

Newsletter

Samuel Knight Chapter
Society for Industrial Archeology

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The Newsletter is published in April, August, and December with special issues when they are needed.

Visit the new Chapter web site:
<http://knightsia.org>

Chapter News

2008 SIA National Conference

by Jay McCauley

After a lot of discussions with Chapter members and friends, the Board decided to make a proposal to the SIA Board for hosting the 2008 SIA National Conference in the Bay Area. At their meeting in Philadelphia on February 10, 2007, the SIA Board approved the proposal. The Conference will be May 29, 2008 through June 1, 2008. Although the Conference will be centered in San José, we are planning tours to IA sites throughout the Bay Area. We are working with History San José, the Computer History Museum, and the Department of Anthropology at San José State University as co-sponsors, and are seeking alliances with other organizations with related interests.

This is a big step for the Chapter, but I am confident that we can make it a very successful event. From the very beginning, we want to solicit your ideas, insights and concepts. The membership has a quite broad spectrum of interests, and the Conference provides an opportunity to show SIA members from all over the US and Canada the things in our area that you're passionate about. To make this easy and inclusive, the new Chapter web site has a Forum with a number of Conference related topics already in place (and you can create your own topics). More conventional means like email or even paper notes work, too. Just forward ideas etc. to me. We are also looking for folks who would like to be more involved in the planning, so consider this an invitation to join the planning effort. We're going to be using contemporary technology to minimize the need for lots of face-to-face meetings.

There will be opportunities for more participation at the Conference itself, we'll need a variety of different people to help. Block your calendar now and join in the fun!

There is an area of our new web site devoted to the Conference:
<http://knightsia.org/sia2008>

Planned Events

Caltrans Carquinez Bridge Dinner Meeting, Thursday, April 19, 2007, 7:30PM

Our second major event of 2007 is a talk by Andy Hope from Caltrans on the historic 1927 bridge between Crockett and Vallejo over the Carquinez Straights. Due to rising costs for dinner meetings, this evening meeting will not be a dinner event. It will be held in the Directors Conference Room of the Historic Central Building, 436 14th Street, in downtown Oakland and will start at 7:30PM. Please RSVP to Tony Meadow or Jay McCauley, so we can give a list to the building security folks. The building is right at the 12th Street BART station and there is ample parking nearby.

When it opened in 1927, this bridge became the first of the major Bay Area bridges. It's opening was overshadowed by another event that day, Lindberg's flight across the Atlantic. Although it was one of the first bridges anywhere to be built with seismic safety considerations, advances in our understanding of earthquakes and their effects meant that the bridge would have needed very expensive retrofits to meet current standards. It was determined that constructing a new bridge, now the Alfred Zampa Bridge, would be more cost effective, and eventually, the 1927 bridge would be dismantled. This deconstruction is currently happening.

Andy has worked on the HAER documentation of the 1927 bridge and will be discussing its history. Please join us for what should be a fascinating talk!

Chapter Planning and Work Day, Saturday, March 31, 2007, 10:00-2:00

With our new web site and the upcoming SIA National Conference, it's time to start planning and capturing information about your IA favorites. We'll be meeting at Bear River Software, 436 14th Street, Oakland (same building as the April 19 Carquinez Bridge Talk) at about 10AM. If you have articles or images that we can use, bring them along. Tony Meadow, our host and President of Bear River, has a high-speed scanner, fast internet access and other tools to help collect information. We'll grab a quick lunch and do a short walking tour of the area, which has a number of historic buildings.

Previous Events

USS-POSCO Plant Tour, January 25, 2007

In one of the most successful Chapter events in recent years, a visit to the USS-POSCO steel rolling mill in Pittsburg, CA was held on January 25, 2007. Special thanks to Chapter President Tony Meadow for arranging the visit, and to UPI staff members Rod Simpson and Jim Carthew for a fascinating tour of this state-of-the-art plant!

We were scared about the traffic (rightly so!) in the area, so arranged to meet before the plant tour at the Pittsburg Historical Society. They had dug into their archives and had a lot of material about the plant, and other industries available for our members and friends to view. The town of Pittsburg hasn't, yet, been as completely developed as some of the communities in the area, so has a delightful, quaint downtown along Railroad Avenue leading to the waterfront. Worth a stroll if you're ever in the area! The Museum is in a building that was built in 1926 by Coast County Gas & Electric, then later became home of the Pittsburg's Post-Dispatch. There are other buildings along Railroad Avenue with lovely terracotta work, including the California Theater. Hopefully, some other members took pictures (HINT!).

We got to tour the eclectic Museum on our own, then had a talk by Don Carpenello on the rich industrial history of the area. This set the scene quite well for the short drive over to the UPI site.

It took a while for the caravan to get all signed in, but we eventually made our way to the plant offices. Rod and Jim gave us an introduction to the history of the site and the current production there. Of particular note were some old ink on linen engineering drawings from previous products built at the site. These completely captivated us! A few of these are on the Chapter web site.

This is a steel finishing mill. Coils of steel come into the plant via ship from Korea. One interesting aspect is the efforts made to control air pollution from the ships by employing advanced catalytic converter technology as they near the Coast and proceed to the plant. The plant keeps about a 30 day supply of coiled steel. The plant is highly automated and operates continuously 24x7. As the next coil is processed, it is welded on to the end of the previous coil, so the ribbon of steel is continuous. At the end of the rolling mill, automated machinery cuts off the ribbon to the desired length as it is put into another coil. Much of the production is used for sheet metal for buildings (air ducts, etc.) so is hot dipped galvanized. Other production is destined for tin cans, so is plated at the plant. Alas, company rules prevented taking pictures at the plant, so you'll just have to use your imagination.

Several of us proceeded over to Humphrey's, a restaurant on the Antioch waterfront named after the wayward whale that made it's way into the Delta some years ago, for a lively meal.

Thanks to all for what was a wonderful kickoff to 2007!


The New Chapter Web Site, <http://knightsia.org>

By Jay McCauley

First, a great big THANKS to Don Durfee at SIA Headquarters for supporting the Chapter web site for the last several years. When I left SGI, ending the free support of the original web site, hosting was prohibitively expensive for a small organization like the Chapter, so the support from Don was a great help. In the last couple years, hosting costs have dropped dramatically, while new features from the open source community (i.e. free software) continue to emerge. So, in late December, Tony and I decided to migrate the Chapter web site to a new hosting service, and to start the process of redoing the look of the site and add features to it.

The Chapter was one of the first to have a web site, a simple version went live in 1997. The last time we did major work on the basic look of the site was 1999, an eternity for web sites.

One of the new features is a forum, <http://knightsia.org/smf>, in which you can post items of interest to the membership (you have to register first), including events on the calendar. Anyone can read material on the Forum, no registration is required for reading. The forum automatically supports an RSS feed of the postings. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a mechanism for informing you of changes to web sites, so you don't have to constantly visit them to see what's new. ISP "dashboards", like My Yahoo!, allow you to put your own favor-

ite RSS feeds on them. There is a posting in the forum on how to use the forum RSS feed. There is also an RSS feed for the main site, click on the this icon:  (the mechanisms differ by which browser you are using).

There are lots of other possible features, such as a wiki, survey packages, content management systems, etc. that could be installed. If you have ideas about how to improve the site, please contact me.

Since the site is now much easier to update, there will be more frequent updates. We will still publish the Newsletter in hard copy, but will be moving towards electronic distribution to cope with rising postage and reproduction costs. As before the move, the web site will contain more content than the newsletter, e.g. color images, active links to other sites. Where timely new content is created on the web site, it will be incorporated into the next Newsletter.

For the hard core techies (gee, am I the only one...) the site was constructed entirely with open source tools and designs. The Aptana and NVU tools were both used, sometimes simultaneously. The basic structure comes from a template design from openwebdesign.org. FileZilla was used to load content into the site, though both Aptana and NVU have their own automated ways to do this.

Notes and Tidbits

Exif and Geocoding

By Jay McCauley

“What the heck is this about?!”

Digital cameras capture quite a bit of information about each picture you take. This information includes:

- Time and date
- Camera settings including shutter speed, aperture, metering mode and effective film speed
- Thumbnail of the image

This information is stored in the image file in a format called Exchangeable Image File Format or Exif.

Exif is very flexible, and allows information to be added or changed, usually by image manipulation programs like Adobe Photoshop®. There are lots of other Exif software tools available. It is common for professional photographers to add copyright information to the Exif data for the image, for example.

“Where was that taken?”

Exif has definitions for optional location data expressed as geographic coordinates, latitude and longitude. Specifying these for an image is referred to a “geocoding”. (Geocoding is a general term for specifying the location of something, e.g. geocode an address.) Until

fairly recently, one had geocode images manually, but with new technology, this is becoming automatic. High-end cell phones equipped with both cameras and Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) receivers can automatically geocode the images that they capture. Sony has introduced a device, GPS-CS1, a small GPS receiver that comes with a Windows™ utility to geocode photos automatically. This works by matching the time the image was captured to the location captured by the GPS-CS1 at that time. This can also be done with any GPS receiver and an open source software package, gpsphoto, written in PERL. (Installation of this is fairly hard, I can help if you're interested.)

Once you have geocoded pictures, they can be located on maps. The popular Flickr™ photo-sharing site recently added geocoding support. There are lots of other web sites supporting geocoded images for various special purposes.

There are, of course, some limitations. Typical consumer-grade GPS receivers have an accuracy of about 10-20 feet, which is an inherent characteristic of the GPS system. This is probably not an issue for most recreational uses. More serious is the fact that GPS receivers don't operate indoors, or under dense tree cover. (The water in the leaves attenuates the signals.) They also don't work well in deep canyons, including those created by urban high rises, as the GPS receiver can't "see" the necessary three satellites (a fourth needs to be visible for best accuracy).

Happy geocoding!

Book Review: *The Ghost Map* by Steven Johnson

Reviewed by Jay McCauley

(from the dust jacket) *It is the summer of 1854. Cholera has seized London with unprecedented intensity... lacking the infrastructure necessary to support its dense population – garbage collection, clean water, sewers – the city has become a perfect breeding ground for a terrifying disease than no one knows how to cure.*

This is a fascinating book weaving history, medicine, epidemiology, civil engineering, urban planning, and cartography into a rich detective story. Two men, Rev. Henry Whitehead and Dr. John Snow decided to find out why so many people in a small area were dieing of cholera. Against great official skepticism, they followed what we'd today call a multi-disciplinary approach which lead to a single water pump as the source of the disease. A key part of the work was the creation of a map by Snow showing the locations of all the victims and an analysis of where they got drinking water.

The work ultimately lead to the construction of the first interceptor sewers in London to divert the flow of waste water past the city, and the creation of the rest of the infrastructure that makes modern cities possible.

I'm a big fan of maps and novel uses for them. Snow's map was the first time maps were used in this way. Johnson also discusses how geocoded inputs from the public, e.g. a restaurant review tied to its

location and visible on a map on your Treo™, are changing how we live and work.

Riverhead Books, New York, 2006, ISBN 1-59448-925-4

New Publications from Arcadia Publishing

By Tony Meadow

If you go to any bookstore or museum you must have seen sepia-toned volumes from Arcadia Publishing, all of uniform size (6.5" x 8.5"), with the same number of pages (128), and the same price (\$19.99). They offer several thousand books in the following series: Images of America, Postcard History, Images of Rail, Black America, Then and Now, and yet others. Arcadia has made local history much more visible, making it easier for authors to publish volumes on local history. Arcadia Publishing has become the Microsoft of local history publishing... or is it the Starbucks of local history?

Their web site is located at <http://www.arcadiapublishing.com/>

There are several recent volumes of interest to our members. Check them out!

"Sutter Creek, California" was written by Kimberly Wooten and our very own board member R. Scott Baxter. The front cover is a photo of the Knight Foundry. ISBN 0-7385-4686-0.

"Amador County" by John Poultney and the Amador County Archives. ISBN 0-7385-4701-8.

"Selections from the Oakland Tribune" by Annalee Allen who spent a lot of time in the Oakland Trib's morgue to locate interesting photos that were published by the Oakland Tribune. ISBN 0-7385-4678-X.

"Oakland" (Postcard History Series) by Annalee Allen who selected 230 postcard images of my hometown. ISBN 0-7385-3014-X.

My personal favorites of these many books are by John Charles Anicic Jr. who has written two volumes so far and is already at work on others. John's books are "Kaiser Steel, Fontana" (ISBN 0-7385-4650-X) and "Fontana" (ISBN 0-7385-2900-1). John has been very involved in trying to preserve the local history of Fontana and nearby cities. John is president of the Fontana Heritage Museum Association which is trying to create a museum that covers the history of Fontana including Kaiser Steel.

Other local volumes of interest include:

"Pittsburg" by Marti Aiello (ISBN 0738529044)

"Al Zampa and the Bay Area Bridges" by John V. Robinson (ISBN 0738529966)

"Emeryville" by the Emeryville Historical Society (ISBN 0-7385-3006-9)

"The Bay Bridge" by Paul C. Trimble, John C. Alioto Jr. (ISBN 0738529702)

"Northwestern Pacific Railroad", Fred Codoni, Paul C. Trimble, Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society (ISBN 0738531219)

"Richmond" by Donald Bastin (ISBN 0738528587)

"Niles Canyon" by Henry Luna and the Pacific Locomotive Association (ISBN 0738529834)

"New Almaden" by Michael Boulland and Arthur Boudreault (ISBN 0738531316)

"World War II Shipyards by the Bay" by Nicholas A. Veronico (ISBN 0738547174)

"The Key System: San Francisco and the Eastshore Empire" by Walter Rice and Emiliano Echeverria (ISBN 0738547220)

To find more interesting volumes use the catalog search feature on their web site. Try "search by theme" and select from these values: Aviation, Canals, Corporate, Industrial, Maritime, Railroads, or Transportation.

I've talked with a couple of authors who have written books published by Arcadia. From what I've heard they're a reasonable publisher to work with. If you're interested in writing a local history book you might want to consider working with Arcadia. For more details go to

<http://www.arcadiapublishing.com/publish.html>.

Oakland Heritage Alliance – Walks & Talks

The Oakland Heritage Alliance (OHA) sponsors a number of activities that might be of interest to Chapter members. In the coming summer (July to September) they will be sponsoring a series of guided walks. Quoting from last year's brochure:

OHA's summer walks explore the city's natural, social and cultural history, diverse neighborhoods and architectural styles.

Some of the walks from 2006 with an IA interest included:

- Uptown Art Deco
- Oakland's Cable Railways
- Waterfront Warehouse District
- Oakland's Walkways and Streetcar Heritage

The 2007 schedule should be coming out in the next couple months. Check the OHA web site <http://oaklandheritage.org> for details

OHA also sponsors the *Chapel of the Chimes Lectures*, at 7:30 on the second Thursday of the month. These are in the Julia Morgan designed Chapel of the Chimes at the end of Piedmont Avenue in Oakland. The building is inspired by gothic cathedrals, and is worth a visit on its own (tours are by appointment, check their web site: http://www.lifemarkgroup.com/oakland/special_events.asp) The lectures cover a wide range of topics and are currently scheduled through June 2007.

Software Review: Adobe Photoshop® Elements 5.0

By Jay McCauley

Adobe Photoshop Elements brought the most useful features from Photoshop into a consumer product. The product became the best selling consumer photo-editing package on the market. The 5.0 version came out in late 2006, and is worth considering as an upgrade. 5.0 automates a number of common tasks, such as red-eye elimination, skin tone adjustments, lighting and image sharpening. 5.0 retains the full editor functions from previous versions. These include the image layer functions that are the basis for sophisticated processing of complex images. 5.0 also has new features for doing things with photos, including organizing features and tools to create things like greeting cards and scrapbook pages incorporating photos. It can create Flash® animations for web sites.

Many newer systems have dual-core processors. Photoshop Elements 5.0 makes use of this feature to speed up certain CPU intensive operations.

I'm not a "power user" but for the tasks that I do in Photoshop, 5.0 is a noticeable improvement over the 1.0 version I had been using. It seems faster, but that's quite subjective. I like the ease of doing the most common tasks, while allowing you to do more sophisticated things.

Adobe offers a 30-day free trial, so give it a spin:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshopelwin/tryout.html>

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In 2006, the Chapter Board voted to simplify the dues structure to \$10 per year. A few members had renewed at the old rates, and their membership is being extended through 2008.

To join the Chapter, please send a check or money order (made out to the Samuel Knight Chapter) to the Chapter Treasurer. We'd also love to know about your interests, skills, etc. that might be part of a future Chapter event. We encourage Chapter members to join the National SIA.