Fingerprint EVERYONE in Berkeley?

By John G. Aronovici

August Vollmer, Berkeley's first Police Chief, was born in New Orleans in 1876. After his father died, his mother moved the family to Germany, then to San Francisco, and eventually to Berkeley in 1891. He helped support the family as a partner in Patterson and Vollmer, a hay, grain, wood, and coal supply store, at the corner of Shattuck Avenue and Vine Street near a fire station north of downtown Berkeley. He was one of the organizers of the North Berkeley Volunteer Fire Department.

He enlisted in the Marines in 1898 and fought in the Spanish-American War. After he returned to Berkeley in 1899, he worked as a mail carrier. In 1904 he won fame after he leapt onto a runaway railroad freight car on Shattuck Avenue in downtown Berkeley and applied its brakes, preventing a disastrous collision with a passenger coach loaded with commuters at the Berkeley Station. Recognition for this helped him to be elected as town Marshal in 1905.

In 1909 Vollmer, with only an elementary school education, was elected as the Berkeley Police Chief. In the years following, his innovations led to his reputation as the “Father of Modern Law Enforcement.” Many of the groundbreaking practices of the Berkeley Police Department are credited to Vollmer. These accomplishments all gave him national recognition, and he lectured around the country on his methods. Berkeley history books list his extensive achievements, and many were firsts for any

- Use of scientific methods with the first police crime lab
- The “MO” concept
- Establishment of a police school
- College education requirement for his officers
- Use of bicycles and motorcycles by his officers
- Establishment of a juvenile division
- Extensive application examinations for officers
- Use of radios
- The first Junior Traffic Police program
- Use of fingerprints to identify suspects
- First use of the lie detector
- First women hired as police officers

He even appeared as himself in a silent movie serial, Officer 444, directed by Francis Ford, brother of John Ford. (The Berkeley Historical Society has a copy of one of the episodes in its video library.)

In 1936 Vollmer, then retired from the force and teaching at the University of California, and Captain John Greening, who became chief after Vollmer, worked to promote an educational program on the value of fingerprinting citizens. By that time, fingerprinting had become a routine police procedure. Making appearances at civic groups, Vollmer was able to get the city to approve a special election that would support a volunteer program to fingerprint everyone, including children, in the city of Berkeley. The measure passed three to one. Greening contended, “People who objected to being fingerprinted did so, probably because they were contemplating a crime, had committed a crime and feared detection; and they could not trust themselves to avoid a criminal act.”

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2011 Suffrage marchers win at Solano Stroll parade

Berkeley Women Vote:
Celebrating California Suffrage 1911-2011

Exhibit Committee: Phyllis Gale (Curator), Nancy Bickel, Sarah Miyazaki, Daina Coffey, John Aronovici, Joe Ryspan, and Ed Herney

We have come to the midpoint of our exhibit; and we have had a very successful run so far. We began with marching in the Solano Stroll Parade – taking second place. Then the opening with “pink tea” and author of “Winning the Vote: The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement” Bob Cooney was our speaker.

We sang, marched and attended speeches at the Centennial Celebrations in Oakland and at the State Capitol on October 10th hosted by Secretary of State. Later, in October we installed a second exhibit in the Berkeley Main Library Lobby which closes around December 30, 2011. It has been very well received by the Library Patrons.

The League of Women Voters Berkeley Albany Emeryville celebrated their 100th anniversary on October 30, 2011, with over 60 attendees, honoring the Berkeley Suffragists who met on October 30, 1911 to create the Berkeley Center of the California Civic League.

The centennial celebrations have received proclamations from the City of Berkeley, Berkeley Unified School District, and the California Senate and Assembly.

We are selling postcards, the Vote for Women pin, and the children’s book “Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the Fight for Women’s Suffrage” by Claire Rudolph Murphy. It is a treasure. It is very unusual to find a children's book about women’s suffrage; however it is very rare to find a book based on Berkeley’s 1896 women’s suffrage. If you are looking for a children’s book with a message, this will be a great Holiday Gift.

We are also asking BHS members and friends to purchase a book to give as a gift to Berkeley's local public elementary school libraries. We need two more. These items can be purchased at the History Center at your next visit.

The Exhibit continues until March 30, 2012. We will celebrate the registration of new women voters and the first time Berkeley Women voted. According to the January 18, 1911 Berkeley Gazette, the Berkeley Assistant City Clerk and Deputy Alameda County Voter Registrar was very upset with women registering to vote. Women would come in and register, but refuse to complete the registration because it required their true age to be included.
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Photo of an unidentified Berkeley citizen giving his fingerprints at one of Berkeley’s fine printing “stations.”

The primary organization that promoted fingerprinting was The Citizens’ Committee on Universal Registration, located in Berkeley. They distributed 20,000 copies of their pamphlet, WHY FINGERPRINTING? Four Berkeley merchants made this possible: Call Me Joe, Krieger’s Market, Woodshed Bakery, and Charles Knight Plumbing. The pamphlet listed many historical facts about public use of fingerprints as identification.

According to the pamphlet, police first used fingerprints in the United States in about 1901. The New York City Magistrates Court made 31,000 identifications without error. In 1928, there were 12 states that had fingerprint bureaus, and by 1935 some 27 states had them.

In response to objections to universal fingerprinting, the Committee responded:

- **Personal Liberty:** Fingerprints do not invade such liberty; in fact, they insure against such invasion by the fixation of one’s identity.

- **Regimentation:** People are already “regimented” through census, auto licenses, professional and trade requirements, etc. Fingerprinting merely makes this registration positive and accurate.

- **Union Labor should favor fingerprints for two reasons:** It makes the union card positive identification and puts the finger on crooked labor leaders.

- **Blacklisting:** State law prohibits the use of criminal fingerprints for any other than crime purposes, and prescribes punishment for misuse.

- **Precedent:** The uniqueness of fingerprints was recognized early in history. It has been proven that Chinese used fingerprints as a means of identification in 700 B.C.

The voluntary campaign was conducted to get every person in Berkeley fingerprinted. Fingerprinting stations were set up. The campaign started with publicly fingerprinting city celebrities, including Robert Gordon Sproul, President of the University of California. By 1936 16,000 Berkeleys had their fingerprints on file as a result of the campaign. Each person was given an identification card with their prints and copies were sent to Washington D.C. to file with the FBI and the Department of Justice.

About half of the population was fingerprinted before serious objections were raised to the campaign, and it was discontinued. Factory workers thought it was a way for management to control labor and others feared it would become involuntary.

Unknown child being fingerprinted in Berkeley.

Personal identification card belonging to Cora Williams, Director of Williams Institute (Now Spring Mansion)

The front of Cora Williams ID card.
THE OLD ORDER PASSES: LAST DAYS AT SPENGER’S

By Paul Soltow, Jr.

Spenger’s was marked with many identifying signs. The largest one, over the entrance, was painted black and white and transformed into brilliant red and blue neon at night. Others proclaimed the locations of the banquet room, the fish market, and the big parking lot. Inside, patrons entered a magic world finished in teak siding from old ships and lighted with chandeliers fashioned from old ship steering wheels.

Massive wood haunches that once had supported decks of old Bay ferries were placed in service in the banquet room. An enormous gun collection in glass cases lined with green felt competed with detailed ship models of every description. A bronze plaque commemorated the return of American soldiers from the ill-fated Polar Bear expedition in Siberia in 1919. Binnacles, engine room telegraphs, range finders, clinometers, and life rings were part of the great array of nautical items brought together by the founder, Frank Spenger.

The highlight was the marble-sized diamond, the Star of Denmark, which Frank used to carry in a specially tailored watch pocket to show to patrons at the bar. After Frank’s passing, the great diamond, all 37 carats of it, resided in a burglarproof viewing case in the Oyster Bar, an area arranged to hold the hundreds of patrons waiting for tables.
The story of the diamond, according to El Cerrito jeweler Maury Wolfe, starts with King Kalakaua’s visit to London on his world tour in the late 1880’s. Britain had trading interests in the Hawaiian kingdom and Queen Victoria treated the Hawaiian king royally. As a parting gift, the King was presented with a large diamond called the Star of Denmark (probably after Victoria’s daughter-in-law Alexandra, who was a Danish princess). The King went to the United States and photos were taken of him wearing the enormous diamond in a ring. Later photos of the King show him without the ring, and it is believed that he lost it in a card game with gamblers in Santa Barbara or Santa Cruz. The Hawaiian King was considered a playboy, and the story is consistent with his reputation. The King’s last stay in the U.S. was in San Francisco at the St. Francis Hotel. Sadly, he became ill and died there, and his casket was returned to Honolulu in a U.S. warship. I am not sure what happened in the ensuing 20 or so years until Frank Spenger acquired it.

Was the restaurant popular? Was it ever! For fifty years through most of the 1990’s, Spenger’s was one of the top grossing restaurants in the country, with annual receipts in the millions. Spenger’s stayed open seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. breakfast to 2:00 a.m. the following day when the bar closed. The combination of tasty seafood, funky atmosphere, pleasant waiters, and low prices was irresistible for thousands of loyal customers. And there were also hundreds who flocked to the fish market to buy the fresh catch of the day plus the tasty trademark French loaves.

The passing of Spenger’s was announced suddenly in August 1998, with stories appearing the Bay Area press stating that the once-great seafood restaurant could no longer afford to stay open. Many factors were cited, including high cost of seafood, difficulty of competing with a unionized staff against nonunion local restaurants, decline in bar trade due to strict alcohol limits for drivers, bans on smoking in bars and restaurants, objections to the traditional deep fried cuisine, and, perhaps most important, a change in demographics as young people gradually drifted away from traditional eateries. And, the customer base had moved away to distant communities such as Fairfield, Brentwood, and Pleasanton.

The last weeks were marked by changes in the regular banquet groups, one of the mainstays of the business that had introduced hundreds of new customers to the East Bay tradition. One by one, the civic and other group signs disappeared: the Lions Club (Rotary had disappeared a few years earlier), Sons in Retirement, Pearl Harbor Survivors…all went elsewhere. Finally, there was just one: The Berkeley Breakfast Club, a weekly meeting group of about 200 members founded in 1936 for no special purposes except fellowship. The Breakfast Club started at the Durant Hotel, followed by a wartime move to the Shattuck Hotel (then called the Whitecotton), and later to the Berkeley City Club. In 1978 the advantages of Spenger’s became evident, and the Breakfast Club met there from then until the very end.

The Breakfast Club’s stay at Spenger’s had many highlights. One of the most spectacular was the annual demotion ceremony of the outgoing club president. These events were carefully scripted to utilize the considerable dramatic talents of the club members. A key feature of the demotions was the so-called “trial” of the outgoing president, who would always be found “guilty” and would be rolled out to the street, giving a literal emphasis on the term “outgoing.” Once outside, the ex-president would suffer some final indignity, sometimes with the help of the Berkeley Fire Department or the animal control people.

Special events often included operating a small bar in the corner of the banquet room, serving Tom and Jerry’s at Christmas time and Irish coffee on St. Patrick’s Day. A summer event called the Asian Invasion included a taste of the Orient mellowed with sake from the nearby sake plant. And, of course, football season at the University of California was celebrated by the grand entry of the Cal Band in its traditional straw-hat garb and complete with base drums and tubas.

Club meetings consisted of several parts. First, members picked up their name badges from the rack at the entrance to the banquet room and paid the club treasurer for breakfast. Spenger’s kept the breakfast cost low for the club. Once money had been paid, club members congregated at the banquet room bar where orange juice was served. This was a social time when members could meet and chat with each other.

As the meeting time of 7:30 approached, everyone would find a seat at one of the six long tables. Being creatures of habit, everyone seemed to sit in the same place at the table every week. The president would call the meeting to order by ringing the club’s brass meeting bell and starting the introductions table by table. A drawing of names would then impose dollar fines on six or seven members, with one lucky person winning a free breakfast. By 8:00, it was time for the speaker of the day, introduced by a chairman of the day, with hoots and catcalls if the introduction took longer than a minute.

Speakers and programs focused on issues of the day, drawing from business, government, commerce, and the University. The last day of the Breakfast Club at Spenger’s started with a new drink, the mimosa, a mixture of champagne and orange juice, followed by a breakfast entree of corned beef hash. The program consisted of Bob Eneman, a former East Bay Municipal Utility district manager, telling the story of the Club and its founding. That was followed by Tony Riccio, a former manager of Spenger’s, talking about life during the restaurant’s glory years, and then by Mel Rigler, longtime bartender, sharing observations about the people he had served. Gifts were given to the loyal banquet room waiters, Alex Mejia, Fred Mejia, Joe Valdivia, Jerry Perales, and Arthur de la Santo (absent) and cook Joe Perez. Fred Mejia, speaking for the group, expressed his sadness about the closing and the hope that a way could be found to reopen the landmark restaurant. The meeting ended with renditions from the informal Breakfast Club band, closing with the saddest selection of all, Auld Lang Syne. After the tears were dried, the Club members posed for a group picture in front of Spenger’s for the last time. In keeping with the tears on leaving, the weather cooperated by providing a light rain to memorialize the occasion. An era had ended.

[Spenger’s was reopened, but under new management.]
Early photos of the Berkeley Humane Society

Recently the granddaughter of George H. Denny sent us these pictures. Mr. Denny was the founder and of the Berkeley Humane Society and its director until 1977. The photos were taken in 1935 at Ninth and Carlton Streets in West Berkeley. The society is still located at the same site. These photos are courtesy of Stephen and Linda Sanderhome.

Thank You

$50 Contributing Memberships:
- Patricia Edwards
- Jane Edginton
- Howard Bern
- Jack & Florence Van Geen
- Judy & Fred Porta
- Warren & Helen Tryon
- Harry & Kathleen Heckman
- David Eifler
- Jean Reilly
- George Petty
- David Williamson

$100 Sponsor Memberships:
- Bruce Fodiman
- Mara Melandry

Cash Donations:
- Costume Society of America (West Division) $85
- Anonymous Donation toward printing of Ken Cardwell Oral History $650

SOME RECENT DONATIONS TO BHS ARCHIVES

- Ed Herny-Assorted Berkeley ephemera
- Lafayette Historical Society-Original 1908 aerial photo of Berkeley.
- Jim Howard-1889 pen & ink sketchbook of Berkeley scenes by his great grandfather.
- Jim Cahoon-Collection of police photographs of the People’s Park protest.
- Bruce Miller-Twin-Pines Co-op wood logo from the Berkeley Co-op.
- Berkeley Sea Scouts-Collection of log books & artifacts.
- Vallery Yashukochi,Vangie Buell,Therese Pipe-Berkeley Co-op artifacts for the BHS exhibit.

What’s in your basement that could be donated to the BHS archives?

We welcome your suggestions and ideas for future history walks and newsletter articles.

Be sure to check out our new website at: berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org
Oral History Committee

The BHS Oral History Committee is currently preparing an exhibit on dance in Berkeley during the period of 1910-1940. We are researching the Parthenia’s, a yearly performance prepared and held by the graduating senior women of the University of California, the Isadora Duncan style dance, the Temple of the Wings, and the Boynton/Quitzow family.

We are also looking for information about dance teachers and dance studios in Berkeley during the same period. We would love to hear from anyone who participated, took lessons, taught dance, or may have any material on dance in Berkeley for this period. Our contact emails are: jcastello.lin@gmail.com and tstaros@gmail.com.

The Committee’s Therese Pipe and Paul Grunland are in the process of publishing the in-depth oral history of Kenneth Harvey Cardwell, a famous local architect and friend of Bernard Maybeck. It will be available in January 2012. For more information, contact Therese at tpipe@jps.net or (510) 841-5493.

We would love to welcome new members. We meet every fourth Thursday of the month at the Berkeley Historical Society museum at 7:15 p.m. Please contact us at the emails mentioned above.

Jeanine Castello and Tonya Staros. Co-chairs

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Calendar of Berkeley Women’s Suffrage Events:

“Berkeley Women Vote: Celebrating California Suffrage 1911-2011,”

Continues through March 2012
At the Berkeley Historical Center in the Veterans Building,
1931 Center Street. Thursday, Friday and Saturday
Afternoons between 1 and 4 pm.
Call (510) 848-0181
Before making a special trip downtown, to make sure volunteers are present Free admission, wheelchair accessible.

Exhibit Speakers Series

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Speaker and Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>01/08/2012</td>
<td>John Calderwood: The Woman Suffrage Vote in 1911 was one of many changes that fueled the progressive revolution brought on by the election of Governor Hiram Johnson</td>
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<td>02/05/2012</td>
<td>Barbara Babcock: Stanford Law Professor Emeritus is the author of “Woman Lawyer: The Trials of Carol Foltz.” As a young woman and single mother of five, Foltz authored the Women’s Vote Amendment that California men approved October 10, 1911.</td>
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<td>03/2012</td>
<td>TBD: In celebration of Berkeley Women’s first vote in April 1912, we are planning a reception honoring Berkeley’s Elected and Appointed Women both present and past. We will keep you posted on the details of this event!</td>
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Other Companion Activities

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<td>08/15/2011</td>
<td>“A Centennial Celebration: California Women and the Vote” in the Bancroft Library display cases, University of California, Berkeley</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/07/2011 through 3/30/2012</td>
<td>“Women at Cal: 1910-1915: When California Passed the Women’s Suffrage Amendment” in the Bancroft Library Rowell display cases, University of California, Berkeley</td>
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Membership Application

I would like to enroll as a member:
☑ Individual $20  ☑ Family $25  ☑ Contributor $50  ☑ Business $100
☐ Sponsor $100
☐ I would like to contribute to the L.L. Stein Endowment Fund: $__________

Please make checks out to BHS.
Mail to: Berkeley Historical Society
PO Box 1190 Berkeley, CA 94701

☐ I am interested in being in a volunteer. Please call me.

Name ______________________________________
Address _____________________________________
City _________________________________________
State _______ Zip ______________
Phone _______________________________________
E-mail* _____________________________________

*So we can notify you of special events or confirm your reservation.