

BALBOA ISLAND LIVING

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Happy
Father's Day!

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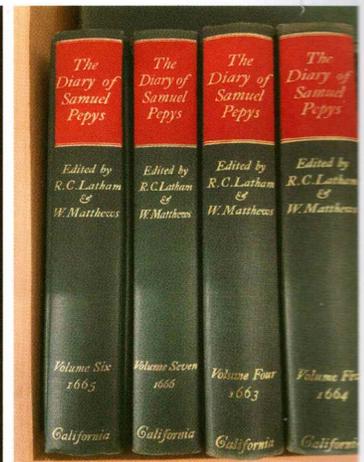
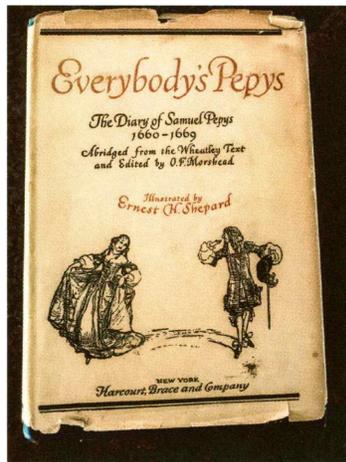
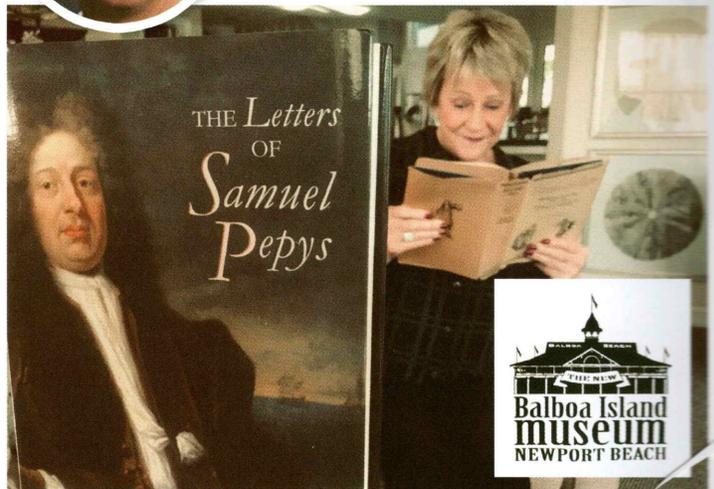
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Balboa Island Museum – COVID-19 Lessons from Samuel Pepys Museum Curator’s Cousin Was There – UK, 1665



history

By Pete Weitzner, producer, Balboa Island Museum’s “Legacy Videos”



After barely a year, the relocated and visitor-friendly Balboa Island Museum is a Marine Avenue fave – among locals and tourists. Some exhibits trace to before Mr. Collins began dredging in 1906. But an homage to Samuel Pepys would be the oldest and surely most distant by geography.

But museum president Shirley Pepys is considering one. “He’s being quoted right now,” Shirley Pepys said of Samuel Pepys, her children’s (Renee, Tiffany, Noel, and Max) second cousin nine times removed (2C/9R). Tiffany is the curator and executive director.

In one week this spring, Samuel Pepys’ deeds were noted, his diaries quoted, in two separate *New York Times* stories on COVID-19. You see, Samuel Pepys, member of Parliament, influential official in the British Royal Navy, and famous lothario – more on that later – is best known as one of the world’s foremost diarists.

The Diary of Samuel Pepys – pronounced “Peeps” in England – placed #92 on “The 100 Best Nonfiction Books of All Time” by English writer Robert McCrum, in a list compiled for *The Guardian*. *The Diary* is a collection of several diaries Pepys kept in a tumultuous ten-year period in England, 1660-1669. That period encompassed the English Restoration, Second Dutch War, Great Fire of London and...the Great Plague of London.

The Great Plague. By some accounts, the flea-transmitted disease claimed 100,000 Londoners, 20% of the population. It also laid the groundwork for battling pandemics. And Samuel Pepys was there to chronicle. As *Times* writer Paul Theroux wrote on April 5, “We know the progress of England’s Great Plague of 1665 because Samuel Pepys anatomized it in his diary.”

Samuel Pepys did more than anatomize the killer. Indeed, the distancing and stay-in-place measures we’re abiding by nationwide, on Balboa Island, were perhaps modeled after England 1665, as recorded by Samuel Pepys.

From Pepys’ 1665 diary: “On hearing ill rumour that Londoners may soon be urged into their lodgings by Her Majesty’s men, I looked upon the street to see a gaggle of striplings. Making fair merry and no doubt spreading the plague well about. Not a care had these rogues for the health of their elders.” Incredible! But for the formal English, Pepys diary reads like advisories from 2020 Sacramento, Newport Beach City Hall, and, well, NextDoor.

“I’m not surprised by the references in *NYT* to Samuel,” Mary Pepys, Shirley’s sister-in-law said. “There have been many articles and books about Samuel Pepys, which Eric treasured.” Eric Pepys is Shirley’s late husband. “We’ve all been to Cambridge, to his [Samuel Pepys’] library,” Shirley said. There’s a Pepys Way, the Samuel Pepys Restaurant along the Thames, and a Pepys Pub Tour. Of course. It’s London.

Times opinion writer Annalee Newitz also relayed Pepys’s account of hoarding, his own, in plague-ravaged England. Not toilet paper. Rather “my Parmazan cheese...my wine and some other things.”

Both Mary and Shirley note other eccentricities of Samuel’s life and writings. He wrote his diaries in code, not deciphered until the 1800s. His sexual exploits were “well known, scandalous at the time,” Mary said. “Lots of accounts of his lady friends. Some have said he sent the first Valentine,” Shirley said.

Sounds like Samuel Pepys would have loved Bal Week!

Visit the Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach – join the fun and discover more about the Island and Newport Peninsula’s rich history...perhaps some 17th-century British history.