

TRINIDAD MUSEUM SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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'EXPLORING OUR HISTORY'

1995

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

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TRINIDAD CHAMBER of COMMERCE ORIGINS:

By: Glenn Saunders

In 1953, Bob & Joellyn Hallmark, and Glenn & Janis Saunders got-together for a potluck dinner in the Hallmark home just above the Trinidad wharf. The purpose was to discuss the feasibility of starting an organization to encourage visitors to the Trinidad area to enjoy the salmon fishing and the natural resources we all enjoy here. The tourist trade would add to the tax base of the city and would help the business community. Much enthusiasm was shown by all the people living in this small, friendly historic town.

A public meeting for local input was held in the Ladies Club ... and the room was packed! From its inception, it was apparent that this was to be an all-encompassing membership including, not only the business community, but school teachers, doctors, dentists, loggers and all neighbors who wanted to help this worthwhile project. Dr. Charles Earl, our local physician, was a speaker, as were Fred Mathis from Bishop Pine Lodge and Harold Daniels from the Modern Garage, to name a few.

About this time, the gun-club that many of the old-timers belonged to was disbanding. They had about \$100 left in their "kitty," and joined-in with their donation to become our opening treasury account. From that group, Dave Zebo, George Collins, Dr. Earl and Al Myers were some of the names put on the membership roll. The name agreed upon for this civic-minded group of men was "Trinidad Improvement Association."
(Please note, I said men.)

In 1954, the Association had grown to the point that we decided to change the name to "Trinidad Chamber of Commerce," complete with By-laws, etc. The first Board of Directors listed the following: President, Frederic R. Mathis; Vice President, Glenn W. Saunders; Secretary-Treasurer, Harold A. Daniels. Board Members were Ervin Hodge, Robert Hallmark, Raymond Hodge, Wallace McLeon, Albert Myers. Many years later, after much discussion, it was agreed to accept "Katy" from the Smokehouse as the first woman Chamber of Commerce member.

One of the first BIG events the Chamber undertook was to sponsor a booth at the "Mardi Gras Carnival" at the Trinidad School held in February of 1955. Under the tutelage of six members of the C.C., a sowbug had been coached to run around a miniature racetrack and dart into one of a number of holes. Which hole, his trainers say, is still a matter of speculation to this day.

In 1956, then Chamber President, Bob Baker, started an annual tradition of sending the President of the U.S. (Dwight D. Eisenhower at that time) a gift from the Trinidad C-of-C ... a Chinook salmon from our local waters. The first salmon (a 39-pounder) was caught and donated by Captain George Collins. This tradition continued for several years.

On March 24, 1957, the first "Trinidad Crab Feed" was held, with 700-lbs of crab being cooked - outside in the rain - in a barrel next to the small crab shack near the Little Trinidad Head ... All you could eat for a dollar!

The crab for this festival was totally donated by our local fishermen. The proceeds went to improving the parking area for visitors down by the Trinidad Bay. This Crab Feed was a BIG success as it was a complete sellout!

As time went by, the amount of crab purchased each year increased to 11,800-lbs, I believe. The potato salad was made from scratch; 1,000 lbs of potatoes, as well as beans. 'Twas no small task to peel the potatoes, cook & peel the eggs, etc. In later years, we made an arrangement with the County Jail Farm (at the airport) to boil the potatoes in exchange for candy and cigarettes for the inmates. This work was supervised by the late "Blackie" Beers, a long-time butcher in the area. The crab was cooked at Katy's Smokehouse until she could no longer handle the volume. It was then moved to Eureka and processed in the Nor-Cal Crab processing plant. Twenty-to-fifty people were on-hand to assist in the cooking and cracking of the crab. This was a saturation point! Crab, due to its scarcity, had increased in price a great deal and the Trinidad Chamber lost quite a few dollars. The crab left over was sold in bags for \$2.00. It was then decided to drop the Crab Feed as a fund raiser.

Next project -- a barbecue pit was built in the ground in back of the Fire Hall. We had several years of Bar-B-Q's, but they didn't attract the crowds like the Crab Feeds did.

Past Chamber of Commerce meetings were quite 'exciting' at times, with more drinking and arguments regarding the 'operation' of the Chamber. The business part was handled at the general dinner meetings. It was then decided to have the major part of Chamber business handled at the Board of Directors meetings, and give Committee Reports at the general dinner meetings to avoid lengthy and heated discussions which sometimes continued until midnight at the bar!

For several years, no matter who was nominated for Chamber Officers by the nominating committee, someone would always jump-up and nominate another candidate from the floor, so it made the process rather interesting and fun. A good way to avoid having to serve a term, was to be nominated by the committee! Almost every one of Trinidad's 'old-timers' has served as Chamber President, at one time or another; namely,

George Collins, Dave Zebo, Terry Huff, Don Raich, Glenn Saunders, Tom Odom, Bob Hallmark and Tom Richardson.

In early 1969, Bob Hallmark began training his Dungeness crab "Hezeta Rapido Tsurau" in the art of racing! Under the sponsorship of the Chamber, the talented crab was entered as Humboldt County's entry in the famous "Crab Races" held annually in Crescent City. No one seems to recall the results of this competition, but the crab race was continued for the duration of this annual event.

Approximately 15-yrs ago, the Trinidad C-of- had declined to only a few active members. A meeting was held to see what could be done. It was decided to re-group and re-activate our Chamber through their stomachs and their pocketbooks!

Sam Merryman offered the use of his Beach House at no charge. I offered New York steaks at cost, and the late Marie Hannon offered to cook, serve the dinner and clean-up, at a total cost of \$3.00 per member at this dinner! This re-grouping did bring the Chamber around to its present active membership.

The first "Ladies Night" was held on June 20, 1958, in the Trinidad Town Hall to show appreciation to the wives of the members for all their support and assistance throughout the year. It was later changed to a "Christmas Party," which is still held annually. It has become one of the most festive of all the social events sponsored by the Chamber.

Today, the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce continues to be the largest and most active of local organizations. In addition to supporting the business community, it also is a major contributor to many other local groups, including Trinidad School, sports events, and other worthwhile endeavors in the Greater Trinidad Area.

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MEMBERS . . . Please **LOOK** at the date on your mailing label. Are you due for renewal in October? An addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

If you are past-due, we hope you will renew your membership at this time. "Thank you" for your continued support of T-M-S.