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Port of Redwood City  
San Francisco Bay

# Currents

The Port of Redwood City

[www.redwoodcityport.com](http://www.redwoodcityport.com)

Fall 2005

## Channel Project to Enhance Shipping is Underway

### Good News for Cost of Building Products

Crediting the strong efforts of a coalition of Port businesses and elected officials, the Port of Redwood City's critically needed maintenance dredging has begun and is scheduled for completion in December.

The \$1.6 million, 75-day project will dredge the port channel to its federally-permitted depth of 30 feet, thus enabling maritime commerce to move by ship more efficiently and economically than at the current channel depth of 26.5 feet, Port Executive Director Michael J. Giari said.

For several years, the Port has been in a critical situation that essentially forces ships to load less than full shipments of cargo to and from the Port. This has been costly and inefficient for shippers using the Port. Port customers import cement from the Far East, gypsum from Mexico, and building materials from Australia and Canada, all used by the construction industry in Northern California. Another Port business, SimsMetal USA, exports scrap metal to the Far East.

"Our staff and Commission worked tirelessly with the offices of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congresswoman Anna Esho to secure the necessary federal funding for this important project" Board Chairman Larry Aikins said.

Aikins also credited the Redwood City Dredging Coalition (RCDC), which the Port formed in 2004 to help secure funding. RCDC is comprised of the Port's maritime customers, representatives of the ILWU, San Francisco Bar Pilots, Seaport Industrial Association, and numerous shipping companies, stevedores, and marine transportation consultants.

The Redwood City channel is a federally-approved navigation project maintained at 30 feet (MLLW). Recent conditions have rendered the channel to depths of only 26.5 feet, which severely



restricts the ability of ships calling on the port to bring full in loads.

Historically, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers performs the port channel maintenance dredging every three to four years. But it has become increasingly difficult for ports around the nation to secure timely funding.

This has particularly threatened the San Francisco Bay region that depends on the construction materials shipped and barged to the region through the Port of Redwood City. The huge demand for such materials has enabled the Port to reach record business in four of the past five years.

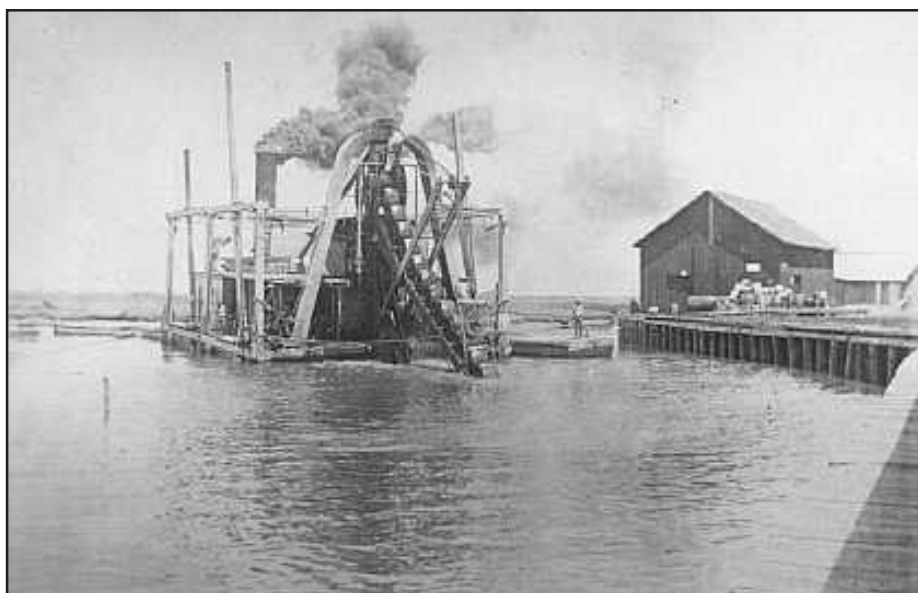
An independent report presented to the Port Commission in June concluded that Port maritime customers are paying more than \$2 million annually to cope with the less than 30-foot channel depth. That cost is ultimately passed on to Bay Area consumers.

"The maintenance dredging to the 30 foot authorized depth will allow Port businesses to streamline operations, use more capacity in efficient vessels, and reduce the need for lightering or waiting time," Giari explained.

The cargo-carrying capacity of a ship is directly related to its draft, which is the depth to which the ship floats in the water. All of the ships currently carrying imported bulk materials to the Port, or exporting scrap metal from the port, have drafts that exceed the current Redwood City channel depth.

The study on the economic impact of the Port's dredging project called the Port's dredging crucial for the Bay Area economy.

"The Bay Area needs the bulk shipping capabilities of the Port of Redwood City—now and for the future," the report conducted by the Tioga Group/HPA concluded. "The region's drive to maintain and upgrade its infrastructure and sustain manageable growth will be thwarted if the supply of essential construction materials is constricted by inadequate draft in the Redwood City channel. The alternatives are costly, environmentally unsound, and unworkable."



Channel improvements are nothing new in Redwood City. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Redwood Creek silted in with mud from land erosion caused by the development of the town. The port actually used to be located roughly where Broadway and the railroad tracks exist today. In 1896, the Army Corps of Engineers conducted an extensive dredging project of the slough using equipment like the steam dredger shown in this photograph. Above is today's modern equipment used for maintenance dredging. (Photo from Redwood City Library)

### Port, City Efforts to Support Our Troops

The Port of Redwood City recently participated in a citywide yellow ribbon campaign that ran parallel with the nationwide campaign sponsored by Operation Support Our Troops ([www.OSOT.us](http://www.OSOT.us)).

Partnering with Yellow Ribbon Redwood City community members and the Red Cross, the Port and Port businesses provided bins for donations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> citywide care package supply drive, Operation Care and Comfort.

Yellow Ribbon Redwood City maintains a website at which you can send messages to troops, view artwork from local children sent to troops, and view a host of information relating to Redwood City's efforts to support our troops: [www.yellowribbonrwc.com](http://www.yellowribbonrwc.com)

# San Mateo County's Sesquicentennial to Include Maritime Weekend

## Historic Schooner Alma & Other Events

Slated for May 13-14, 2006 at Port

## & Historic Museum

Get ready for the year-long celebration of San Mateo County's Sesquicentennial (150 years) in 2006.

One of the major weekend events is being planned by the Port and the San Mateo County Historical Museum for May 13-14, featuring a visit of the celebrated scow schooner Alma.

According to Port Executive Director Michael J. Giari and Museum President Mitchell P. Postel, plans for that weekend include:

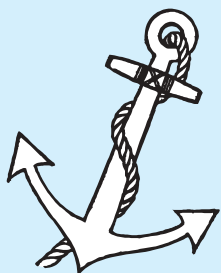
- Public visits aboard the Alma.
- A variety of interactive things with historic nautical themes for children to do at the Port with shuttle buses to the Museum, only a few blocks away at 777 Hamilton Street in downtown.
- Live sea shanty style entertainment.
- A collection at the Museum of 23 model ships created by master model maker Charles Parsons of San Carlos.

"It is most appropriate for the Alma to visit Redwood city because scow schooners like her frequently arrived here in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, taking loads of lumber or agricultural products to San Francisco," Postel said.



Scow schooner Alma ca. 1971-1972. Photo courtesy of National Maritime Museum, San Francisco.

## Historical Notes About the Port



(source: Mitch Postel, President,  
San Mateo County History Museum:

- As early as 1859, ships were being built here. The Pacific Steam Ship Navigation Company built a schooner of 120 tons.
- In 1860, two more schooners were built, the Dashaway and the Harriet were each 230 tons, 100 feet long, with 85-foot masts
- A normal week in July and August in 1860 saw the arrival of 24 ships to the Port. On average, they carried away 50,000 board feet of milled redwood; 1.7 million singles; 108,700 fence posts; and 152 cords of firewood.
- In 1861, the locals at the Port were amazed when the schooner Anna arrived towing a 185-foot barge, the largest anyone had seen in San Francisco Bay. She left with 20,000 fence posts destined for Sacramento.
- The original port facilities existed at what is now downtown Redwood City and could also conduct transactions with vessels on the bayside.

## History Museum Announces a List of Events Scheduled as Part of the 2006 Sesquicentennial Celebration

Sesquicentennial activities scheduled for dates to be announced in 2006 include:

- Three Chautauqua's on local history themes.
- The opening of several special exhibits about local history throughout the County.
- A concert at Fox Theater in Redwood City.
- A historic steam locomotive will visit various cities in the County.
- The Redwood City July 4 Parade and the San Mateo County Fair will both feature Sesquicentennial attractions.
- The restoration of the County's 1910 courthouse building will be unveiled along with the opening of three new exhibit galleries within the Museum (which assumed the Old Courthouse Buildings)
- A new \$230,000 learning center in the museum.
- A tribute to all the immigrant groups who have come to the County will take place at the museum, featuring the preparation of ethnic foods.

## Alma is the Only American Scow Schooner of Its Kind Surviving

The 1891 scow schooner Alma, a historic vessel moored as part of the collection of the National Maritime Museum, San Francisco, is an excellent example of a once-common, vernacular work-a-day craft found on the major waterways of the United States from Colonial times through the 20th century.

While built and operated on San Francisco Bay, Alma is in many ways indistinguishable from scows which were launched and sailed on Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf Coast, the Great Lakes, inland rivers, and other coastal waters of the United States. No scow schooners save Alma are known to survive afloat in the United States. Possessing a high level of integrity, Alma is of exceptional national significance as the only American scow schooner surviving as a floating, intact representative of her type.

As built in 1891, Alma was a typical flat-bottomed, square-ended scow 59 feet in length, with a 22.6-foot beam, and a 4-foot depth of hold. Alma's registered tonnage was 41 gross and 39 net. Alma carried two masts, schooner-rigged, with a single main-top-mast. Alma was average in size, but she was unusual in that, unlike many of the scow schooners then built on the bay, she had a cross-planked bottom. This construction, requiring heavier scantlings, may have contributed to her longevity.

Following her acquisition by the State of California in 1959, Alma's dredging machinery and deckhouse were removed. For several years Alma served as a floating work platform for other museum vessels. In 1964 Alma was lifted from the water and placed on the pier to begin restoration. Working from old photos, internal evidence, register information, and the plans of other scow schooners made by the W.P.A. Historic American Merchant Marine Survey, Alma was slowly returned to her original configuration.

Portions of scow hulks around the bay were used to replace missing or damaged fittings. Alma's restoration was completed in 1968, and she was returned to the water. Since then she has been maintained in an historic fashion, with in-kind replacement of materials in the manner of her original construction. While externally retaining her historic "as-built" appearance, Alma retains a diesel engine and a propeller for operating on the bay.



## Port Reaches All-Time Business Record: Shows Local Construction Economy Still Going Strong

Continued strong activity in the construction industry combined with limited domestic supplies of construction materials propelled Port of Redwood City's tonnage to a record high level for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005. A record 1,908,000 tons of cargo crossed the Port's docks last year due in part to the demand for construction materials from around the world.

Port Commission Chairman Larry Aikins announced that three major cargos each achieved record business at the Port as measured by tonnage. Cement, gypsum, and recycled scrap metal crossed Port docks in record volumes and contributed significantly to the Port's overall tonnage growth.

"There is a growing demand for construction materials coming from sources outside of Northern California," Aikins noted, "and the Port is pleased to be the maritime connection to bring construction materials from the Far East, Australia, Mexico, Canada, and the Pacific Northwest to our region, as well as exporting ferrous scrap metal to the Far East."

Local supplies from cement plants and quarries are limited, so to keep the building trades humming, the construction industry needs cement, gypsum (used to make wallboard), and aggregates used to build roads, commercial buildings, and homes, Aikins said.

Cemex/RMC imported 570,000 metric tons of cement from Asia during the fiscal year, a 30 percent increase over the previous year. Cemex's new railcar load-out system allows the Port customer to more efficiently move its cement products by rail over a wider market.

Gypsum imports from Mexico exceeded 301,400 metric tons for FY 04-05, a six percent increase. Pabco Gypsum Company uses the gypsum to manufacture wallboard in Newark for the building industry. This record gypsum tonnage was responsible for keeping Pabco's wallboard plant operating around the clock for most of the past 12 months.

Sand, bauxite, and limestone imported by bulk carrier from Australia and the Pacific Northwest, accounted for 441,253 tons.

SimsMetal America exported 394,273 metric tons of scrap



metal to the Far East during the fiscal year, a 41 percent increase over the prior year and an all-time volume for this recycled material. The scrap metal includes thousands of abandoned cars that in days gone by were stored in "junk yards" or discarded in local landfills.

The fiscal year saw 156 ships and barges call upon the Port.

### Commission Elects Larry Aikins at Board Chairman

Larry Aikins has been selected by his colleagues to serve as chairman of the Redwood City Port Commission for the period through next August. He succeeds Dick Dodge. The Commission selected Jack Castle to serve as vice chairman and Lewis Miller to serve as secretary-treasurer.

The Commission meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 8 a.m.

## One Commissioner's Tribute to 'Mr. Waterfront' - Peter Uccelli

BY JACK CASTLE  
REDWOOD CITY PORT COMMISSIONER

Redwood City's waterfront lost its pioneer and spirit in September when Peter Uccelli died in his sleep while visiting friends in Marina del Rey. He was 84. There wasn't a dry eye when more than 1,000 persons packed Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church for his funeral and subsequent honor-guard led motor procession to an Italian-American cemetery in Colma.

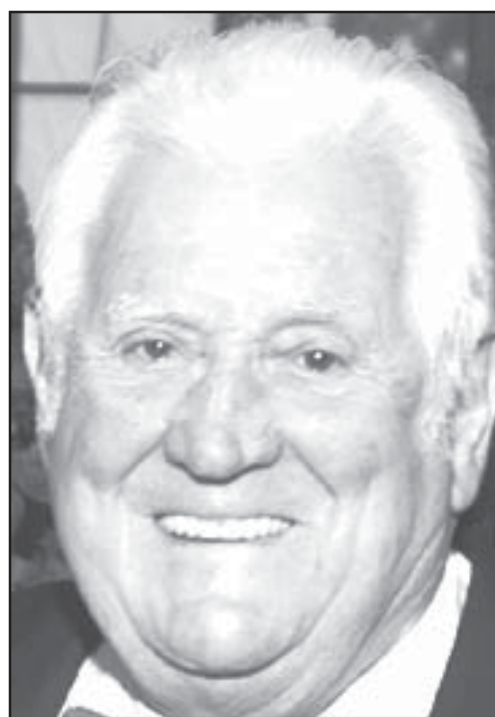
Pete was best identified with Redwood City's waterfront. No one personified the true grit of determination and compassion more than Pete Uccelli, whom I met 40 years ago when he was starting a "hamburger stand" at what we have known locally as Pete's Harbor for more than four decades.

Because of Pete's vision, that "hamburger stand" evolved into a first-class private marina and successful restaurant that Pete used to host numerous events for the public, ranging from benefits for Kainos to a fund-raiser after a local synagogue burned down. It was typical of Pete – an Italian Catholic helping his Jewish friends during their time of need.

Pete once told me he never obtained a liquor license for the restaurant because he wanted to attract and keep families.

When the State Lands Commission tried to take Pete's Harbor a quarter century ago, the hundreds if not thousands of persons whom Pete had helped in one way or another rallied to his support, many placing campaign-like bumper stickers on their vehicles that read, "Save Pete's Harbor."

Pete Uccelli possessed a heart that spanned the City and



Pete Uccelli

beyond, giving of his time and money to numerous organizations and causes that will continue to benefit Redwood City for generations to come. The organizations mentioned above don't even touch the surface of the number of community groups that he helped. He shared his life, his vision, and his success with everyone in the Bay Area.

Pete's Harbor and the Port of Redwood City are linked, of course, by the waterfront. Pete was also a supporter of the Port and our many activities

for the community.

As a Port Commissioner and one who is proud of the Port and our maritime business and public recreation, as far as I'm concerned Pete and his wife, Paula, can be the symbols of our great waterways here in Redwood City for eternity.

After all, Pete's Harbor was and is at 1 Uccelli Boulevard.

# Ralph Garcia Named to Port Commission

Businessman and long-time community volunteer Ralph Garcia has been named to the Redwood City Port Commission by the City Council, succeeding Guy Smith, who stepped down after 21 years for health reasons.

Like Smith, Garcia is beginning his service on the Board of Port Commissioners after having previously served on the City's Planning Commission. Garcia did not seek reappointment to the Planning Commission last summer after 10 ½ years, including a two-year term as Commission Chairman.

Garcia is the first new member of the five-member Port Commission in 10 years. The Council appoints commissioners for staggered five-year terms. The Commission sets policy and direction for the Port of Redwood City, which is a self-supporting municipal enterprise, providing maritime, commercial, and waterfront recreational facilities to the community. The Port receives no tax revenues.

Garcia has owned Ralph's Vacuum and Sewing Center in Redwood City for 27 years, a business he describes as one of the few remaining family businesses in that industry. "Since the Port is managed like a business, I thought that my business experience would be helpful," Garcia said.

He has been a member of the Redwood City Optimist Club for 25 years, including two terms as president and long-time



sergeant-at-arms. The Club during recent years has bought or donated nearly \$50,000 in music instruments and equipment to sustain music programs in the Redwood City Elementary School District.

Garcia is also on the Board of Directors of El Centro de Libertad (the Freedom Center), a program in Redwood City that offers outpatient alcohol and drug treatment and related services to residents of San Mateo County.

Garcia has lived in Redwood City since he was 12, attending local schools as well as Menlo-Atherton High School. He and his wife, Teresa, have four adult children.

Away from his business, Garcia enjoys restoring cars and entering them into car shows. He has won first place in a national show for the restoration of a 1963 Falcon Sprint.

## Port Receives Security Grant from California Office of Homeland Security

The Port has been awarded a \$150,000 security grant by the California Office of Homeland Security. The grant is being used for these purposes:

- Improved perimeter fencing and gates around Port property.
- Two new guardhouses for entry checkpoints to Port property.
- Training of security guards, port personnel and tenant facility security officers.

Since Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, U.S. ports have been targeted as high priorities for new security measures by the federal Homeland Security Office as well as the state equivalent.

All of the marine cargo facilities at the Port of Redwood City are in compliance with the requirements of the new U.S. Coast Guard regulations that took effect a year ago under the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA). Enacted in 2002, the MTSA fortified and extended the Coast Guard's jurisdiction and responsibilities for security planning and execution in and around U.S. waterways.

The Port of Redwood City's security management team, consisting of Port staff, tenants, other Port users, and security consultants, spent innumerable hours over several months to complete and submit its security plan to the Coast Guard which was ultimately approved. The focus of the increased Port security efforts are on the restricted areas involved with cargo operations and the handling of chemicals.

The Port received a \$75,000 grant from the Transportation Security Administration to help create its plan. The grant issued by the California Homeland Security Department enables the Port to fund many of the physical improvements called for in the plan.

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## Environmental Clean Up Plans Approved

Two significant environmental steps were recently completed that will bring the Port close to finishing the clean up of the Liquid Bulk Terminal.

The Port is the lead agency for the environmental review of the clean up of the former petroleum storage facility originally built by Texaco. Following a 30-day public comment period, the Port Commission in October approved the Negative Declaration for the project. The findings of this environmental document were that there will be no adverse environmental impacts from the proposed clean up activities, which include dismantling the tanks and pipelines and remediating the contaminated soil and groundwater on the site.

One of the comment letters received on the Negative Declaration was from Clem Molony, Secretary of the Seaport Industrial Association. Molony praised the Port for "carrying forward this complicated clean up project which, when completed, will help guarantee the ongoing prosperity of the Port and the City."

Concurrently with the Port's public review of the Negative Declaration, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) requested public comment and held a public hearing in October on the draft Remedial Action and Closure Plans for the site. DTSC is responsible for obtaining public approval of the plans. DTSC evaluated clean up options based on risk assessments, protection of the environment, effectiveness, cost, and community acceptability. The plans call for excavation of the contaminated soil and groundwater, enhanced biodegradation, and monitoring of ground water and soil gas.

The Port is working with a Canadian firm, Eagle Rock Aggregates, to plan for the possible future use of the site as an import terminal for high quality sand, gravel, and crushed granite to be shipped from British Columbia.

**Port of Redwood City**  
San Francisco Bay



**Port Commissioners**

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**Jack Castle**, Vice Chairman

**Lewis Miller**, Secretary

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**Richard "Dick" Dodge**, Commissioner

**Ralph Garcia**, Commissioner

**Michael J. Giari**, Executive Director