

Lower Haight Local

The Local Magazine of Lower Haight, SF

Issue 12 | September 2026



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Take a stick, leave a stick, chew a stick

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You Can't Teach an Old Dog a New Stick...

by Maggie Frantz

Recent veterinary science has pointed out that when a dog goes for a walk, it's a little like scrolling social media or reading the news. Every bush, favorite bench, and street corner offers a new array of scents and updates for them to read up on. Well, if dogs can read, don't they need a library?

NOPA resident Lisa and her partner Jason seem to think so. Just a block from the Panhandle (a favorite spot for neighborhood pups), the couple has created their very own Stick Library on their stoop. A humble basket filled with, well, sticks, and adorned with a sign that reads, "Take a stick, leave a stick, chew a stick," it's a small gesture that brightens the entire block.

Lisa says the irony of a stick library isn't lost on her, and she loves hearing the laughter of passersbys from her window when they first discover their little canine collection. Perhaps the most unexpected (though not entirely surprising) thing to come from it is how seriously the neighborhood kids take the library.

Like many little neighborhood projects, it all started during COVID. All of Lisa and Jason's friends got puppies during lockdown, so in 2021, Jason created the Stick Library for them and all their friends. What began as a basket of sticks has since expanded into a little book library, along with the occasional offering

of free sourdough starter. I even grabbed some myself and made a cinnamon apple loaf (for journalistic purposes of course).

As a newcomer to the Lower Haight, I find myself wondering what makes up the ecosystem of a neighborhood. Of course there are the big things: the architecture, the parks and greenways, the small businesses, the events that bring people together. But like any ecosystem, sometimes the smallest organisms can have the biggest impact.

Neighbors like Lisa, Jason, and their adorable dog Sky make their block their own, bringing a little life and whimsy to the concrete and asphalt that pave their streets.

Sometimes, apparently, all it takes is a basket of sticks.



As always, this is your paper. Get involved and help make it what you want!

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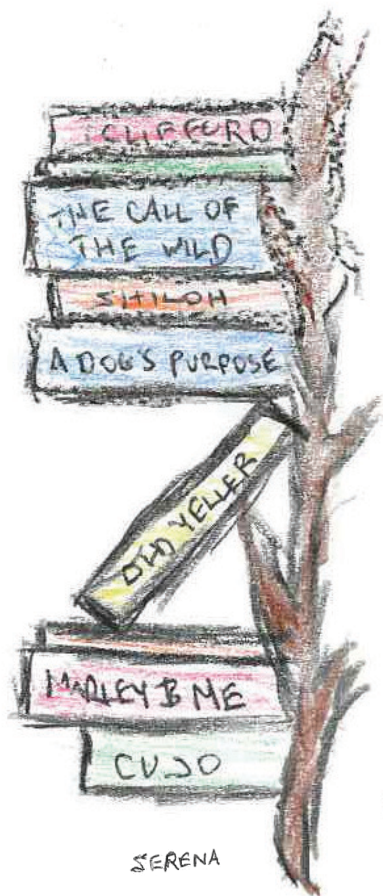
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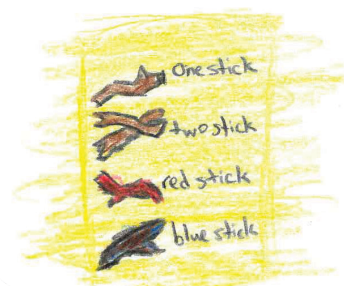
Stick Library for Dogs

No! I've lost my stick
Have you seen it? Long and brown
I'll Mourn - ooh! New stick

The latest hot spot:
Stick library for all dogs
slobber included

Dog librarian—
five years of experience
good boys/girls only

It's a hard knock life,
being a stick in this box,
put me in your mouth!



A. H. H.



The Old Spanish Road (Devisadero)

by Joel Pomerantz

The most direct route between the Mission and the Presidio was, for the first century of their existence, referred to by residents using the name *Sans Souci Valley*. It was seen as a valley thanks to the prominent hills (now gone) near the mission end of that route. Together with Buena Vista Hill, they formed a gateway, with the cluster of old buildings that was Mission Dolores framed by this entryway up into the hills.

‘Sans souci’ is French for care-free, a possibly-intentional juxtaposition to ‘dolores’—Spanish for sorrow or pain. It was named after an establishment along the way, a roadhouse and minor resort where people could get a drink, go hunting, or just take a rest on their slog through the dunes. With streets added around the building, Sans Souci Road House became 1317 Fulton Street, just west of Divisadero Street. Storefronts were added, extending it forward to the sidewalk.

For thousands of years, the bottom of this valley, now gridded and known as *the Wiggle*, was the main route through the vast dune field. Avoiding the highest hills, it was the link between two Yelamu settlements: *Chutchui*, adjacent to the Mission, and *Petlenuc*, on a salt marsh at Crissy Field along the north edge of San Francisco.

As a street system was being mapped out, the snaking route through these hills was still called the Old Spanish Road or the *Devisadero Road*. Devisadero (the old spelling) was a Spanish term

meaning lookout or viewpoint. Heading north, it crested Pacific Heights. There, a breath-taking view of the bay was your reward for overcoming the incessant sand. During the early years of the city, there was a little gazebo up top, later a water tank, and eventually a private home at the northeast corner of Pacific Avenue and Lyon Street.

The prominent street approximating the old road was likewise named Devisadero. By sheer chance, this street was the last one westward within the boundaries of the 1851 city limits, so it called up thoughts of a dividing line. This coincidence pushed a gradual shift in spelling conventions to ‘Divisadero’, a nonsense word that conveniently evokes a divide.

The chaparral (scrubby plants) and blowing sand, west of the 1851 line, was known as the ‘outside lands’—the origin of that term.

Consider also the arduous journey from the Presidio back to our neighborhood, mid 1800s, when the Devisadero Road wound its way through. Heading south, we would cross a mile of chaparral between Pac Heights and Fulton

street, trending east toward Scott Street to skirt Anza Vista. (A hunk of that hill was removed at Turk Street to straighten Devisadero.) Coming back west from that little detour, we would go over the lowest point in the ridge at McAllister and Divisadero, past the Sans Souci.

In the 1860s, after the extreme winter of 1861–1862 saturated the dunes and made ponds, one formed at the roadhouse that attracted ducks (for hunting, by the sentiment of the time).

Keeping Sans Souci to the right as we head south, we’d descend past the ridge on the left with its multiple hilltops, the first being Alamo Square. On the right, the main hills of the city: Buena Vista on up, to Twin Peaks.

At today’s Scott Street and Hayes, the road passed through a linear dune through a notch, shown in Emily Underwood’s illustration. One last linear east-west dune needed to be crossed at Page Street. At Fillmore the notch in this dune allowed, finally, a view of the Mission, as seen in last month’s issue.



Photo credit: Jesse B. Cook, just before the building was demolished in 1924 (Bancroft Library)

Remembering Dick Vivian, Owner of Rooky Ricardo's Records

by Ania Ahsan

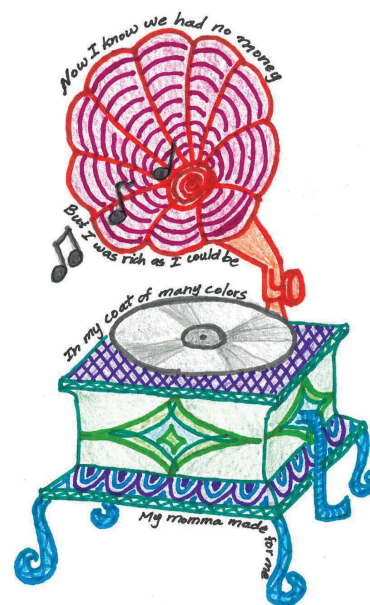
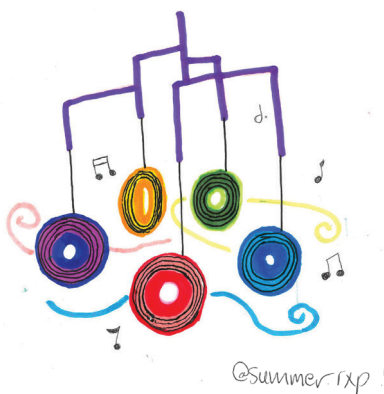
Dick Vivian, the owner of the landmark store Rooky Ricardo's Records, passed away from pancreatic cancer on July 24th.

Dick had been running the shop in Lower Haight for the past 39 years, twice forced to relocate by earthquake-retrofitting rent hikes. He was a quick-witted, sassy, salty-on-the-outside-sweet-on-the-inside man who was known for his sharp dissections of anyone who walked into his store. If you weren't put off by his playful teasing, you got the chance to meet the warm, community-building spirit with a fervent love for music. Growing up through the 1960s as a gay man,

Dick found music of that era to be transcendent and life-changing. He left his legacy on 144 burned CDs that capture the exact beauty of those soul records. You can't find these artists on any digital service or streaming, but Dick knew even the rarest records by heart.

He is renowned worldwide as a premier record collector and a true gem of the San Francisco community. Rooky's was a community center as much as a record store, and Dick made an effort to make every patron feel known by sharing his knowledge of music. He even hosted dance lessons in the store for a time! He had friends that were millionaires and others that were busboys from his serving days, as well as a wide network of capable straight men he deemed "galoots" who would do anything for him. Take Jon Blunck, a former employee, galoot, and longtime friend of Dick's, who quit his job in LA and moved to help run the store when Dick was diagnosed with cancer.

Dubbed the 'Mayor of Lower Haight' in the store's statement, Dick Vivian will be remembered dearly by those who knew him and by Rooky's, whose vintage charm captures anyone who walks in. Stop by and ask to hear a story about him or just listen to songs you won't find anywhere else. You'll find that his soul and impact are still very much alive.



Quieting One Voice to Find Another

by Alistair Hamilton

Cadence for Change is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to raising musical aspirations in people of all ages and backgrounds. The organization supports a non-audition

choir where everyone is welcome, an auditioned chamber choir, a group voice class, and an instrumental chamber ensemble. We rehearse at Unity (240 Page St.), and this fall we're preparing Mozart's Requiem for a December 19th performance alongside a professional orchestra. Whatever

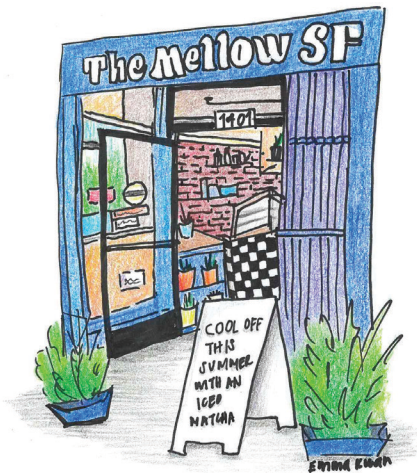
musical baggage you may (or may not) be carrying, you are welcome. Register for a welcome session: www.cadenceforchange.org

Mellow Nights on Haight

by Emily Liu

Anyone walking past Haight and Masonic would be forgiven for being confused by The Mellow. Why are so many people going into a barbershop? They're coming out with coffee? I thought The Mellow was a plant store in the Mission?

That's the way that owner Lo likes it. Opened in 2021, The Mellow in Haight Ashbury started as a propagation of the plant shop originally rooted in the Mission. That Mission location was equally multihyphenate: it was a floral-workshop-studio-at-night-plant-store-by-day-then-also-a-barbershop-oh-and-a-music-venue. "Every weekend we'd have music right there on the cement in front of the store. When we found the Haight location, we were like let's take the musicians from the curb and put them on a stage now."



So when Lo and her husband signed the lease for 1401 Haight St, the two thought: "we love plants. We love flowers. We love community. We love music. Let's just do it all together. Let's create a space that we ourselves would want to go to." The shop was retail by day and music by night. It didn't last long. With a BYOB policy and a \$35 ticket, it was hard to keep the seats full. The pair hit pause on the live music while they worked on getting a liquor license: "It took 2 years. I also had a baby. We literally couldn't juggle it all." In the meantime, they introduced a coffee bar at the front with airy seating space and non-perishables shopping in the back, leading you to a two-chair barbershop on the top floor.

In July of this year, the original Mission location

closed. Since the end of the pandemic, plant sales had been declining. Lo and her husband tried hard to keep the shop afloat: vintage clothing pop-ups, non-perishable food items, online sales. "We basically tried everything possible to stay alive, which I'm really proud of. Mission was able to stay alive for six years. So instead of being heartbroken, I'm like, we did it. I'm just proud of us. That was a good run."

The spirit of the plant-store-that-was-always-more-than-a-plant-store lives on in Haight Ashbury, though. Now newly armed with its liquor license, The Mellow is ready to return to its late-night live music roots with a cocktail menu designed by Gillian from Casements and a lineup of local musicians. And the owners are still thinking beyond music: "We keep the five senses in mind. We like to burn incense, we want it to be visually appealing. And a part of that is eating or drinking: the taste of it. We want to have people come in and feel like it is an oasis and really hit on all the five senses... We're not just one thing. And that could get us into trouble in a way where people come here and they're like, 'I want a plant.' We're not that anymore — or we're more than that. We have coffee. We have music. We do this. We do that. We just can't be pinned to one thing."

The Mellow coffee bar is open 8am–6pm daily. Mellow Nights runs Thursdays–Saturdays from 7–11pm. For more information, check out @themellowsf on Instagram. For musicians interested in performing at Mellow Nights, you can answer the call for artists at app.mellowsessions.com



September Events

DM @lowerhaightlocal to get your event featured!
Full listing at lowerhaightlocal.com/events

Recurring Events

Every Sunday, 10am **Lower Haight Cleanup** Meet at Tarragon Cafe (200 Fillmore) to care for our streets — coffee and breakfast provided!

Every Sunday, 6–10pm **Free Line Dancing** Learn to line dance in a Lower Haight garage, free. DM @lowerhaightlinedancing for the location!

Every Monday **Motown on Mondays** DJ Gordo Cabeza spins Motown classics at Madrone Art Bar (500 Divisadero). Free before 8pm.

1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 6–10pm **Open Mic at The Faight** Bring a song, a poem, or a joke (475 Haight). Free, all welcome.

1st & 3rd Wednesdays, 7–10pm **The Sound Pour** Live Lower Haight jazz and a glass of wine at The Faight.

Tuesdays & Wednesdays **Bingo & Trivia at Danny Coyle's** Free bar bingo Tuesdays 7–9pm, Brainstormer Trivia Wednesdays 8pm (668 Haight).

Every Thursday, 7–9pm **Jazz Night at Mercury Cafe** Live jazz at 201 Octavia.

New! 1st Saturdays, 4–7pm **Game Night at Madrone** Gamescape brings the games, Madrone pours the drinks (500 Divisadero). Starts September 5th!

Events This Month

Saturday, September 5th, 10am–1pm **September Issue Distribution** Grab the new issue at the corner of Scott & Page. Pancakes, free coffee, and live music — come say hi!

Saturday, September 5th **“Forever Grateful” Comes to Golden Gate Park** The immersive Grateful Dead show opens at the County Fair Building — Ken Kesey's Furthur bus included — while the original at Haight Street Art Center (215 Haight) runs free through September 20th.

Saturday, September 5th, doors 8pm **Yuma Abe at Rickshaw Stop** Japanese city-pop with Jared Mattson x Chili Corder and Adam Spry (155 Fell). All ages.

Monday, September 7th, 2–6pm **Grahame Lesh & Friends** A free Labor Day concert from a flatbed truck at Robin Williams Meadow, Golden Gate Park.

Monday, September 7th, 7pm **Nappy Roots at The Faight** The Kentucky hip-hop legends — one of the biggest acts The Faight has ever booked (475 Haight).

Friday, September 11th **Wave Collective Anniversary Party** Wave (663 Haight) celebrates a year — and releases the pét-nat the community helped press, with a neighbor-designed label.

Tuesday, September 15th **SF Comedy Competition Semifinals** The legendary contest turns 50 and brings semifinals night one to The Faight (475 Haight).

Sunday, September 20th, 11am–5:30pm **Haight Ashbury Street Fair** The 47th annual fair takes over Haight Street from Stanyan to Masonic — 200+ vendors, music, and art. Free.

Wednesday, September 23rd, 7pm **Lower Haight Local Art Night** Make art and meet your neighbors while we put together the October issue. Supplies provided — DM @lowerhaightlocal for the location.

Thursday, September 24th, doors 8pm **Read My Lips Drag Show: Lord of the Rings** The drag queens of literature take on Tolkien at The Booksmith (1644 Haight).

Saturday, September 26th **Outdoor Movie Night in Duboce Park** Friends of Duboce Park screens *How to Train Your Dragon* (2025) under the stars. Free.

Saturday, September 26th **Unedited Returns to Underground** SF DJ Spun's beloved open-to-close night comes back to UGSF (424 Haight).

...

Saturday, October 3rd, 10am–1pm **October Issue Distribution** The next issue lands at Scott & Page. Same spot, same pancakes :)



Cozy Cubs Puzzle Club™

"Casual Games for
Consenting Adults"



**Step
Right
Up**

Across

1. Ω, to an electrician
4. Outlaw country singer David Allan ____
5. Santa's little helper
6. Brand with three stripes
10. Poet Pablo who wrote "A Dream of Trains"
11. Ancestor of Windows
12. With few words
16. "Hasta la vista"
17. Night vision?

Down

1. ____ Beach: first and last stop of the N Judah
2. What they do in Texas, but you should not do to the doors of the N Judah
3. SF-based punk cover band "____ and the Gimme Gimmies," or what you might say to someone trying to board the N before letting you off
7. Some surfers
8. Liked a lot
9. One talking back
13. Word after pink or private
14. Mauna ____ (Hawaiian volcano)
15. "Mmmm ... tasty"



These puzzles first appeared in Cozy Cubs issue #41 - N Judah. Answers and more at www.cozycubs.club

Blue Moves

As new letters board, one or two letters in blue seats will move to a red seats to yield priority seating.

O A T S → **B L O W** [red] [red] [red] [red]

S L O W B O A T
the long way to China?

(B)

N A I L → **H A R D** [red] [red] [red] [red]

something to hold on to

(O)

L O B E → **P A R T** [red] [red] [red] [red]

easily taken

(O)

F L A N → **R A I L** [red] [red] [red] [red]

cause of wetness

(O)

T R I M → **B A K E** [red] [red] [red] [red]

evidence of a vampire

(O) (O)

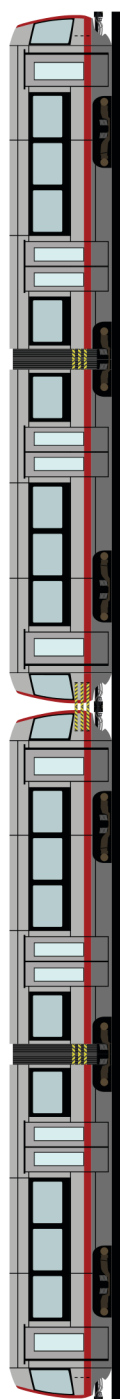
F R A T → **L I P S** [red] [red] [red] [red]

part of a track event

(O) (O)



Arrange the eight letters that gave up their seats to discover where we will get off.



Los Embarcaderos

Match each person to their line and their personal drama.

1. Jason did not ride the J line. In fact, none of the passengers rode the line that matches the first letter of their name.
2. The person who rode the L bought two bananas.
3. The person who ran into their ex was neither Lauren nor Natasha
4. Meech gasped with private delight when he found the \$20 bill folded in the smallest pocket of his jeans.
5. Lauren waited until she sat down on the J to send the photo to the group chat.
6. A person on the J or M was passed a handwritten note that made them smile.
7. "One for now, and one for later?" the corner store clerk teased, ringing up Katarina's purchase.
8. "This doesn't feel nearly as awkward as I thought it would," said the ex to our friend on the K.
9. Natasha reacted with a 🙄 when she received the photo of her friend high-fiving the mayor.

	J	K	L	M	N	\$20	Bananas	Ex	Mayor	Note
Jason										
Katarina										
Lauren										
Meech										
Natasha										
\$20										
Bananas										
Ex										
Mayor										
Note										

Cozy Cubs Puzzle Club is a creative project of Sage Kitamorn. I believe in Analog Fun.



@lowerhightlocal

find us and
get involved
with the
zine!



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