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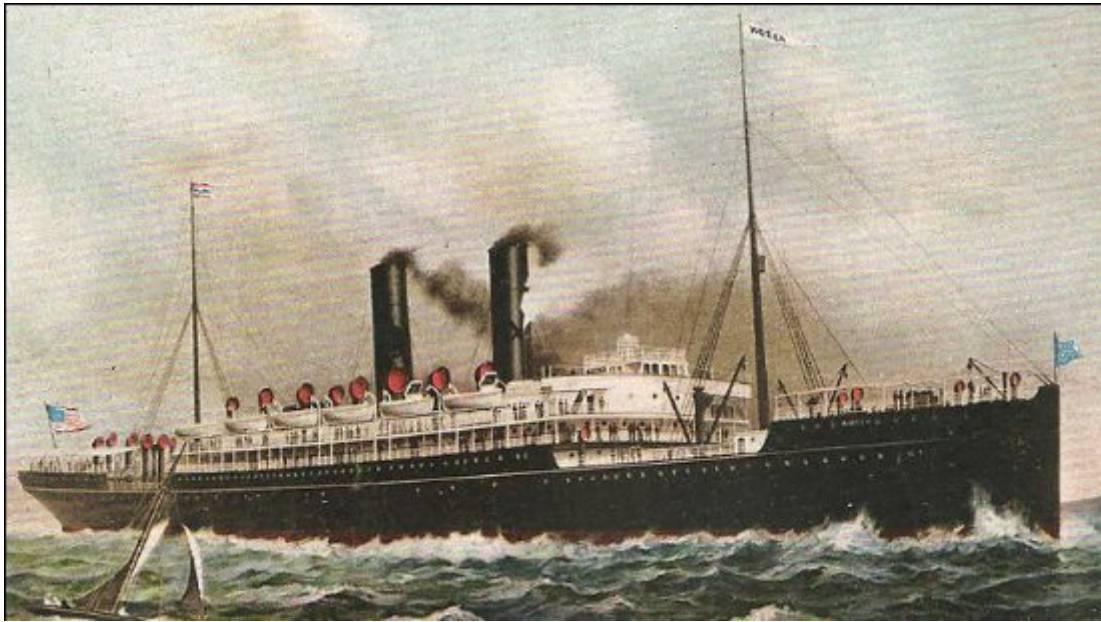
June 29, 2022 • Volume 17 • No. 6



Hello--

In this newsletter, we're featuring one woman's fascinating story of her family's journey from Boston to San Francisco in the mid-1800s that involved two steamships and a train trip across Panama--this was before the Panama Canal was built. For those who watched the Warriors playoffs and missed the Cameo Theater program, we've included some highlights. This is also available on our [YouTube channel](#).

Coming up in July: A deeper dive into the pioneer families of St.



From Boston to San Francisco by Steamship and Train through Panama

This is the story of Carl Lemme, his wife Agnes Siegemann-Lemme, her mother Henriette Siegemann and the Lemme children Agnes (7) and Rudolf (4). The family immigrated from Germany to Boston in 1853. Carl was a goldsmith, and in 1861 they moved to “Golden”-- San Francisco!

Their journey was not across the plains; rather, they traveled by steamship to Panama, took the Panama Railway across the isthmus, then boarded another steamship to travel up the coast of North America to California.

The following is from a letter that Agnes wrote to her relatives:

We left Boston on February 21, 1861. Carl was seasick the first night, the next day the children got sick. I felt badly but did not stay in bed. The others could not get up for eight days so I had plenty to do as the care of the sick is very inadequate on these ships.

At first cold, then it got warmer; by the fifth day it was hot

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in Aspinwall, (now Colon), Panama. Eight days ago we were in winter and now it's summer. Here were coconut trees, with ripe fruit— oranges and bananas in abundance—and fresh sugar cane! Aspinwall is only a little village inhabited by natives. In honor of the day the females put on dresses, but they had no underclothes, and they were barefoot! They seemed to find themselves most beautiful as they paraded in front of our hotel



At 3pm we left on the Panama Railroad

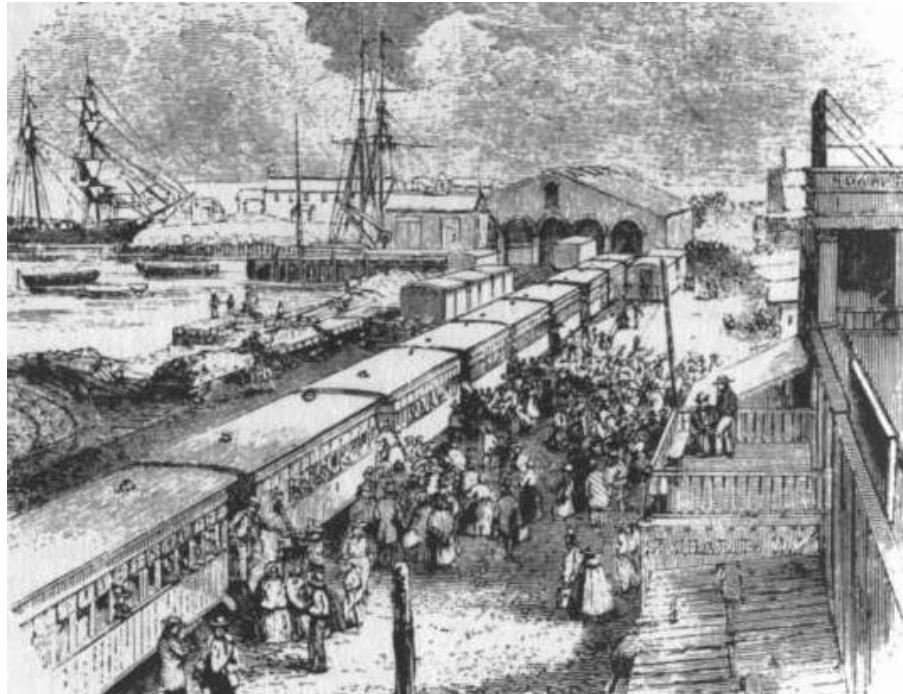
I will never forget the trip across the isthmus. I had never imagined it so beautiful. There is only a narrow single-track railway through a beautiful forest of tropical trees and plants. Where there is a clearing one has the most inspiring view of high mountains and deep valleys. We passed many native villages, some of them were stations for getting coal and water. The women came with baskets of oranges and bananas on their heads, which they sold for ten cents a dozen. We ate sparingly, as it is very dangerous and one can easily contract Panama fever.

In Panama City, we went directly to our ship, the *Golden Age*

Glad to be settled for a while. It became colder and Agnes developed rheumatism and could not be moved without fainting. The doctor gave her strong medicine and was soon able to go on deck. Eight days later we arrived in Acapulco, a poverty-stricken little city almost surrounded by mountains, with continuous sultry heat. We have had beautiful sunsets nearly every day. As our steamer has three decks, we climbed from one to the other in order to enjoy the scene as long as possible!

canoes with torches surrounded our ship, piloted by natives with their brown faces. They were loaded with tasteful arrangements of fruits, flowers, and shells surrounded our ship.

If one wanted to make a purchase, a rope was thrown aboard with a small pouch fastened.



The money was let down and the fruit pulled up. It was a picturesque sight to see the semi-naked figures floating around on the dark water in the brilliant torchlight. Some of them were not dressed at all or very scantily and spoke to us in Spanish. We refreshed ourselves, but I was afraid of getting sick from eating too much!

Passing mountain ranges and trees off the Mexican coast

Day after day we passed along the great mountain ranges and we came so near the Mexican coast that we can see the trees! Here we found the ship which we had to tow. We learned the steamer which had left Panama before us had to remain in Acapulco as one of its shafts had broken. Our ship had to take the “Uncle Sam” in tow, which really slowed us down. The next morning we were greeted by the passengers, happy that our ship pulled them with two enormous ropes toward San Francisco.

On March 19, 1861 we neared the beautiful passage into San Francisco with lovely weather not often seen--a splendid day for our arrival. There is probably no harbor more beautifully located than

ship tried to come ashore as he entered so a tremendous crowd at the landing stage. A short time later the whole ship's passengers had separated.

With a hearty kiss for you,
Closes your Agnes

P.S. In 1873 Charles & Agnes Lemme bought 250 acres on Spring Mountain and started a winery. They called it "La Perla".

A Quick History Lesson on the Panama Connection



In 1848 a charter was granted to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company to deliver mail between the U.S. and Panama. They built three steamships to deliver mail between New York, Panama and San Francisco. The Lemme family boarded the Panama Railroad that connected the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, then boarded a second steamship for the final leg of their journey up the coast to San Francisco.



Those seeking their fortunes took the Panama Railroad route rather than going overland. This brought a building boom to the area--new hotels, a station house, etc.

Highlights of June's "Cathy Buck and the History of the Cameo Theater" Program

St. Helena's movie theater history dates back to 1909 when Joe Galewsky and Julius Goodman started the G&G Theater in St. Helena's Turnverein Hall--now Lyman Park! By 1913, the G&G Theatre could accommodate an audience of 400 with 150 opera chairs. In 1916, the theater would undergo one of its many name changes and renovations. It became the Liberty Theater.

The Liberty Theater became the Roxy

John and Angie Aquila bought the business in October 1953. More extensive renovations followed. The Roxy closed again in 1976 with a remodeling that

included a new façade, projector, screen and snack bar. Seating was reduced from 370 to 180 seats. In 1979, new owner Paul Gartin renamed it the Liberty Theater.

In 1984, Gartin and



his group established the Napa Valley Film Festival. In 1986, the first Film Festival opened. The Liberty Theater closed indefinitely, until 1988, when Michael and Susan Rada took over, investing \$30,000 in new improvements.

A gathering place for young people

The Radas sold the business to Silver Screen Amusements of Santa Rosa and Corey Wing (22) became the new manager. The site became a gathering place for the community's young people--mostly high-

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over the lease, renovated and reopened in 1997.

The Cameo was ultimately leased to Cathy Buck and Shawn LaRue of St. Helena in 2008. Cathy Buck

assumed the lease in 2008 and has implemented a number of exciting programs, including Tuesday Film Class, bring-your-own-bowl popcorn, kid-friendly workshops, pre-release screenings, CinemaBites, etc.



Tim de la Torre (Visual Art instructor at PUC) setting up the lights for the lecture on the Cameo Theater.

[Watch "Cathy Buck and The History of the Cameo Theater" our YouTube channel](#)



June 11 at 10:04am: Dedication of the Birthplace of St. Helena

Mariam Hansen, SHHS Research Director; Archie Eckles, E. Clampus Vitus; Anna Chouteau, City Council; Jay Smith, Owner, Sunshine Foods; and Stephen Taplin, SHHS President dedicated the birthplace of St. Helena on June 11 at exactly 10:04 am. The plaque is located in the corner of the Sunshine Foods parking lot.



July 13: St. Helena's Pioneer Families: The Lyman Family

September 14: Helena's Pioneer Families: The Chaix Family

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November: Research Director Mariam Hansen will be discussing the movies made in St. Helena!



In October: 16th Annual “Spirits of St. Helena Cemetery Discovery Walk”, Featuring Our Italian Settlers

We'll commemorate some of the Italians who are buried in the St. Helena Cemetery. We're collaborating with the high school drama department, and our students will dramatize the events and socioeconomic factors that motivated settlers to leave Italy and settle here in the St. Helena area.



The Heritage Center: Open the First Saturday of the Month from Noon-4pm

We're looking for volunteers to help staff the Heritage Center on the first Saturday of the month. Noon-4pm shifts. Contact

shstory@shstory.org

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