read more details later in this issue. We will have time for refreshments during and fellowship before and after his presentation. Please RSVP by email cha@colmahistory.com, or voicemail 650-757-1676.

Many thanks to Perky Ramroth and Amy Yip for their presentation at our October 19 meeting. Everyone enjoyed "Who Am I? – Biographies of Interesting People in Colma Cemeteries."

Membership: The CHA has 143 active members as of December 2025. We welcomed 8 new members, and 30 members renewed their memberships. Check the article on pg. 3 of this newsletter.

CHA Tea: the date for our annual Tea of Many Themes has been moved to Saturday, September 26,

the last Saturday in September. Mark your calendar, please.

CHA Quarterly Meeting, April 19: John Goodwin is our speaker. He has a 2nd edition of his book *Echoes of the Badge, Stories from a National Park Service Career*. It has additional stories with a fresh perspective on the National Park Service.

CHA Quarterly Meeting July 19: Richard Rocchetta will tell us about *The Cemetery That Never Was*. This is a fascinating Colma story that Richard presented on Zoom during the COVID lockdown. Most of you missed it so we're bringing it back.

Maureen O'Connor

We're still eager to accept new volunteers

Join us for FUN at the Museum!

We will partner with you for training in whatever volunteer role you choose.

Tour Coordination & Assisting – We would like to resume offering tours of points of interest in Colma using already created scripts and creating new ones.

School Outreach – to local schools offering classroom presentations & museum tours.

Docent – Greet guests and answer questions about Colma and the Museum. We'll partner you with an experienced docent. Just 3 hours once a month on a Saturday of your choosing.

Create exhibits for the freight shed – arranging items, identifying signage, etc.

Create inventories of our filed archives – organize and list articles to make them more accessible.

Share your creative ideas and skills

Board of Directors

Maureen O'Connor	President
Michael Rocchetta	Vice President
Richard Rocchetta	Secretary-Treasurer
Perky Ramroth	Member

Pat Hatfield 1932-2021, President Emerita
Dorothy Hillman 1921-2020, Treasurer Emerita

Committee Chairs

Maureen O'Connor	Newsletter Editor, Program Chair, & Hospitality Chair
Richard Rocchetta	Museum & Office Manager, Fundraiser Event Operations
Michael Rocchetta	Restoration Expert & Technical Consultant
Perky Ramroth	Membership Chair
Helen Fiscaro	Tea Chair
Square 2 Design	Website Manager
Volunteer Needed	Tour Coordinator
Volunteer Needed	Hospitality Chair
Volunteer Needed	Program Chair
Volunteer Needed	School Outreach

Docents

Susanna Hnilo, Maureen O'Connor, Perky Ramroth, Michael Rocchetta, Richard Rocchetta, Lisa Sirianni, Amy Yip

Volunteers (ad hoc)

Helen Fiscaro, John Goodwin, Martha Goodwin, Sean Goodwin, Judy Hnilo, Susanna Hnilo, Yamel Rodriguez, Lisa Sirianni, Patrick Yu, Patricia Valente, Amy Yip

Museum – Now open Saturdays from 12:00 to 3:00

Quarterly Meetings – 1520 Hillside Blvd.

Colma

Sunday, February 1, 2026, 2:00 PM
Sunday, April 19, 2026, 2:00 PM
Sunday, July 19, 2026, 2:00 PM
Sunday, October 25, 2026, 2:00 PM

Annual Tea of Many Themes

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2026. (new date)
Colma Community Center, 1520 Hillside Blvd.

Tours

The Colma Historical Association has information on self-guided tours of our museums and of sites in Colma. Call for information, (650) 757-1676.

STAYING ALIVE ON SOUTHERN PACIFIC's COLMA BRANCH

By Maureen O'Connor

John Petrovitz loves history and railroads and has constructed a model of the Southern Pacific railroad line between Colma and South San Francisco. He and his wife Cindy stopped by the Colma Historical Museum in January 2025 to research the former Bocci Monuments office building that was on the east side of Mission Street (a.k.a., El Camino Real) in Colma for many years. I learned for the first time that it was moved from the roadside to the hilltop above when Mission Street was widened (circa 1930). It is now an apartment building at 401 E St., the northwest end of E Street. (It recently sold for \$1.6 million.) But back to John Petrovitz, at the CHA Quarterly Meeting on Sunday February 1 at 2:00 PM he will be sharing his adventures in creating models of railroad lines and surrounding landscapes with us in person at the CHA's February 1, 2026, quarterly meeting.

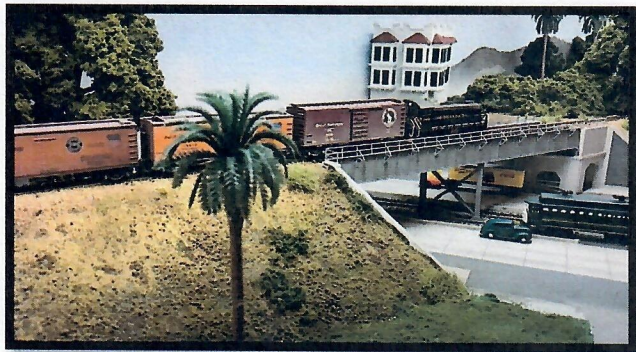
You can google search *John Petrovitz railroad models*, and find You Tube access to his four videos about the SP Colma Branch model. All are delightful, well produced, and informative with a detailed history of the line and Colma. Many of the photos he uses are from the Colma Historical Museum archives. The video titles are:

“Still Alive” on SP's Colma Branch
“Staying Alive on SP's COLMA Branch” Part 2
“Staying Alive on SP's COLMA Branch” Part 3
“Staying Alive on SP's COLMA Branch” Part 4*

*Tip: If you don't have a lot of time, watch Part 4.



#40 Streetcar, Railroad bridge across Mission St., and the Bocci Monuments office & home up on the hill.



John Petrovitz's model of the preceding photo.

CHA NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

The CHA welcomes the following new and renewing members. Thank you for your support.

New Members: Nancy Casazza, Anna-Marie Chavez-Rey, Joanne & David Gordon, Elliot J. Gorn, Gayle Montalbano, Noris Nehrebecki, Kenneth Sacks, and David Vallerga.

Renewing Members: Dot & Ed Abrahamson, Jeanette Acosta, Jerry Assaro, Iris Beilan, Etta L. Breaux, Susan Brissenden-Smith, Barbara Camenzind, Tim & Jo Anne Cannon, Jim Fisicaro, Jean Gallagher, Mike Gerrans, Earl Harper, Mary Hatfield, Mary Healey, Sue Hudson, Carole Hutchings, Dante Ivani, Anna Kauffman, Peter O'Neil, Perky Ramroth, Joe Rinaldi, Giulio & Lorraine Sbragia, Richard, Nancy & Christine Schenone, Lisa Sirianni, Dale Suess, Ginny Tilton, Janice Uccelli, Vicki Vitali, and Christopher Zanoni.

Please spread the word about the Colma Museum and Historical Association. Encourage friends to join. Membership is very reasonable, ranging for \$10/yr for Seniors & Students, \$15/yr for Individuals, & \$25/yr for Families.

COLMA TEXT MESSAGING SERVICE

On October 1, 2025, the Town of Colma introduced its smart text messaging service. Residents can opt-in by texting the keyword "COLMA" to the number 91896. They will then receive a text asking them to reply "YES" to confirm opt-in. After opting-in they will receive a message from 91896 confirming the action (message and data rates apply). Residents may then receive notifications for Town events, police alerts, roadway closures, etc. Opt-out at any time by Texting "STOP" to 91896.

Residents can also text the Town to find information and report issues. Text "Hi" followed by the message to the Town's text messaging number 650-993-9100.

TOWN OF COLMA'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY FILM

View it by going to www.colma.ca.gov. On the banner at the top of the home page, click on ABOUT. Then click on History (3rd picture). A page will appear that announces the film. Click on the black ribbon below the Colma logo. It is just under 30 minutes.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

The Historical Associations of San Mateo County will meet again on January 18, hosted by the Historical Society of South San Francisco. This roundtable was initiated by the CHA and the Daly City History Guild under the leadership of **Perky Ramroth**. It has been an enthusiastically received information sharing resource. Discussion topics will be: commemorating the USA's 250th Anniversary; using electronic databases; participation at the Historic Union Cemetery's Memorial Day Celebration; demonstration of Google Sheets communication tool; information about the Calif. Assoc. of Museum's Annual Conference; and attracting & recruiting new members & volunteers.

SAN MATEO COUNTY'S MEDICAL EQUIPMENT LOAN PROGRAM

San Mateo County's Medical Equipment Loan Program (MELP) has recently opened a site in South San Francisco, 325 Corey Way #112 (rolling door on south side of building), Saturdays 9-11 AM. This program has gently used, repaired as needed, and cleaned durable medical equipment (DME) for long- and short-term FREE loans. This equipment is often expensive even when partially covered by health insurance. The SSF site is convenient for Colma residents. MELP also has a site in San Carlos. This is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization that is made up of members of the community.

Last October **Colma's Age-Friendly Task Force** teamed up with MELP for a community medical equipment drive to collect walkers, wheelchairs, crutches, canes, shower chairs, and other DME.

In South San Francisco you can make donations and drop off loans on Thursdays from 2-4 PM.

Contact: www.freemedequip.org. 650-590-9112 (voicemail or text)

COLMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
1500 Hillside Blvd.
Colma, CA 94014

FEBRUARY 2026 QUARTERLY MEETING
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026

2:00 PM Colma Community Center
1520 Hillside Blvd. Colma

Program: *Staying Alive on Southern Pacific Railroad's Colma Branch* (Creating a model train landscape of the Colma & San Francisco branches)

by John Petrovitz, model train builder

QR Code for
Colma Historical Association Website



KIOSK: *The Notable Underground Residents* window has been updated. It now features photos and bio-sketches of: Gertrude Barrows, Fantasy Science Fiction Author; Margaret Pauline Brown, Educator, Community Worker, Philanthropist; Michael de Young, Newspaper Publisher, Businessman; Laura Tompson Duker, Sociocultural Anthropologist; Abby Fisher, Author, Chef, Businesswoman; Bill Graham, Rock Concert Producer, Businessman; Etienne Guitard, Chocolatier, Businessman; Florence Kahn, Congresswoman; Mary Ann Magnin, I. Magnin Owner, Businesswoman; Boris Theodore Pash, US Military Intelligence Officer; George Shima, Businessman, Farmer, “The Potato King;” and Cal Tjader, Jazz Musician.