
Heritage

El Cajon Historical Society Quarterly News

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2001

Dudley Family's Memories to be January Meeting Topic

Jean Meagher, daughter of the Dudley's Bakery family, will join us at our January 25th membership luncheon to share some mouth-watering tales of the family's important role in East County history. Her father, Dudley Pratt, was known throughout the area as a musician, orchestra leader, spotter for the Civil Air Patrol during World War II, an Assistant Postmaster, and a generous host at the family home on North First Street.

Our speaker describes herself as a 65-year El Cajon native who attended Ballantyne Elementary and Montgomery Middle Schools, Grossmont High, and San Diego State. She taught at Meridian School for a year, then in the La Mesa Spring Valley district for another 34 before retiring. She's now a popular speaker whose dozens of fascinating tales include stories of Balboa Park, Palomar Mountain, Charles Lindbergh, Beatrix Potter, and many others.

Jean will share stories of the family's life in East County, the opening of Dudley's, and of the

bakery's relocation to Santa Ysabel in 1963. She's also promised to bring recipes and samples of some of the delicious breads which have made Dudley's a delightful destination point!

We'll meet at the Jamacha Junction Restaurant, located at 777 Jamacha Road in the Harvest Ranch shopping center. The price of \$11.00 per person will include your choice of a chef's salad, chicken cordon bleu, or a french dip sandwich. Please use the registration form inserted in the center of this newsletter. And, invite a friend to join you for this entertaining look at some of our tasty local history.

Two New Books

Recommended to History and Antique Fans, Friends, and Families

My History Is America's History, a new publication from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is subtitled "15 Things You Can Do To Save America's Stories." The book's short, concise chapters are filled with practical advice and specific examples:

- Keeping a journal
- Why family recollections matter
- Playing detective with photographs
- Discovering clues in family papers
- Uncovering history in the attic
- Exploring your home's history
- Climbing the family tree
- Finding your family's place in American history
- Writing your own story
- Fun for the family
- Sharing your story
- Connecting with your community
- Finding help
- Teaching American history through family history
- Joining your hometown experts

The book also contains an extensive list of resources and a guide for preserving family treasures including scrapbooks, videotapes, leather, metals, and furniture. Each topic receives practical advice about use and display, storage, and care.

The publication could be a terrific learning guide, particularly for those families with youngsters studying local history as part of their third grade curriculum.

The book is available at a minimal cost from the National Endowment for the Humanities at 1-877-634-4478. For computer users, there is an excellent web site at www.myhistory.org.

For the many fans of PBS' "Antiques Roadshow," there's a new 350-page Antiques Show Primer written by Carol Prisant and available from Workman Publishing Company for \$19.95 (paperback). Check your local bookstore!

Board Hires Firm to Prepare New Video of Knox House

At its December meeting, the Historical Society's Board of Directors approved an agreement with Front Burner Film & Video to prepare a new 30-minute video tour of the Knox House. The completed program will be available for sale at the museum, on our Internet web site, and at other local outlets. It will also be a valuable asset to local teachers who help their third grade students prepare for the Society's annual essay contest, and will be of particular help to those teachers whose classes are unable to schedule field trips to the Knox House.

Front Burner's producer, John Moore, offered to prepare a script for review by the

Board and to film the necessary footage during January so the finished product could be ready by early Spring. Watch for an announcement of a special debut screening for our membership!

Returning Members Thanked for Their Continued Support

Dorothy Baber, the Society's Membership chair, reports that this year's first class mailing of membership renewal letters resulted in a record 55 percent response before the Christmas holidays.

Our thanks to all of you who give your generous support to the organization's ongoing programs to honor our community's heritage. We add a special note of appreciation to two new life members: the Friends of East County Arts and the Richard Weinstock family.

Window Display Results in Long-distance Purchase of Gifts for Former Resident

The Historical Society's eye-catching window display at the former Dudenhoeffer's jewelry store on Main Street brought a phone call from a San Francisco woman hoping to purchase some very special gifts for her friend, a former La Mesa resident who saw the display during his Thanksgiving trip to El Cajon. The man was so thrilled with the display and the list of our publications that he took a photo and showed it to

our caller who will now be able to surprise him with copies of the books he saw.

So, with help from a good friend and the U.S. Post Office, a homesick former East County resident now has his own collection of several of our most popular publications.

Our appreciation goes to Christy and Joe Klock, Eldonna Lay, June Leck, Virginia Levenson, and others who create those occasional and beautiful displays at Dudenhoeffer's and at the El Cajon Library. Your hard work is, indeed, appreciated!

Children's Essay Contest Info to be Available Soon

Shortly after the first of the year, Tammy Goodwater and her hard working committee will issue the schedule and requirements for participation in this year's essay contest for third graders in local schools. The contest is a creative writing project which allows students to share the work they have researched and written as part of their study of local history.

As in past years, students will be encouraged to conduct interviews, use library resources, and tour the Knox House as part of their research. Past participants have written about topics as varied as Olaf Wieghorst, Captain Archibald Gillespie, the El Cajon Speedway, the Diegueno Indian tribe, Colonel Ed Fletcher, the Best Spot Cafe, and the family for whom Chase Avenue was named.

The volunteer readers fortunate enough to help Tammy evaluate the essays always learn a great deal about local history from the participants in the organization's enjoyable annual competition.

'Honored Historian' Title Awarded to Three Members

A highlight of the Society's 2000 Annual Meeting, held at the El Cajon Community Center October 25th, was the announcement of three recipients of the organization's first "Honored Historian" awards. President Judy Garrett introduced the three surprised honorees and thanked them for their important contributions to the Historical Society.

Retired Lakeside photographer Bill Bledsoe was thanked "for the donation of a personal photographic collection chronicling more than thirty years of El Cajon's history." The photos, many of which are new to our collection, are work from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, and were an invaluable source of information in last year's preparation of a history of the buildings on Main Street in the downtown area.

Former Historical Society leader Russ Stockwell was honored "for more than twenty years of service as the organization's archivist, researcher, mentor, and three-time president."

The current president introduced Russ as our "role model for volunteer commitment" and cited a number of projects he had led during his many years of involvement with the Society.

Model volunteer Jonna Waite was recognized "for more than ten years of service as editor and designer of the organization's newsletter." Her long tenure in the job — more than 35 newsletters and countless hours of typing, folding, labeling, and mailing the quarterly publications — was set in perspective by a look back at people and stories in the first issue she produced for us.

All three honorees were in the audience and able to enjoy the audience's enthusiastic applause. Congratulations — and, thank you all!

Society Continues to Receive Donations of Historical Items, Will Consider New Programs

One of the major issues to be discussed at the Board of Directors' planning meeting in January is the organization's future role in the collection, display, loan, or sale of historical items which are donated to us. The response could identify a new direction for the Society, and we encourage comments from our members as we evaluate a variety of options.

The Knox House museum is specific to the community's early history and has been decorated to reflect life here at the turn of the

century. The building is fully furnished and we currently have no additional display space for new items. As a consequence, the many family possessions — print materials, medicine and perfume bottles, handmade laces, sewing materials, and other things — donated by former resident Donnell Martin and his wife, must either be stored or shown in our temporary exhibits in the Dudenhoefter store window or in the El Cajon Library.

We have also, within the past three months, found ourselves the recipient of two other donations, one from a Spring Valley resident who entrusted the Society with a number of elegant women's dresses and jackets, children's shoes, crocheted doilies, and other items. Several of the pieces have been displayed at the Library, but most are currently stored at the Knox House.

A donation from a La Jolla woman whose late mother had lived near Balboa Park included a marble bust, a dictionary stand, and several contemporary paintings. The bust is now on the desk at the Knox, the book stand holds our Bible, and the paintings have, with the donor's permission, been given to the Arts Center Foundation and the Wieghorst Foundation for use in their annual fund raising auctions.

As older families move to smaller homes and as younger people find themselves without storage space for many of their collected possessions, we anticipate that historical societies will receive an increasing number of donations from people who want a way of sharing their valued items with an appreciative audience.

More than a year ago, Russ Stockwell, our former Society president and recipient of one of last year's Honored Historian awards, suggested that the organization consider the creation of a Twentieth Century museum with collections and displays specific to East County's role in the Roaring '20s, World War II, and technology.

The current president has spoken of the need for a storage facility which could be used by our organization or which could serve as a repository for a consortium of East County historical societies.

At its January planning session, our Board of Directors will discuss those and other suggestions as we determine a course of action for the Historical Society as protector of our important local heritage.

Comments, suggestions, and involvement are welcomed by the Board. Please contact Judy Garrett at (619) 589-8010 or send a note to her at our Post Office address.

Collection and Preservation of Additional Oral Histories to be Among Projects for 2001

Board members are evaluating a number of current techniques for recording the memories of some of our local residents and will make the effort a priority in the work program for 2001.

The Society has several audio and video taped interviews in its reference library and expects to continue to use both methods of

recording oral histories. We are also exploring some of the new computer technologies now available which may allow us to store interviews on more permanent materials, ideally allowing them to be available for reference and study by future generations.

Among the ideas which will be considered by the Board are potential partnerships with local schools and colleges. An NBC television news report on December 23rd, for example, described a program at Eureka College in Illinois which paired history students with elderly people in the local community to help write their memoirs. The history professor who developed the program spoke highly of the popular project as an enjoyable learning opportunity for everyone involved.

Our members are invited to participate in our program, as well. If you would enjoy conducting interviews or if you would like to recommend an interview subject, please let a Board member know.

With the publication of Jim Graves' newest book late last year, the number of publications for sale at the Knox House continues to grow. Jim's book, titled Always Movin', is the story of Jim's parents and their adventures in the new community of El Cajon. The book is for sale at the museum at \$12 per copy and, thanks to Jim's generosity, the Historical Society will be the recipient of the proceeds for the first 50 copies sold.

Other publications for sale include Valley of Opportunity (\$23 soft cover, \$44 hard cover), El Cajon: a Pictorial History (\$10), Bus and Auto Tour of Historical El Cajon (\$5), and the four-volume childhood series (\$3 each).

Also available are Jim Graves' two earlier books, The Harris - Graves Families – Pioneers of El Cajon (\$7) and Son of the South Come West (\$11.50). Carol Clark Cunningham's The Ancestral (\$12) relates her family's history through the memories of a treasured piece of furniture which has been part of the family since 1812.

Stop by to see those books and others. They are fascinating reading and, as our caller from San Francisco learned (see the article on page 3), they make wonderful gifts.

*Jim Graves' Newest Book,
Others Still for Sale at Knox*

*New AASLH Document
Offers Thoughtful
Definition of History and Its
Importance*

The American Association for State and Local History recently published a short essay titled "The Gift of History," the result of a two-year project to write a document which could be of use by individuals and organizations striving to explain the importance of history in their local communities. The opening paragraphs are reprinted here:

"History is the account of things said and done in the past. In this sense, each of us has a history — an account of where we came from and how we got to be who we are. Communities, likewise, each have a history. So, too, do nations, families, and human groups of every sort.

"History serves us in many ways. It can inspire us with stories of exemplary lives or caution us with tales of human folly and wickedness. History can inform and educate us by providing the context and perspective that allow us to make thoughtful decisions about the future. And history has the power to delight and enrich us, enlarging and intensifying the experience of being alive."

Copies of the full document are available by mail from AASLH (call the Nashville office at 615-320-3203) or on the organization's Internet web site at www.aaslh.org.

California Museums Play Important Educational Role

A recent report issued by the California Association of Museums summarized a number of important facts from a survey mailed to more than

1 500 museums, science centers, zoos, nature centers, and other educational resources in the state. Foremost among the survey findings were these -- museums are an asset to the state's public education system, providing ongoing educational opportunities for adults and cultural enrichment to people of all ages, and often being involved in a variety of activities that enrich their communities. We should all be proud of ourselves!

The Inside Back Page

A Terrific Year, Millennium or Not!

by Judy Garrett, President

As the debate continues -- was 2000 the millennium or will 2001 be? -- the year certainly passed quickly! As I write this in mid-December, we're all conscientiously drafting our annual New Year's resolutions, vowing to be thinner, smarter, healthier, happier, to get more sleep, to spend more time with friends, to watch more sunrises, and to be resolute about our resolutions. As you read this in mid-January, we've all abandoned the concept for another year.

But, let's do try to spend more time with friends, to watch more sunrises, and to follow through with the best of the goals on your list and mine. Thinner can wait.

Last year was a fine one for the Historical Society and there are many, many people who played a role in the projects and programs we were involved in. Let me try, with fear that I'll miss one or two, to thank all of them for their participation:

- Jonna Waite, who represented us so well for so many years as *Heritage* editor
- Bill Bledsoe and Russ Stockwell, our other Honored Historians for 2000
- Melody Arnold, who contributed hundreds of hours of service as our docent coordinator
- all of the Sprites who worked with us as Junior Docents
- Bill Murphy, who planned and oversaw three membership meetings and our July band concert
- Fran Hill, talented manager of our continually growing archival collection
- Tammy Goodwater, chair of the essay contest and designer of our terrific new Internet web site
- Virginia Levenson, Carla Nowak, and Lou Toth, who were Tammy's essay contest committee
- Rick and Sharon Hall and Russ Litchfield, who researched the histories of Main Street businesses
- Bea Heyenga and Jim Graves, chairs of the May "Home, Art and Antique Car Tour"
- Sprites and Albertson's Inc. for generous grants to help develop the Bledsoe photo collection

- the City of El Cajon for continued maintenance of the Knox House building and grounds
- Carla Nowak, for months of clear, concise, and accurate minutes of our Board meetings
- Christy Klock, for another sterling year as the organization's hard-working Treasurer
- Dorothy Baber, who skillfully managed our membership roster and mailing list on her home computer
- Board members Ellen Anderson, Melody Arnold, Dorothy Baber, Tammy Goodwater, Rick Hall, Bea Heyenga, Fran Hill, Del Hood, Christy Klock, Eldonna Lay, Dorothy Maranda, Bill Murphy, Carla Nowak, Harriet Stockwell, Jeanne Thacher, and Jonna Waite for ideas, support, participation, and encouragement throughout the year
- all of our members, speakers, docents, volunteers, visitors, and others who made 2000 so special!

Board to Hold Annual Planning Session in January

One of the first items on the agenda of the 2001 Board of Directors will be a planning session to develop a comprehensive work program for the current year. We will continue our quarterly meetings and newsletter, of course, but the Board is looking at additional ways of providing services and activities for our members and may consider suggestions including field trips to other museums and historical sites, workshops and lectures on specific preservation topics, home tours, and fund raising events for new community programs and partnerships.

and opportunities for property acquisition and the creation of additional museum space.

Thoughts? Want to be involved? Please call Judy Garrett at 589-8010.

Knox House Museum hours:
12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Thursdays and Saturdays

Heritage is published quarterly for members and friends of the El Cajon Historical Society. Send comments and materials for publication to the El Cajon Historical Society, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973. Phone: (619) 444-3800.

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We will also review our need for storage and display space and will evaluate a variety of options

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Membership Meeting
Thursday, January 25, 2001
-- details inside --