

Golden Nuggets

SACRAMENTO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPT-OCT 2015, VOL. 1-2

SCHS Presents Ray Oliver: McClellan Air Base, the Prequel

Tuesday, Sept 22, 7:00 PM (Social Time, 6:30)

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Building, 5380 Elvas Ave., Sacramento

McClellan AFB will be featured at the September 22 meeting, a joint session with the Sacramento Pioneer Association and a prequel for the SCHS and Pioneer sponsored tour of the former base on Friday, September 25. (Tour information is on page 2 and at sachistoricalociety.org.) Ray Oliver, narrator for the daylong bus tour, will describe the base's history and show a rarely seen movie made in 1986 as part of the installation's 50-year anniversary. Oliver, a former McClellan historian and museum curator, will describe how an astute politician led the effort to bring the base to Sacramento, how the base got its name, and how it rapidly progressed from a few hundred workers to one of the biggest employers in this area with annual budgets in hundreds of millions of dollars. The work involved storing and transporting millions of tons of aircraft, equipment and supplies all over the world and providing maintenance and modifications for thousands of aircraft in the huge hangars on the base and in combat areas. While it seemed that the base was essential to not only the Air Force but to the nation as well, politics and cost reduction efforts led to closure in 2001.

The program will include a timeline of the base's existence from 1936 to 2001, aerial photos, base history books and perhaps some museum artifacts. With two groups attending, the best parking and seating will go to those arriving early. Street parking is usually readily available.

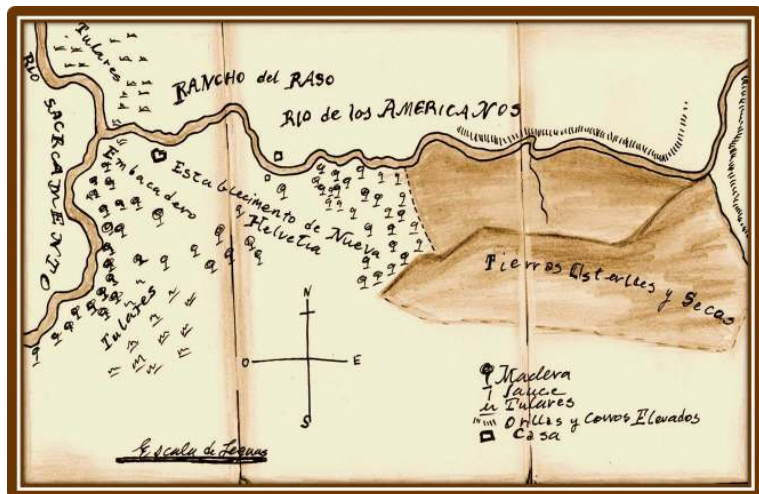


To step up its delivery of Speedy Bell P-39 "Airacobra" fighter airplanes to American pilots in the South Pacific, the Army Air Forces Air Service Command put American production line methods to work in its repair docks at McClellan Field, California. Official US Air Force photo no. 080128-f-3927-s-053, circa 1944.

SCHS Presents Mark Davidson: Mexican Land Grants of Sacramento County

Tuesday, October 27, 2015 7:00 PM (Social Time, 6:30)

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Building, 5380 Elvas Ave., Sacramento



Official Map (Diseno) of Rancho Rio de los Americanos, 1844. Sketch by Mark Davidson after a map shown on the UC Online Archives of California.

Mark Davidson developed an interest in local history, especially land grants, as he pursued a business career in the Title industry. Our local land grants, starting in 1841, were the first real estate transactions affecting this region. His interests are in the back stories of the fascinating people and events that shaped our early Sacramento heritage, things that are not often found in history books.

Davidson will present an entertaining and informative look at the history of Sacramento's land grants and will include a number of displays he created. Join us On October 27 to learn to whom, where, and why these grants were awarded and what became of them after the Gold Rush and years of subsequent development. As always, guests are welcome.

Joint SCHS Society of Pioneers McClellan Tour



Name(s) _____

Email Address _____

Home Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Number Attending _____

SCHS/Society of Pioneers McClellan Tour Reservation Form

Mail check made out to SCHS (costs below) with form or a photocopy to Bob LaPerriere, POB 255345, Sacramento, CA 95865-5345 OR pay online at sachistoricalociety.org. **Reservation deadline: September 11th.**

Full Day Bus Trip through McClellan Park, Friday, September 25, 9 AM to 5 PM

Join the Sacramento County Historical Society and the Sacramento Pioneer Association for an exciting full day bus trip thru McClellan Park's 3000 acres, home to a huge air base for 62 years and now home to dozens of hidden treasures. Ray Oliver, coauthor of a history of McClellan Air Base, will be the major narrator for the tour. Cost: \$55 (\$50 if paid by Aug. 31) includes bus, lunch, admission fees, tips. **Please confirm your reservation has been received at 916-481-4525.**

Highlights Include (not in order listed)

Orientation Visit to McClellan Park Corporate Headquarters

View beautiful early 1900s architecture and 1950s Cold War influenced construction

See the two-mile-long runway and extensive rail system, both still in use

Marvel at the huge hangar known as DOMBay where giant aircraft were serviced

-Lunch and Discussion of McClellan community-

Guided Tour of Aerospace Museum

Visits to Center for Sacramento History and State Parks Museum Collections Center

Visit to active Coast Guard facility



**Bus Pick Up Location: Country Club Plaza,
Butano and El Camino
Park along Butano, near Lusk, away from stores.**



Mather Field vs. McClellan Air Base

An Overview

By Marshall Garvey

Separated by roughly 12 miles, Mather Air Force Base and McClellan Air Force Base represent two integral parts of Sacramento military history that, while parallel to each other in many regards, also maintain unique individual identities.

One particularly salient, albeit tragic, similarity the two bases share is the origin of their names, as both were named after pilots who died in flying accidents. Mather Field, initially referred to as Mills Field upon its opening in April 1918, was rechristened on May 2 in honor of Second Lieutenant Carl Mather. Mather, a member of the Army Signal Corps, had died on January 25 of that year at the tender age of 16 during one of the first World War I pilot training classes at Ellington Field, near Houston Texas. When the training class transferred to Mills Field, Mather's classmates subsequently pushed for its re-naming in their fallen friend's honor.



2d Lt. Carl Mather
USGOVPD



Maj. Hezekiah McClellan
Aerospace Museum of CA

McClellan Air Force Base, meanwhile, took its name from Major Hezekiah McClellan, a pioneer in arctic aeronautical tests who died in a flight test crash near Centerville, Ohio in 1936. (See Nov. 2008 *Golden Nuggets* article by Ray Oliver for more on Major McClellan.)

While their names were derived from similar sources, the two bases opened in dramatically different circumstances. Being officially opened in early 1918, Mather Field was

quickly used as a base for World War I training. The conflict, which the United States had avoided involvement in from its start in 1914 until 1917, necessitated the Mather Field's use as a base for pilots. McClellan's base, on the other hand, was established in 1935, well after the "The War to End All Wars" had ended in November 1918.

However, with the onset of America's entry into World War II in December 1941, both bases became tremendously productive almost overnight. Mather Field had already been rebuilt by the U.S. government after the onset of the war in Europe in 1939. After its full reactivation in 1941, it served as a training center for pilots, navigators, observers, and bombardiers throughout the course of the conflict. Additionally, it provided a strategic stopover location for troops and aircraft heading to and from the Pacific theater of the war. McClellan Air Force Base also served as a crucial preparation stop for aircraft on its way to the Pacific, the most notable by far being Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle's B-25s in March of 1942, en route to their famous "Doolittle Raid" in Tokyo the following month.

Rather than settle into complete peace after war's end in 1945, the United States almost immediately geared up for the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Mather and McClellan would continue to parallel each other over the next few decades, as they either trained on (Mather) or serviced (McClellan) numerous aircrafts during the long-running contest for global supremacy. Mather Field became a home for B-52 wing aircrafts, with the first Strategic Air Command B-52 being assigned to its base in 1958. McClellan Air Force Base's Cold War arsenal consisted most prominently of Air Force crafts like the F-111 and the Fairchild A-10 Thunderbolt II (among others) as they were overhauled. With the Cold War's official end in 1991, both bases were quickly put out to pasture, with Mather Field's 5,845-acre span being decommissioned on September 30, 1993 and McClellan AFB following suit shortly thereafter in 1995.

While the Cold War's end marked both Mather and McClellan's ends in providing military services, their lifespans were both extended with public/private partnerships. Mather Field was reopened first in 1995, subsequently becoming home to Mather Regional Park, Mather (civilian) Airport and assorted other businesses. With the help of Sacramento County, McClellan Air Force Base was revitalized in the early 2000s as McClellan Business Park, hosting numerous enterprises such as Surewest, SMUD, the USDA Wildfire Academy, Americorp and J.C. Penney, among many others.

A recent graduate of UC Davis, Marshall Garvey has been working on various writing and research projects for SCHS as an intern over the past year. In high school, he served as one of the *Sacramento Bee* teen correspondents, and he has published frequently since then. He was asked to write this article and we hope he'll be contributing others in the future.



P.O. Box 160065
 Sacramento, CA 95816-0065
 Message phone: 916-572-9858
www.sachistoricalociety.org

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Email: info@sachistoricalociety.org

OUT & ABOUT

DATE	TIME	EVENT	@ PLACE & CONTACT
Fri. - Mon. Sept. 4-7	Hours vary, mostly 11-7+ some eves	Gold Rush Days turn back the clock in Old Sacramento. Costumed performers portray historical figures and just plain folks. Musicians perform on multiple stages, evoking the vivid tunes and sounds of the 1850s. Gold panning, rides, contests, more.	Sacramento Gold Rush Days Front to 2nd & J to L streets, Old Sacramento sacramentogoldrushdays.com/schedule/
Saturday Sept. 20	10-4 PM	Historic Home Tour set in Richmond Grove neighborhood, W-R and 12th to 19th streets. Homes include Queen Anne, 20th Century Revival, Arts & Crafts and Art Deco architecture. Ethnically diverse landmarks and the vibrant R St. Corridor.	Preservation Sacramento (SOCA reborn) Details, prices, purchase options at 2015hometour.brownpapertickets.com/preservationsacramento.org
Saturday Oct. 3	9AM-6PM	Fifth Annual Sacramento Aloha Festival includes Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) exhibits, workshops, presentations, arts and crafts, merchandise, food, and entertainment. Free! Paid, lighted parking.	Cal Expo 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento 916-420-7290 sacalohafest.org
Fri & Sat Oct. 9-24	Evenings: Exact times TBA	Ghost Tours Join the “ghosts” of early Sacramento on an eerie journey back in time. Beware of wayward miners, murder victims, and other colorful Gold Rush characters. Hear tantalizing tales of how folks lived - and died! - in our fair city. One hour guided walking tour, rain or shine.	Old Sacramento Underground Tours Depart from Sacramento History Museum 101 I St., Old Sacramento 916-808-7059 Info and tickets at sachistorymuseum.org/tours/ghost-tours/