

# TRINIDAD MUSEUM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

400 Janis Court

P.O. Box 1126

Trinidad, CA 95570

trinidadmuseum.org

Contributors: Patti Fleschner, Alexandra Cox, Jim & Virginia Waters & Shoshoni Gensaw-Hostler

## New Collection In the Native American Room



Newly-elected Trinidad Museum Society Board Member Shoshoni Gensaw-Hostler is shown above installing the New Collection Exhibit in the Native American Room. The exhibit includes her medicine woman Flicker Feather Dress and mink hair ties. Also shown in the exhibit are a carved eel hook and men's head dress made by her brother James Gensaw as well as a Lena McCovey baby basket and 46 Yurok and Karuk cooking, eating, trinket and work baskets, covered bottles and gambling and cooking trays. Curators of the exhibit are Shoshoni Gensaw-Hostler, Ron Johnson and Alexandra Cox.

Shoshoni Gensaw-Hostler was guest speaker at the May 2022 Annual Meeting. She explained her technique in creating 24 dresses and other regalia, including hangers, hair ties, and shell jewelry. Docents Maggie McCune and Susan Wagner are shown speaking with Shoshoni in photo on right. (Ingrid Bailey is in background at refreshment table.)

Shoshoni comes from a traditionalist Yurok family with some Tolowa and Karuk heritage. Her brother James is a master carver and teaches Yurok language. She is one of the most outstanding young regalia makers of her generation. She has an MA in Psychology with an emphasis in Counseling from HSU. She is the Yurok Tribe Suicide Prevention Manager. She also serves on the Stanford ECHO (a medical teaching program) Leadership Team. Shoshoni lives in Hoopa with her husband, David Michael Hostler, and their children Sofia (16), Oliva (10), Kautia (7), and David (6).

## Notable Trinidad Sculptors: Bruno Groth & Robert Gilkerson

### Bruno Groth (1905 – 1992)

Bruno Groth was born in 1905 in Stolp, Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1923. A renowned artist of his day, Groth lived the most of his life in Humboldt County. His work was included in many major exhibitions, both national and international, and select pieces were acquired for the collections of world class museums such as the Hirshhorn Museum. Bruno Groth's work has been shown at the Brussels World Fair in 1957, and in such places as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Much of his work was inspired by nature, life and death.

Groth was prolific during his lifetime: he produced more than 400 sculptures in over 60 years of creativity. He additionally found time to design and build several of his homes, one of which is here in Trinidad. He was technically very skilled in a variety of materials including ceramics, wood, bronze, and painted metals. He even built his own foundry in order to cast his pieces. His technical skill was such that after losing four fingers on his right hand in an accident in 1978 he continued his productivity and, indeed, produced some of his most intricate works.

The scope of his creative vision spread from the real to the abstract. Even over his wide range of media and mode of expression, the quality of his work was consistently high. He never repeated the theme of a successful exhibit, preferring to move on to his next creations even though his last ones were highly successful. As a result, each exhibition was unique and independent.

Groth, who was interested in Asian philosophy, explained, "Universal Being expresses itself in its highest form on this earth in man. Don't you feel that? Hence, this is the family of man, continuously bringing forth life until he reaches his highest point - of realizing within himself that he is an immortal being - that he is part of what has always been. In this parcel of divisibility he manifests his present form in evolution, but the potentiality of his being, having reached this high, knows no limit. Sages have expressed this as 'Cosmic Consciousness,' I have tried to express my Metaphysics in this form" - Bruno Groth.

Bruno's wife, the late Nita Groth, and his children, Nina and David Groth, who both reside in Trinidad, also are internationally known and respected artists.

### Robert Gilkerson (1922 – 2008)

Encyclopedia Britannica defines Outsider Art (aka Folk Art) as "Any work of art produced by an untrained idiosyncratic artist who is typically unconnected to the conventional art world." According to the Hallie Ford Museum of Art (Willamette University) "From the 1940s on, there emerged a large, identifiable group of self-taught artists who became notable and collectable - outsider artists in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. They tended to live in rural parts of the United States and lacked formal education. Most started their artistic careers late in life and often used inexpensive and ordinary materials - whatever was available and handy - to create their artwork."

The above descriptions match Robert Gilkerson perfectly. Bruce Pettit, exhibit curator, met him in the late seventies while he was living on Stagecoach Road. At that time, he was constructing whimsical figures out of driftwood collected from Trinidad beaches. His use of other found objects expanded, as well as his subject matter over the years to include articulated objects. In 1985 his work was included in a show at the Jamison/Thomas Gallery in Portland and his work caught the eye of Willem Volkersz, a noted folk artist and collector. Mr. Volkersz purchased "Stud Draw" and included it in a National tour titled "Strange and Wonderful American Folk Art from the Willem and Diane Volkersz Collection." The Volkersz collection of folk art is considered the finest in the United States. In Volkersz's interview with Gilkerson in 1985 Gilkerson stated that at that time he had made 1,242 sculptures that were numbered and "Some of it (his work) was absolutely ridiculous...If you'd seen all the work that I've ever made, you'd see how ridiculous some of it is, but wherever you go, everybody'll get a laugh." Well Bruce Pettit certainly does and hopes you do as well. Curators: Bruce Pettit, Alexandra Cox, and Patti Fleschner



Nina Groth, artist and daughter of notable Trinidad sculptor Bruno Groth, restored his circa 1960s metal sculpture *Snow Owl*, a gift to Trinidad Museum from Bruce Pettit, in anticipation of the "Notable Trinidad Artists: Groth & Gilkerson" exhibit.

## Notable Trinidad Sculptors: Bruno Groth & Robert Gilkerson



Bruce Pettit in front of Bruno Groth sculptures.



Robert Gilkerson Folk Art creations

Thanks to Morris Graves Museum of Art and the Clarke Historical Museum for contributing to this exhibit.

## Our Museum Pond – A Refuge for Amphibian



Frogs and salamanders are threatened all over the world. Even a small artificial pond can help them. Their delicate skins must be kept wet. Plants and twigs in the pond provide places to lay their eggs and protection for the tadpoles. Dense ground covers and leaf litter around the pond hide the adults from predators and drying and grow the tiny animals that the young frogs eat. In our community, where the natural ponds have been destroyed, the Museum pond helps us compensate the remaining amphibians.



The most conspicuous frogs in our ponds are **Pacific chorus frogs** (*Pseudacris regilla*). (They used to be called “tree frogs”, but their biology, behavior, and genetics make it clear that they are chorus frogs.) Adults are a couple of inches long, bright leaf-green or with delicate patches of browns or grays. Males gather around the pond and sing loudly for weeks, the familiar “ribbet” or “ruckit” call, claiming their little patch of margin, especially when a female comes into the pond. After mating, she lays golfball-sized lumps of soft jelly with little black eggs inside, attached to submerged stems and twigs. They hatch quickly and must eat and grow rapidly to become tiny froglets before the pond dries up. They survive our long dry season in the leaf-litter and duff and other moist places.



Less conspicuous and less abundant are the **red-legged frogs** (*Rana aurora*), 3-4 inches long, the color of redwood bark and needles on the back, suffused with beautiful pinks on the underside.

They travel widely during the dry season, and you can see them along trailsides as they hop away to disappear into the plant cover. The males come into the pond around Christmastime, where they sing quietly for a couple of weeks, a gentle pulsating sound (“rk-rk-rk”) that travels both in air and under water. If you sit quietly for a time, you may hear the call and see the ripples it makes in the surface of the water. Frog songs, like bird songs, have the dual function of warding off other males and attracting females, and when the red-legged frogs are singing they often approach each other and grapple. Eggs are laid on sticks in softball-sized masses of soft jelly; each egg has its own capsule, giving the mass a surface of rounded bumps. (We think that this is one of the most beautiful frogs in North America. What a privilege to live where they do and to know that our Museum pond contributes to their survival.)

Frog tadpoles are most wonderful creatures. Their gills form a dense sieve which filters tiny particles of suspended food out of the water. Many animals do this, but tadpoles can make their own suspended particles, by nibbling and chopping and scraping larger objects like submerged leaves or small carcasses. They have the best of both worlds.



Salamanders are rarer and less conspicuous than frogs. We occasionally see the **northwestern salamander** (*Ambystoma gracile*), purplish or chocolate-colored and about the size and shape of a stocky wiener with legs. It lives in duff, slipping quietly into the pond in early spring to lay egg masses much like those of red-legged frogs but smoother, without the bumpy surface. Each individual egg capsule is lined with chlorophyll-green symbiotic algae: most unusual, and distinctive. (Continued on next pg.)

Our Museum pond also supports various native semiaquatic plants, a diversity of insects and little crustaceans, and doubtless many of the bacteria, fungi, and algae on whom the rest of earthly life depends. Though the pond looks humble, especially in summer, we can be proud of it and the small but significant contribution it makes to the continued survival of all these our related creatures.

Jim Waters

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## Call for Garden Volunteers



The significant spring rains have our garden volunteers struggling to keep up with rampant growth. Bring a few hand tools and join us Sunday from 10 to noon, even if you can only come once or twice, to help keep the garden looking great! Email Ingrid Bailey at [ingridhaven@gmail.com](mailto:ingridhaven@gmail.com) or Mary Kline at [humboldtmary@gmail.com](mailto:humboldtmary@gmail.com) for details.



Garden Volunteers: Mary Spinas Kline, Jill Mefford and Ingrid Bailey

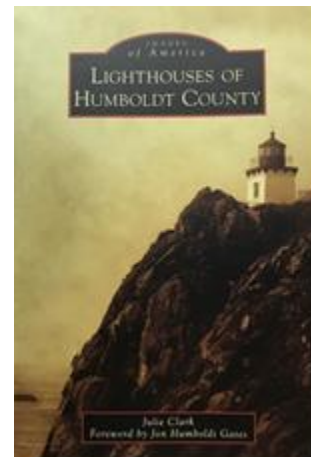
## Recent Trinidad News



Artist and lighthouse docent Matthew Dodge assisted with polishing Connie Butler's *Grey Whale and Calf* recently. Connie died on March 24, 2022 but her generous spirit and artistic legacy live on.

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*Lighthouses of Humboldt County* was written last year by Julie Clark, park ranger for the Bureau of Land Management, steward of the land on which the 1871 Trinidad Lighthouse rests. The book celebrates maritime history and the lighthouses built at Table Bluff, Cape Mendocino, Punta Gorda and Trinidad, the only lighthouse currently in operation today. Copies are for sale at Trinidad Museum. Trinidad Head Lighthouse is open on the first Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management-California Coastal National Monument, the Trinidad Rancheria and Trinidad Museum Society volunteer docents.



## Recent Donations to Museum Collection: Kupelian Donation

David Hunter Walker Sr. of Damascus, Oregon and his daughter, Jenni Kupelian of Vancouver, Washington, are pictured with Jenni's daughter, Audrey, in front of the 1871 Trinidad Head Lighthouse exhibit. David, Jenni and their family donated the lighthouse clock belonging to Capt. Fred and Josephine Harrington, who served at the lighthouse from 1888-1916, along with Fred's discharge certificate. The family has many connections to important Humboldt County and Trinidad lighthouse families, including Chief Kiwelata (David's great, great great grandfather), Josephine Beach (Kiwelata's daughter), Billy Beach (Josephine's son), Milton Hunter (Fred and Josephine Harrington's grandson) and LaDortha Beach Hunter (Billy's daughter), and Gary and Nolan Hunter (Milton and LaDortha's sons). The 1878 clock, made by Ansonia Clock Co., Brooklyn NY, may have been a wedding present to the Harringtons.



Honorable Discharge certificate for Fred Harrington recognizing his December 1864 – May 1866 service in the Regiment of California Volunteers.

## Recent Donations to Museum Collection: Joanne Hagood Martin's Donation

TMS Board Member Mary Spinns Kline accepts Joanne Hagood Martin's recent gift of two circa 1920 Trinidad watercolor paintings (artist unknown) of Trinidad Head shown from Luffenholtz Beach and the coast. Joanne lives in Auburn, Washington but her family has a century of ties to the Trinidad-Orick area.





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**Trinidad Museum Society\* Support**

If you haven't already joined the Trinidad Museum Society, we encourage you to do so. Our membership year, like our fiscal year, runs from February 1 to January 31.

Memberships

- \$35 Member       \$50 Sponsor       \$100 Patron       \$250 Benefactor  
 \$1,000 Lifetime membership

Special Gifts

In addition to becoming a member of the Trinidad Museum Society, we hope you'll consider giving a gift to recognize someone special or to support some aspect of the Museum.

- Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  Native Plant Garden     Exhibits     Building Maintenance  
 In memory of \_\_\_\_\_     In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Museum Directors: Patti Fleschner, president ([baycity@sonic.net](mailto:baycity@sonic.net) or 707-677-3816); Scott Baker, vice-president; Dennis Koutouzou, treasurer; Virginia Waters, Secretary; Jill Mefford, Matthew Marshall, Jim Webb, Mary Spinas Kline, Shoshoni Gensaw-Hostler

\*Trinidad Museum Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, tax ID# 68-0042645