

# Martinez Historical Society

1005 Escobar Street - Martinez, CA 94553 (925) 228-8160



## Martinez Museum

1005 Escobar Street

Built as home and office of Dr. John S. Moore in 1890. Known as the Borland House after 1900 when Moore's daughter Emma and her husband, James H. Borland, owned it. Rented to businesses including a palm reader, in the 1930s. Acquired by the Contra Costa Community College District in 1948 and used for administrative offices until 1973. Became the Museum of the Martinez Historical Society in June of 1976.

## Sharkey Square

Court Street between Main & Escobar

Street widening created area dedicated as Sharkey Square in October of 1954 to honor State Sen. William R. Sharkey, owner, publisher and editor of the Contra Costa Gazette for 50 years. As a legislator, he helped establish the California State Park System and saved Mt. Diablo from development.

**Plaque in the Square reads** - Sharkey Square, dedicated in memory of Will R. Sharkey 1879 - 1948. Publisher, Legislator, and Conservationist.



## Finance Building

625 Court Street

On the Federal Register of Historic Places, this was built in 1901 to replace the County's first Court House (1855-56). The dome, used during World War II for civil defense aircraft spotting, was removed in 1957 for earthquake safety. The building was converted into the County Finance Building in the 1960s as the courts moved into the Hall of Records building.



## Contra Costa County Court House

725 Court Street

Originally built as the County Hall of Records in 1931, it began housing the County Superior Court in the 1960s. It is named after State Court of Appeals Justice Wakefield Taylor, a long-time resident of Martinez.



# Justice A.F. Bray Courts

1010 Ward Street

The Justice A.F. Bray Courts Building was dedicated in 1988, to house the additional court rooms needed due to continued county growth. A.F. Bray was a Martinez City Attorney, County Superior Court Judge and a Justice of the California State Court of Appeals for many years.



# Martinez Post Office

815 Court Street

First Post Office Established in 1851 on land purchased by the federal government. The 4<sup>th</sup> post office building to serve the city, the building was constructed in 1937 using funds from the Public Services Building division of the Treasury Department. The mural on the south wall was painted by prominent early 20<sup>th</sup> century artist, Maynard Dixon and his wife, Edith Hamlin. This building is on the Federal Register of Historic Places.



# Veteran's Memorial Hall

930 Ward Street

One of several built in cities across the county in the 1920s in memory of the 76 Contra Costa County servicemen and women who lost their lives in World War I and to honor all veterans of all wars the United States has fought.

***Martinez Historical Society Plaque #10 Reads:*** A memorial to the 76 servicemen who died in World War One. Commissioned by County Board of Supervisors in 1923 on Former S. Blum Barn Property. Now commemorates the memory of all who served in all wars.



# Martinez Library

740 Court Street

The Martinez Branch of the Contra Costa Library system at the corner of Ward and Court Street opened in 1941. The ♦Art Deco Moderne♦ building is one of three buildings on Court Street to be listed on the Federal Register of Historic Places but it is not the first building in town to house a library. Renovated in 2010 from bond issue funds, its electrical infrastructure was upgraded to handle modern technology and the basement was remodeled to provide a Friends of the Martinez Library Book Room for fund-raising and staff offices. But its historic interior was retained with portraits of library patrons Dr. John and Louisiana Strentzel prominently displayed.

However, Martinez had a public library or ♦Free Reading Room♦ 30 years before the County system was established in 1913. A small group of Martinez women formed a reading society and opened a public reading room at 620 Main Street in 1883. Two years later the Martinez Free Reading Room and Library Association was formed. Dues were 25 cents a month for the privilege of borrowing books but anyone could read in the library itself for no charge. The location was owned by Dr. John Strentzel who charged the Association nothing for its use.



In 1896, Dr Strentzel♦s widow and their daughter (Mrs. John Muir), donated a parcel of land at the corner of Estudillo and Main Street (now adjacent to the City Plaza) to the Library Association. A new library was built at a cost of \$6,371. 42 years later, Martinez voters passed an \$18,000 bond issue to fund a new library building across from the Martinez Veterans Memorial Building on Ward Street.

***Martinez Historical Society Plaque #18*** commemorates the entire history of the Martinez Library.

## Rankin Building

736 Main Street

Built by Sarah Rankin, widow of James Rankin, Contra Costa County Sheriff from 1885-89 and local businessman, following the 1904 fire which destroyed two complete blocks between Escobar and Ward Streets. Sarah was a ranch wife, mother of 8 and entrepreneur. The complex of 4 storefronts was ♦modernized♦ in the 1950s to keep up with trends in retail architecture. A number of similar ♦remodels♦ downtown have been removed subsequently to highlight Martinez♦ turn-of-the-19th century charm.



***Martinez Historical Society Plaque #5 Reads:*** Built in 1905 by Mrs. James Rankin after fire destroyed two city blocks. Palm Garden Grill, W.G. Reed - Confectioner Stationer, E Pasch - Haberdasher, A. B. Wilson Jeweler & Optician.



## City Hall Apartments

700-716 Main Street

Built in 1914, first apartment house in city with retail stores on ground floor. So named because it was adjacent to the Old City Hall and housed the bachelor firemen. It was one of the first downtown buildings in the last half of the 20th century to be completely renovated in a way that keeps its early 20th century style and architectural features.

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #9 Reads:** Built in 1914... 1st apartment building in Martinez, built during refinery boom. Unique because it sits astride Alhambra Creek, retail stores were on the first floor professional offices and apartments on 2nd floor. Named for City Hall next door 1913 - 1956.

Realignment of the creek was completed in 2000 and it meanders through the plaza next to the building.

## Old Martinez City Hall

Main Street Plaza Parking Lot, located on south side of current plaza.

The city's first hotel, the Hotel de Steward, owned by a black ships cook was built on this site in 1850, and it stood on Ward Street facing Estudillo Street. In 1852, the property was sold to Josiah Sturgis who renamed the hotel, the Alhambra Hotel. Sturgis continued to operate the hotel until his death in 1897. Several years later the city purchased the property and the hotel was demolished in 1912 for a new city hall. The Ward Street side of the building was used as a firehouse.

The property became parking lot #1 after the City Hall building was demolished in 1956. Landscaping and a fountain were added to the front of the parking lot to create a plaza in 1981. Realignment of the creek and redesign of the plaza to stop downtown flooding was completed in 2000.



## Hilson ♦ s

610 Main Street

Site of the first mercantile store in Martinez circa 1852. Capt. Fogg ♦ s general store was sold to Simon Blum in 1854, who owned it until he sold it to the Baer Bros. of San Francisco in 1897. D.L. Hilson bought it in 1913. Three generations of the Hilson family operated the department store until 1991. The Contra Costa Historical Society housed its archival History Center there until 2012. The building is currently being restored as an office and shop site. The sign marking the Martinez Post Office from the late 1800s to 1937 was discovered during the remodeling.



**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #3 Reads:** On this site in 1852, Hiram Fogg began a mercantile store. Operating as 1854 - 1897 Simon Blum and Bro, 1897 - 1912 Baer Bros, 1912 - 1986 Hilsons.



## National Bank of Martinez

659 Main Street

Chartered April 15, 1924, the firm later became the Bank of Italy, later renamed the Bank of America which moved to a new building across Main Street in the late 1940s until it closed in 2014. After hosting a variety of businesses, the site again became a bank in the 1990s

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #8 Reads:** National Bank of Martinez Founded 1924

# Bank of Martinez

634 Ferry Street

Site marked is the location location of the first bank chartered in Contra Costa. From 1893 to 1904 it occupied the site at the northwest corner of Ferry and Main Streets with its entrance facing south on Main Street. Completely destroyed in the devastating fire of 1904 which leveled every building on Ferry and Estudillo between Escobar, Main and Ward Streets, the new building with the main entrance facing east on Ferry St., was ready for its grand reopening in April, 1906 when the San Francisco earthquake struck. Damage was limited to the stone facing accents on the building. Clean-up was quickly completed and the bank reopened in early summer of 1906. Currently Union Bank, it boasts the original marble floors as well as the original safe which survived the disaster although it is no longer used.



**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #4 Reads:** Bank of Martinez Founded on this site - October 7, 1873.



# Hook Building

801 Main Street

Built in 1927 to replace the old Hook building that dates to 1853. This new building housed the James Hotel and Coffee Shop along with various businesses. Now apartments over various businesses. A cigar factory was located on the Ferry Street side where the Hoffman family made widely known Blue Bird Cigars.

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #13 Reads:** Hook Building 1926 Built to replace building destroyed by fire in 1925. Originally built in 1854 by Pioneer & Prominent Landowner William Hook. Occupied by the James Hotel - James Bulger Proprietor until closed in 1979.





## McMahon-Telfer Building

600-610 Ferry Street

Built in 1914, this replaced the Curry Livery Stable and Hall that burned in 1904. The Royal Theatre was upstairs and the upper hall was used for prize fight arenas, dances and traveling shows. Building was restored by McMahon Telfer Trust in 1980's. Received award from the Conference of California Historical Societies for restoration with integrity.

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #7 Reads:** 1862 site of Seely J. Bennett's Livery Stable and Social Hall. Destroyed by fire, 1904. 1913 built by Henry J. Curry with retail and offices, Royal Theatre, the city's first. 1939 building acquired by Mc Mahon Family.

## Southern Pacific Depot and Locomotive

End of Ferry Street

site of original Northern Railway depot built in 1877 by the subsidiary of Central Pacific. In the 1880s both railroads became known as Southern Pacific. In the early years of the 20th century, Alhambra graduates took the train to Berkeley daily to attend their classes at UC. Location of Amtrak depot until the opening of the new station nearby in 2001. The locomotive across the street represents steam trains that passed through in large numbers in the 1880 - 1950 era

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #6 Reads:** First located here April 28, 1876 by Central Pacific RR. First passenger train passed through on September 25, 1877 with Leland Stanford aboard.



**Southern Pacific 1258**



Southern Pacific steam locomotive number 1258 was one of 38 SP built S-12 switch engines. It was one of 6 built in SP's Los Angeles shop's as Los Angeles shops known as job # 8. Weighing nearly 80 tons, and operating at 200 psi steam pressure the 1258 and her sisters were the state of the art of steam efficiency at their time of conception in 1921. Engine 1258 spent most of her life working in the northern California area. Southern Pacific retired all of it's steam power by 1956, and the 1258 sat on the deadline track at Oakland yard waiting the scrapper's torch, when in 1959 she was donated to the City of Martinez as a museum piece. She was moved to Rankin Park

in the hills of Martinez, where she sat until being moved adjacent to the Southern Pacific, now Union Pacific main line at the Martinez Amtrak station in the mid 1980's. She now sits there with her tender, a wooden Santa Fe boxcar, and a Santa Fe caboose. Vandalism took a good part of her features away, but a group of local residents went to work painting her up and today she sits as pretty as she has been in years.

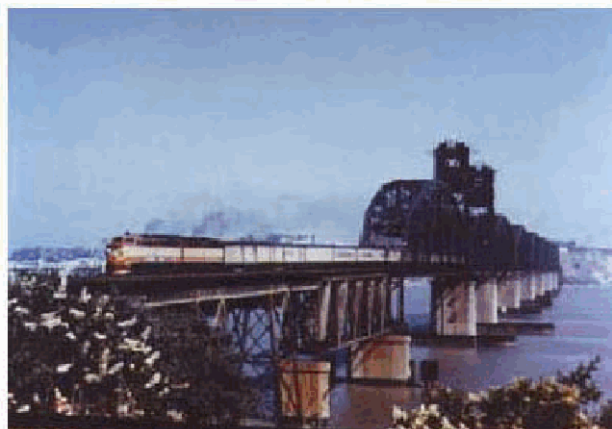


## Southern Pacific Train Bridge

Carquinez Straits

Train bridge completed by Southern Pacific, October 15th, 1930. A large dedication ceremony was held marking the first time in decades that SP transcontinental trains could stop in Martinez rather than being ferried across the Bay to Port Costa.

Tracks are currently owned by Union Pacific and used by Amtrak. It was the longest (5,603ft), heaviest double track span west of the Mississippi River.



## Bergamini Building

624 Ferry Street

Maximillian Bergamini's building dates to 1905 and replaced an earlier building destroyed in the August 1904 fire that leveled the entire block. It was a grocery and general store for many years.

***Martinez Historical Society Plaque #12 Reads:*** Built by Maximillian Bergamini in 1905 to replace grocery and notions store that was leveled in the block-wide fire of August 1904.

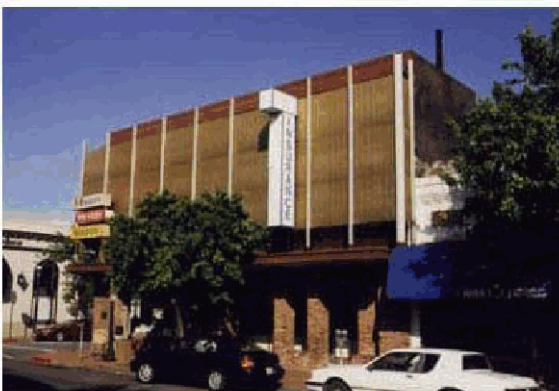
## Bell Telephone Company Building

736 Ferry Street

The telephone was brought to Martinez and the Northern Pacific Railroad depot on Ferry Street in 1881 by James Borland. After several moves a permanent home was sought and after a 1904 fire this property was sold to the telephone company.

Although we know this building as the A.F Bray, Jr. law offices, it started life as the home of the Bell Telephone Company, successor to the Contra Costa Telephone Company of San Francisco in 1881. The grand opening of the originally art deco structure was delayed four months after it was badly damaged by the 1906 earthquake. While the building had been modernized on the outside in the 1950s, the original brick is still attractively apparent on the inside

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #14 Reads:** Built after the Fire of 1904 which razed the entire block. Occupied by Contra Costa Telephone founded in 1881 by J. Borland which was sold to Pacific Bell Telephone company in 1892 with R. Borland as superintendent for 40 years. Offices of Bray and Bray since 1961.



## McNamara - McMahon Building

701 - 707 Main Street

Built in 1906, this building replaced an earlier building that burned in a 1904 fire. It was the location of the Alhambra Meat Market and McMahon Grocery store. For many years from the 1960s until a fire in 2013, the site was occupied by several popular coffee shops including DiMaggio's named for the famous baseball player who was born in Martinez.

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #11 Reads:** Built to replace buildings destroyed in devastating fire of 1904 which destroyed entire block. 701 - McMahon Grocery 707 - Alhambra Meat Market

## Lasell Building

Green and Castro

In 1885, L.M. Lasell opened a general merchandise store in a two story frame building he built on the corner of Castro and Thompson Streets (now Masonic Street). A new brick building was built adjacent to the old building in 1917 at the corner of Castro and Green Streets. It became the largest retail mercantile establishment in the entire county.

Lasell's closed its doors for the last time in 1985.

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #2 Reads:** L.M Lasell Co.  
1885 - 1985.



## Martini Monument

Alhambra Ave, Lasell Parking Lot

Plaque reads "In 1874, Julio Richelieo, Bartender, served up the first Martini when a miner came into his saloon with a fistful of nuggets and asked for something special. He was served a "Martinez Special." After three or four drinks however the "Z" would get very much in the way. The drink consisted of 2/3 gin, 1/3 Vermouth a dash or orange bitters, poured over crushed ice and served with an olive."

Erected by Joaquin Murietta Chapter 13 E Clampus Vitus. Dedicated April 11, 1992.

## Bruncher and Connolly Mortuary

1124 Ferry Street

This building was built in 1927 for Bruncher and Connolly as the first full service mortuary in Martinez.

The late Teamsters Union leader, Jimmy Hoffa, attended the funeral of a local union official here in the 1950s. It was designed to accommodate 100 funerals per year. In 1965 the mortuary closed and the building was sold to the John F. Kennedy University. In 1976 the building was sold to the Patchin family and converted to a school.



**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #15 Reads:** Occupied by Bruncher & Connolly Mortuary 1927 - 1956. Connolly & Taylor, Inc. Mortuary 1956 - 1963. John F. Kennedy University Campus 1965 - 1975. Patchin School 1976 - Present.



## Prosser Building

815 Marina Vista

In 1855, William Jones built a pub on what is now the corner of Ferry and Marina Vista where it would be the first place passengers disembarking the ferry passed by. He lived above the pub with his family. The building was sold to Watkins Prosser in 1891. About 1914 - 1915 the building was moved to its present location. It was then purchased by Dr. Buckman who lived in most of the house and used one or two rooms for his medical practice.

Martinez Historical Society Plaque #16 Reads: Built by William Jones, hotelkeeper 1884 - Bought by W.J. Hough

and became Hough's Saloon 1891. Bought by Watkins Prosser 1915 Moved to present site. Residence of Dr. H.D. Buckman family for many years

# Italian Hotel

822-824 Alhambra Ave

In 1849, Col. William M. Smith, (who had married into the Martinez Family), established the town of Martinez. He hired Thomas A. Brown, son of Elam C. Brown, founder of Lafayette, to survey the area and paid Elam Brown in property including the north and south halves of lots 7 and 8 in Block 30 of the original Martinez Survey.

In 1903 the Brown family heirs sold the property to Leontine Blum for \$10 in gold coin. In 1905, Marco (Michael) Pistochini, his brother Antonio and another relative, P. Pistochini came from San Francisco and purchased the south lot for \$10 from Mrs. and then paid her \$800 for the north lot.

He then built the Italian Hotel and Boarding House which faced on Smith Street (now Alhambra Ave). Marco and Antonio operated the popular hotel/boarding house/restaurant until the early 1930's. The property remained in the Pistochini family until 1944 when it was sold to Maurice and Lillian Fuller. The property was eventually purchased by Jerry Kramer who then set up Jerry's Dental practice in the building.

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque #17 Reads:** Italian Hotel & Boarding House Owned and Operator by The Pistochini Family.

# State Theatre

The State Theatre opened July 2, 1926, and was one of five theaters in Martinez, including the People, Old Novelty, Royal and Avalon. The State Theatre presented four silent movies a week, which were shown between vaudeville acts.

Two fires in 1931 closed the movie house, but it was rebuilt and reopened in 1932, and operated until Thanksgiving Day 1961. It was boarded up in the 1970s, and it was not until the late 1990s that it was purchased by Contra Costa County and remodeled and reopened as the Public Defenders office

**Martinez Historical Society Plaque 19 Reads:**

State Theatre - 800 Ferry Street Designed Art Deco Style by the Reid Brothers architects/San Francisco

Built by John McNamera - 1922

Premier Opening - July 2, 1926

Closed due to fire 1931, reopened 1932, closed 1961

Purchased by Contra Costa County

1998 - Presently the

Contra Costa County Public Defender



## 406 Ward Street

(Ward Street between Alhambra and Berrellessa)

The handsome brick building was constructed in 1925 and housed the DeRose Chevrolet Dealership until the Great Depression caused the owners to close the business in 1933. After being vacant for 3 years during the Depression Era, the building became the home of the John P. Serpa Pontiac/Buick Dealership, the Kaiser-Frazer Dealership, and the Martinez Auto Body Shop. After the body shop relocated in 1981, the building was the home of the Bay Valve Service Engineering business.

### *Martinez Historical Society Plaque 20 Reads:*

406 Ward Street Built by B.F. Ferrario 1925

DeRose Chevrolet Dealership 1925 - 1933 ~ John P. Serpa Pontiac/Buick Dealershi 1936 - 1948 ~ Kaiser-Frazer Dealership 1948 - 1952 ~ Martinez Auto Body Shop 1952 - 1981 ~ Bay Valve Service Engineering, Inc. 1985 ♦ 2008.



## The Martinez Canteen

On Ferry Street next to the Hot Dog Depot and across from the old train station, there is a parking lot. If you look on a post in front of the parking lot, you can read the plaque commemorating the former location of Martinez Citizens Canteen. Here's what it says:

Former site of Martinez Troops in-transit Canteen.

Opened October 17, 1943, and closed February 15, 1946.

World War II

401,322 traveling servicemen and woman, escorts and children, given rest and refreshment. Served by 1,348 volunteer hostesses. Community Supported.

USO Aided.



# The Italian Fishermen Monument



Martinez Marina

The plaque located at the Martinez Marina honors the Italian Commercial Fishermen who fished the local waters from Crockett to Rio Vista. They brought their families here hoping for a better way of life. Families listed in the plaque have descendants who still make Martinez their home. The river was closed to commercial fishing in 1957 by the State of California

Information from  
 ♦ Pioneer Italian Fishermen of Martinez ♦  
 by Katherine ♦ Tina ♦ Davi Collins.

The boat located by the plaque is the type used by the Italian Fishermen in



Local Waters

## Names listed in the Plaque

Aiello, Antinio & Family	Aiello, Francesco & Family
Aiello, Guisepppe & Family	Aiello, Mercurio & Family
Aiello, Vincenzo & Family	Amato, Peter
Balestrieri, Gueseppe	Bellecci, Francesco & Family
Bellecci, John and Salvatore C.	Bellecci, Giovanni & Family
Bruno, Gaetano & Family	Cardinalli, Francesco & Family
Cardinalli, Nino & Family	Ciaramitaro, Francesco
Compagno, Salvatore	Compagno, Salvatore R.
Costanza, Rocco & Family	Davi, Peter B.
Di Maggio, Giuseppe & Family	Di Maggio, Nino Francis
Di Maggio, Salvatore & Family	Drago, Salvatore & Family
Ferrante, Horace	Ferranti, Giuseppe & Family
Ferranti, Peter & Family	Fontanna, Giuseppe & Family
Franchi, Tony & Family	Galli, Salvatore
Giamona, Paul & Family	Gianno, Pietro & Family
LaBello, Vincenzo & Rocco	LiCavoli, Giuseppe
Lucido, Agostino & Family	Lucido, Francesco & Orazio
Lucido, Frank, Paul & Family	Lucido, Q. (Cavillo) & Family
Lucido, Nino Ray & Sal	Lucido, Peppi (Palido) & Family
Lucido, Pietro & Family	Marazzani Family
Marchi, Francesco	Mercurio, Dominic & Sal
Pagnini, Paul	Pellegrini, Luigi & Family
Pezzimenti, Natale & Family	Quontamatteo, Fred Sr & Family
Romeo, Vincent & Family	Rubino, Neno
Russo, Antonio & Family	Russo, Natalie
Russo, Salvatore & Family	Sanfilippo, Francesco
Sansone, Giuseppe & Family	Savaioni, Mario
Scola, Jik & Family	Tarantino, Guiseppe
Troia, Pietro & Family	Vatalie, Nick



**Mailing Address:**

Martinez Historical Society  
P.O. Box 14  
Martinez, CA 94553

**Phone:**

925-228-8160

**E-mail:**

[webmaster@martinezhistory.org](mailto:webmaster@martinezhistory.org)

