



Camino

Newsletter of the Arcadia Historical Society

JULY 2007



President's Report

Carol Libby

One of the reasons local history is important is that it helps build community pride and respect. It gives us a common focus and a sense of direction. We realize what has been accomplished and what remains undone. A spirit of camaraderie engulfs us knowing we have worked together. With this thought, the Society is embarking on several projects that will revive interest in and knowledge of our city's past. Scott Hettrick and his committee of Tom Duffy, Gary Kovacic, Carol Libby, Jack McCrea and Don Swenson are investigating interpretive signage to identify significant historical landmarks and buildings within Arcadia.

Another project being developed is a pictorial history book of Arcadia. For this book, photographs and other items of historic value are being collected and many more are needed. Some of you have interesting pictures from your family album that would make a good addition to the collection being considered for publication. Were you a part of a special celebration or festival, a parade, sports event, or civic affair? Have photos of cars, buildings or family gatherings? Please give us chance to see them and perhaps they can be included.

In 1952, when the Historical Society was established, Arcadia's population was 28,722. Hinshaws Department Store was opened, a bond issue of \$1.5 million was passed to build 40 new classrooms, a High School opened for freshman and sophomores and two-way traffic was inaugurated on West Huntington Drive.

Today, Hinshaws is gone with Burlington Coat Factory taking its place, a \$218 million bond issue was passed to upgrade schools and the population has exceeded 52,000. Chicken ranches are gone, there is no more horseback riding on "Double Drive" and curbs and gutters line the streets.

Time passes quickly; It is important that we document today, for tomorrow's changes come upon us all too soon. We are in the planning stage for activities in the year ahead and hope you will join us. Your support and suggestions are important and welcome.

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Board of Directors

- Carol Libby—President
- Sherry Wang—Treasurer
- Lee Segal— Programs
- Scott Hettrick—Membership
- Gary Kovacic—Historical Marker Committee
- Jack McCrea—Caminos Editor
- Ruth Dunlap—Recording Secretary
- Tom Duffy—Historical Marker Committee and Programs
- Don Swenson—Historical Marker Committee
- Mickey Wagner Goland—Corresponding Secretary

Upcoming Museum Programs

August 16—Noon to 12:30 p.m. Bring your own Brown Bag Lunch or enjoy pizza (first come— first serve) on our patio.

September 22—Noon to 12:30 p.m. (Adult Learning Series) - How to make *Old Fashion Applesauce* .

October 20—*Harvest Birthday Party* at the Museum. Enjoy harvest fun and great surprises as the Museum celebrates its sixth year.

November 10—Noon to 2:00 p.m. (Family Fun Days) - *Raggedy Ann and Andy Tea Party*. *BYOTC* (Bring your own Tea Cup) *Exhibits*

Now through August 23—*Arcadia: A History of Service*

September 4- November 21---*First Avenue Celebrates 100 Years*

CURATOR'S REPORT

Alycia Wood



The mission of the Ruth and Charles Gilb Arcadia Historical Museum is to collect, preserve and recognize Arcadia's heritage; to create a shared identity for a diverse community; and to celebrate the City's rich history with exhibits and educational programs that will encourage community involvement. I believe the staff and volunteers honor this mission everyday, and I say thank you to everyone who helps make this Museum a community treasure.

I am beyond grateful to all of our wonderful volunteers. The Museum is fortunate to have a core group of volunteers that make it possible for the Museum to grow in popularity. To our adult docents, I say thank you for sharing your love of history with our visitors. Many people come away saying they learned much more than expected. I would also like to say thank you to our adult and teen "behind-the-scenes" volunteers who have helped organize our archives, collections, and education areas. Your assistance has helped us progress much further than expected with organization projects.

Finally, to the adult and teen volunteers who help during Family Fun Days and Adult Learning Series workshops. I would like to express my great appreciation for your hard work, kindness, and enthusiasm. At each event we see many familiar faces and I am sure our happy visitors are due to your efforts.



Carol Libby and Roberta Ramsell encourages visitors to make their own butter

I know that our great volunteers are also a reflection of the person who is responsible for overseeing them, Education Coordinator, Hwee Ching Sinclair. She is absolutely wonderful at everything she does and has made the Museum polished, professional, and fun.

We have had a great summer making ink, butter, soda pop, ice cream, peacock feather jewelry, and candy. If you missed coming to the Museum for one of our special events, I encourage you to come to one of our fall programs. Visit the Museum's website or look for the Arcadia Fun Book coming in the mail for more information.



Jeremiah Wang at the Soda Pop event

Susan Yu and Mickey Ball get ready to teach poetry writing with feather quills



Friends of the Museum and Historical Society Logo

Friends of the Museum- Mickey Ball

Our membership tea in April introduced two new members to the Friends of the Museum. Welcome, welcome, you are greatly appreciated.

Beverly Street
Stella Ross

New Officers for 2007-2008 are:

- President- Mickey Ball
- Vice President -Virginia Moseley
- Secretary -Roberta Ramsell
- Treasurer- Gian Wardell

Historical Society Logo

The Arcadia Historical Society is in the process of designing an official logo incorporating the Santa Anita Depot in its design. The Depot is presently located on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Arboretum. If you have any suggestions please let us know. One possible design appears below:



Old El Monte

By Virginia Moseley

The Butterfield stage pulled out of St. Louis on September 16, 1858, headed for San Francisco carrying the first mail bags on a regular run. It arrived in twenty three days. William Ormsby, the only through passenger on this first west-bound stage kept a diary of his trip. Approaching El Monte he wrote, "A few miles before reaching Los Angeles City, we pass through the beautiful little town of El Monte, which is ranged along the road for over five miles and is composed of a series of neat looking houses built of wood and considerable cultivated land. The fences are, many of them, 'live fences', made of planting cottonwood, poplar or willow, much like the eastern willow, that soon grows to a large size and lines the road for miles. The post office is a wooden building with a neat piazza and shingled roof which looked quite refreshing after over a thousand miles travel without seeing a house having the appearance of civilization." That small village of El Monte, which William Ormsby described so beautifully, was the only town between Los Angeles and San Bernardino. The village had a livery stable, a wagon shop, two blacksmith shops, mercantile stores, a saloon, a Masonic Hall, a school, even a temperance society and a barber-undertaker.

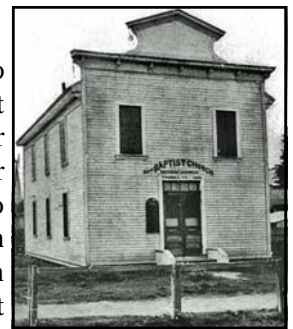


Flood damage- Rio Honda River c1914

In 1850, El Monte was located between the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel Rivers, with patches of fertile pasture and several swamps where small streams crisscrossed the land. In the swampy areas watercress was abundant and on the river banks wild grapes, cattails, berries, willows and tall grasses grew in abundance. This oasis in the midst of hot and dry land became a great place to camp, water the animals and rest before heading on to other places, particularly after gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill. Until the dams in Santa Anita Canyon were built the rivers frequently flooded during stormy weather. In 1842, Mexico could no longer afford to support the missions and Governor Pio Pico was authorized to sell some of the mission lands at auction. One of the grants was to William Workman and John Rowland. Although both men were not of Mexican descent, the land grant was legal under Spanish law because both were married to Mexican women. A few years later these men welcomed the first permanent settlers, when the Ira Thompson wagon train arrived.

The Oatman, Thompson-Brewster wagon train originally left Independence, Missouri in the summer of 1850 and consisted of over 100 people in 40 wagons. At Santa Fe the group split, one going through Utah and the other, led by Royce Oatman, through Arizona. The Oatman party stopped to rest at a Pima village where one member gave birth. Royce Oatman, anxious to move on, tried to persuade the other families to leave for Fort Yuma immediately. They refused, so Royce, with his wife and seven children, moved on alone. At the Gila River they were attacked by Apaches and the family was massacred except for two young girls, Mary Ann and Olive. Mary Ann died of starvation, but Olive was later rescued and brought to El Monte.

When Ira Thompson arrived at El Monte, he decided not to push on. A Mr. Wheeler, who claimed to be the owner of the Francisquito Rancho, sold this land to the settlers for almost nothing. Later, after much back breaking work, others also claimed title to the same land. Under the Squatters Act of 1854 some claimed parcels, and some paid for their land a second time. For one hundred years these unclear titles clogged the courts and caused some settlers to move on to free land in the Central Valley of California. Many of these early settlers' names can be found in such areas as Visalia, Gilroy and Fresno. Mr. Thompson established a stage depot in 1852 and in 1853 built the Willow Grove Hotel and Post Office. It should also be noted that in 1852, the first Protestant church in Southern California was built in El Monte. It was a Baptist Church.



Baptist Church c.1853

A few months after the arrival of the Thompson wagon train, another one commanded by Capt. Johnson, a Kentuckian, settled nearby. Captain Johnson saw the great possibilities for agriculture in the rich, damp soil and realized you didn't need rain or irrigation for crops to grow. El Monte became the first distinct American settlement in Los Angeles County. In fact, one village was called Lexington after Capt. Johnson's hometown. The Johnson and Thompson campsites were approximately two miles apart, but they worked together and became the village of Lexington. The first homes were built from willows cut into poles, placed in the damp earth and then interlaced branches and small sticks. Mud was

applied like stucco to cover the home. Roofs were built in much the same fashion and then covered with leaves, tar and sand.

In 1853, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors set up a system of townships and appointed judges to settle land disputes. Since Lexington was the only town in the El Monte Township it became the capitol and soon after, with some debate, voted to go back to the old title of El Monte. By 1858, El Monte was a bustling town of about 1,000 people with stage coaches, the pony express, three physicians and commercial agriculture that supplied wheat, vegetables and fruit, principally grapes. There was also a corn field that extended to what is now Montebello. Most of the bacon for Southern California came from El Monte. The town's first industry was a broom factory and later it became the hops



El Monte Hotel c1870

growing capital of the United States.



First City Jail

During the 1850s El Monte had its good and bad elements. Sunday horse races down Main Street, gambling, betting and other wild behavior was the norm along with drinking and fighting. It seems that the ruffians who had been driven out of the mining camps in Northern California came south to Los Angeles County. There was at least one killing per day and sheriffs and marshals never stayed long.

In Los Angeles the Rangers tried to maintain order and in El Monte the "Monte Boys" oversaw justice. In 1855 the Committee of Safety was organized in the County, but there were no municipal courts and very few judges. With the exception of federal soldiers, vigilante groups seemed to be the only law enforcement organizations. One author wrote, "When those big Texans, the Monte Boys, galloped into town, order was restored pronto. The trouble was sometimes the hanging took place too fast." In his book, "My Sixty Years in California," Harris Newmark wrote, "As soon as they received the cue, the Monte Boys galloped into town: and being by temperament and training through frontier life used to dealing with the rougher side of human nature, they were the recognized disciplinarians."



Renfro Family in El Monte

In the early 1860s the great ranches had a thriving business in hides and tallow from their herds, but these same herds were destroying the farmers' crops. Just as the conflict between ranchers and farmers was emerging, nature changed the course of events. A great drought occurred and thousands of cattle died. This was followed by torrential rains and thousands more died in the great flood of 1862-63. Suddenly ranchers were hard up and began selling off huge tracts of land. To be continued in October.

Sources: Barton, *Images of America- El Monte*; Harris, *Sixty years in Southern California*; Mudd, *A History of El Monte*; Odd Fellows Lodge, *History of El Monte* and Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail*.

A Great Gift Idea

Consider sponsoring a leaf in the Museum. The leaves and trunk of the tree are made of shaped metal and the display is featured prominently on the south wall as you enter the Museum. Donations are used to fund acquisitions and Museum educational programs.

- Copper leaves \$250**
- Bronze \$1,000**
- Silver \$5,000**
- Gold \$10,000**



Need more gift ideas?

Come by the Museum Gift Store! The Friends of the Museum supports the Museum mission by carrying unique gift items. From exquisite peacock motif gifts to postcards, the Museum gift store is a great place to get a fun gift!

Store Hours:
Tuesday through Saturday
10am to 4pm
Except for holidays

Member Profiles

Bill and Janet Peters: Janet and Bill Peters have been active members of the community since buying their first home in Arcadia in 1961. Janet has been active in several community organizations including the San Gabriel Valley Alumnae Pan-Hellenic Society and the PTA at Baldwin Stocker Elementary School, where she received an Honorary Life Membership. The Sierra Madre Girl Scout Council (now the Mt. Wilson-Vista Girl Scout Council) awarded her the Emeritus Award for her work in scouting. Bill served on the board of the California Arboretum Foundation and now writes music reviews for all Core Media publications, including the *Arcadia Weekly*.

They are long time supporters of the Ruth and Charles Gilb Historical Museum and think saving the history of Arcadia is very important. The Peters recently donated artist renderings of the interior of the Queen Anne Cottage when the interior was repainted in 1988. The drawings were prepared under the auspices of the National Paint and Coating Association in 1988 as part of the paint industry's community effort to maintain historic buildings. Bill Peters headed the project. Bill grew up in the area and has fond memories of the Arboretum before the County purchased the property and of visits to the Pony Express Museum with his parents.

The Peters have two adult children. Judy Avila teaches high school French in the Central Valley of California and Tom, who resides in Sierra Madre, is a professional double-bassist.



Tom Duffy: Tom Duffy was appointed the Historical Society's Board of Directors in April 2007. He was born in New York City and raised in San Bernardino after his family moved to California. He works as a manager in Information Technology and is very interested in local politics, cooking and in working on his 85 year old home. His wife, Richele, and their two children, Kate and Sarah, have lived in Arcadia for the past 15 years.

Ezra Corral: This summer's Getty Intern is Ezra Corral of Glendora, California. He is a third year undergraduate at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Ezra is double majoring in Philosophy and Religious Studies, with an emphasis in Art History. After finishing up his studies at Cornell, Ezra hopes to enter a dual degree program seeking both a J.D. and a PhD in Philosophy focusing on Philosophy of Law.

Volunteer/Docent Orientation and Training

Plan now for this wonderful fall volunteer opportunity! The Arcadia Historical Museum will be conducting its annual training for all who are interested in becoming docents. The classes will be in the Museum on the following Saturday mornings in September: 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 from 9 a.m. to noon. Training times are fun, educational and enriching. If you love telling stories and enjoy working with school children or Scout groups, we'd love to talk with you. Call the Museum at 574-5440 to schedule an informal Q & A session with our current docents and the Education Coordinator, Hwee-Ching Sinclair, about being a volunteer or docent at the Museum.

Santa Anita Depot

There are unique opportunities for volunteers at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. On the 127 acre facility, one of the historic buildings open to the public is the **Santa Anita Depot**. The building was saved when the construction of the 210 freeway was undertaken. Relocated and restored to its original state on the Arboretum grounds, the depot is filled with antique items from a past era. Each has an interesting history waiting to be told by the trained docents. Openings are available to those who would like to help keep the depot open to the public, and bring to life the fascinating stories the depot played in the days of "Lucky" Baldwin, his famous ranch and the beginnings of Arcadia. For more information please call Lisa Beach, the Arboretum Volunteer Coordinator, at 626 821-5897. Volunteering gives an entirely new meaning to rewarding and enriching experiences.

Mailing Address

Arcadia Historical Society

P.O. Box 60021, Arcadia, CA 91066-6021

Location Address:

380 West Huntington Dr

Arcadia, CA 91007

Curator (Alycia Wood) — 626 574-5468

Historical Society — 626 446-8512

**Education Coordinator (Hwee-Ching Sinclair) —
626 574-5478**

We are on the WEB!

<http://museum.ci.arcadia.ca.us>

Arcadia Historical Society Membership Application

Name: _____ **Address:** _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____ **Phone:** _____

Enclosed are my membership dues for \$ _____. Make your check payable to the *Arcadia Historical Society* and mail to our address on the top of this page. Life memberships are non-transferable.

Annual memberships are renewed each June 1st. Please check membership category

Individual (\$25)____; Family (\$30)____; Business (\$35)____; Life (\$400)_____

Arcadia Historical Society

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