

Heritage

El Cajon Historical Society Quarterly News

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2003

Historical Society, Community Mourn Loss of Two Leaders, Both Respected Champions of Local and East County History

Russ Stockwell and Chloris Scott, both stalwart supporters of our organization, passed away within weeks of each other this Winter. Their knowledge, their commitment, and their enthusiasm for local history will be sorely missed by the hundreds of people, young and old, whose lives they touched.

Russ, an El Cajon resident for almost 50 years, died of heart failure January 27th, two days after his 88th birthday. He'll be missed by the Historical Society, the Sister Cities Committee, and the many other organizations he so generously volunteered his time to for so many, many years. Our organization was a particular favorite of his and it's due to Russ' hard work and meticulous attention to detail that we have such an excellent archival system for our growing collection of

photos, articles, and other documents recording the history of El Cajon and the valley.

He was an early advocate of a museum to honor the late artist Olaf Wieghorst, a local resident whose Western landscapes are known throughout the world. That museum is now blossoming on Rea Avenue, just blocks from the Historical Society's Knox House museum.

Russ was also a skilled photographer and an eager student, an adventurer who loved traveling to new places in his little Volkswagen beetle, sharing ideas and experiences with people he met on his many journeys.

The words written in the program shared at Russ' memorial service honor his memory well: "He will be remembered for the joy he always brought, for his friendship, for his caring, for the things he shared and taught. The lives he touched are better for having known him."

Chloris, a long-time member of the El Cajon Historical Society, a local news columnist, an early advocate of equal pay for equal work, and a tireless worker for a variety of

important causes, died March 9th, also at the age of 88.

Among her proudest accomplishments was an El Cajon Soroptimists' service project in the early 1960s to create a safe, enjoyable after-school program for local girls, an idea which grew and matured into today's successful Boys and Girls Club.

A journalist for more than 20 years, Chloris first retired in 1968 from her role as editor of the women's page for The Daily Californian. She almost immediately accepted a call to serve as executive director of the Girls Club, a job she held until retiring again in 1976.

Many of our members remember Chloris' monthly "A look back" columns which appeared in The Daily Californian during the early 1980s, columns which told her readers about topics as wide ranging as the Mother Goose Parade, the Hall family, the city's incorporation, schools and street names, and silent movies filmed in the El Cajon valley.

Chloris also had a particular interest in nurturing young people's knowledge of local history, a topic the Historical Society continues to encourage through our annual Third Grade Essay Contest. One of the prizes awarded in the annual competition was named in honor of Chloris' mother, Nettie Kersten.

Quarterly Meeting Speaker to Focus on Important Role of Today's Historical Societies

Helen Ofield, President of the Lemon Grove Historical Society, will join our members Thursday, April 24th for a lively discussion of the role of historical societies. Thanks to modern technology and to a growing number of historical societies which are choosing to play activist roles in their communities, we've come a long way from the stereotype of dreadfully serious people in foreboding buildings who spend time studying old papers. Web sites, videos, workshops, touring exhibits, partnerships with other museums and organizations, speakers bureaus, position papers — the opportunities to reach new audiences and to make an impact on our communities are limited only by our imaginations.

The Lemon Grove Historical Society has two house museums in City Center Park — the Parsonage Museum, an 1897 Victorian, has been open for several years, and the H. Lee House, a 1928 Tudor Revival recently moved from the path of freeway construction, is being renovated. The Society is also working to open the Virginia Spencer Thren Memorial Library at the same location.

The organization's Internet web site describes the park as "a center of learning and culture for all ages, where you can explore civic and architectural history, take in a jazz concert, learn cabinet-making or embroidery, or just eat lunch by the fountain while you enjoy the rose garden . . ."

Our April 24th program will be held at the Jamacha Junction restaurant, located at 777 Jamacha Road near the Harvest Ranch Market.

The \$15 lunch will offer a choice of pork cutlet, chicken cordon bleu, or french dip sandwich. An information flyer and registration form will be in your mailbox soon!

Historic Homes, Art Studios, and More on Tenth Annual Home Tour Set for May 17th

An 1892 mansion, two artists' studios, and a garden railroad are among the attractions on this year's annual home tour, one of our most popular and eagerly anticipated events. Tickets for the Saturday, May 17th, self-guided tour are \$10.00 if purchased in advance and may be ordered on the form included in this newsletter.

Bea Heyenga and the tour committee have arranged for participants to see five interesting sites, one of which is the former Pepperwood Mansion built by Mr. and Mrs. Ed Judson in 1892 and which, since 1969, has been used and enjoyed as the clubhouse at Pepperwood Mobilehome Park on Pepper Drive.

The Somers-Linden House built in 1891 by William H. Somers, the first editor of the El Cajon Valley News, is also on the tour. The 2½-story farmhouse has been designated a structure of "historical and architectural significance" by the County of San Diego.

Artists Dorine Lantz and Betsy Brown will welcome guests to their in-home studios. Bob and Mary Lou Newsom will invite people to see their garden railroad, a 450 foot long miniature railway which meanders past the pool and gazebo

and through the extensive landscaping in their yard.

Questions? Please call Bea Heyenga at 444-4366 or the museum at 444-3800.

Third Grade Essay Contest Winners to be Announced at June 5th Celebration

Entries in this year's Third Grade Essay Contest will be collected at the Cajon Valley Union School District office April 11th and submitted to readers who will have the difficult task of choosing winning essays from among the many submitted.

Awards, trophies, and certificates will be presented to participating students Thursday evening, June 5th, in a 7:00 program at the El Cajon Community Center. The popular event is always enjoyed by hundreds of proud families and friends.

Children study local history as part of their third grade curriculum and our essay contest allows them to show what they've learned about individuals, buildings, houses, streets, businesses, or other topics related to El Cajon history. Many of the participants interview people in the community as part of their research. The Historical Society has been the lucky beneficiary of a number of the children's reports since the contest began in 1982.

If you'd like to help read some of the dozens of essays we expect to receive this year, please call Tammy Goodwater, our Essay

Contest chair, at 596-7780 or leave a message for her at the museum — she'll be delighted to hear from you!

(Editor's note: best wishes to Tammy and her husband, Kyle, now celebrating the recent birth of their daughter, Emily Irene, whose big brother, 20 month old Owen, has already dubbed her "Emmy.")

Board Encourages Gifts and Bequests to Help Society's Programs Grow and Expand

One of the many ways this organization has been able to develop the variety of educational programs and other services we provide to the local community is through financial gifts from our generous members and friends.

Did you know there are a number of ways to nurture the creation or continuation of programs important to the people of El Cajon? The following suggestions are taken from materials written by Leave a Legacy Arizona, a cooperative effort among that state's non-profit organizations which focuses on three key messages:

- # anyone can give,
- # the process is easy, and
- # any size gift can make a difference.

The Leave a Legacy information includes a list of the "Top Ten Things You Can Do Today to Leave Your Legacy." They are:

1. Prepare a will.
2. Leave a gift in your will to a non-profit organization or faith group.
3. Leave a specific dollar amount or percentage of the assets in your will to your favorite charity.
4. Consider using assets for your legacy gifts.
5. Name your favorite charity as the beneficiary of your IRA or pension plan.
6. Purchase a new life insurance policy, naming your favorite charity as the beneficiary.
7. Name your favorite charity as the beneficiary of an existing life insurance policy.

8. Remember deceased loved ones with memorial gifts to charities.

9. Encourage family members and friends to leave legacy gifts to their favorite charities.

10. Ask your financial advisor to discuss legacy gifts with their other clients.

The El Cajon Historical Society has been the beneficiary of memorial gifts and donations from a number of local families and we encourage you to consider joining them with a gift of your own. Your financial advisors are well qualified to provide information about a variety of mechanisms and can offer advice about those most in keeping with your own needs and desires.

As the Leave a Legacy organization tells us, "This is Your Chance to Touch the Future."

"Heritage of the Americas Museum"

by Sebastian Revels

Third Place Winner, 2002 Essay Contest

"In the area of Cuyamaca College there is a wonderful museum by the name of "Heritage of the Americas Museum." The founder of this wonderful museum is Mr. Bud Lueck.

"Mr. Lueck's drawings of the first museum were done in 1988. The museum's construction was completed in 1992. The museum was built to display the art of the early Americas because we live in the Americas, and the art and lives of the early North, Central and South American ancestors has much to teach us. That is why the

museum's statement is "By their art shall we know them."

"Mr. Lueck was greatly assisted by his granddaughter Stephanie Lueck in the years of developing the museum. The museum obtained its early possessions by Mr. Lueck personally purchasing artifacts and collections. Friends made donations of their personal collections.

"When a visitor leaves the parking lot and walks through the entryway, they will notice how the building's design is quite unique. Mr. Lueck believed that the building should represent the four cardinal directions: north, east, south, and west. The cardinal directions played a major role in the life of the early Americas Indians. The four cardinal directions have become the four wings in the museum. The circle around the four wings represents the sun which was very significant to assisting the circle of life.

"A visitor will first discover a Natural History wing. This wing contains meteorites, minerals and fossils. The next stop is the Archaeology wing. In this wing the visitor will find pre-Columbian treasures from Mexico and Peru. The journey continues to the Anthropology wing where you will discover how life was for early Native American people. The fourth wing will be the Art wing. Artists' talents are displayed by bronze sculptures, drawings and paintings.

"There are three additional areas in the museum's design. The Education wing contains the library and a video area. In between the Archaeology and Natural History wing there is a Tropical Patio. A second Desert Patio has

desert plants and is located between the Anthropology and Art wings.

"The museum operates by friendly volunteers to assist with the gift shop, maintain the gardens and giving tours. The museum is open to the public and is always free to children. Last year's attendance was about 12,000. Each year's attendance increases approximately ten percent. The museum also offers educational tours, art classes and summer camps.

"The museum is a great experience and the journey will never end for the visitor."

(When this essay was written last Spring, Sebastian was a student in Mrs. Krupens' third grade class at Vista Grande Elementary School.)

Late Member's Columns Still Fine Source of Information about our Local History

(Editor's note: the following is reprinted from a column written for The Daily Californian May 20, 1981, by Chloris Scott, long-time Historical Society member who died in March.)

"The second edition of The El Cajon Valley News (now The Daily Californian) was published March 19, 1892. W.H. Somers, the editor, was also a horticulturist and sold real estate. On the front page of the eight-page

second edition (six pages were in the March 12 first edition) Somers offered for sale several real estate bargains.

"One offering was 391 acres in the heart of the valley, with 142 acres of fine bearing vineyard, large orchards of choice fruits including several hundred large olive trees, a large packing house and one of the oldest raisin vineyards in San Diego County. Price reduced from \$225 to \$150 an acre.

"If you wanted to own 8½ acres adjoining the village of El Cajon, all improved with house, large barn and orchard for only \$4,000, then you would have a real bargain.

"One early land purchase, which stayed in the family for more than 70 years, was the seven acres on East Main Street that W.D. Hall and Charles Kessler bought in 1897 for \$60, with plans to start a lumber yard.

"Six years later Hall bought out his partner. The land and business stayed in the Hall family until 1971 when those seven acres, plus four belonging to other people, were bought for \$1.3 million for today's Superblock.

....

"Another site that wouldn't be recognized by a former owner is a portion of today's Parkway Plaza. Josephus Asher, San Diego's first nurseryman and a promoter of the first county fair, bought 34 acres for \$1,025.55 in gold coins in 1878 from R.G. Clark. Asher's family lived in a house on land now occupied by Sears, and grew nursery stock along what is Johnson Avenue now paved to provide shopping center parking."

Einstein archive at Hebrew University" in Jerusalem.

The writer told his readers the crowds waiting to enter the museum were "as thick as the holiday throngs awaiting entry to the FAO Schwartz toy store on Fifth Avenue."

The exhibit, organized with assistance from the Skirball Center in Los Angeles, will be seen in Los Angeles in 2004.

Exhibit Personalizes Icon's Image, Brings Legend to Life

In an emerging new trend, museum exhibit designers are working hard to develop displays and stories which humanize their subjects, an approach which has quickly become popular with audiences. New programs at Mount Vernon were described in the January *Heritage* and, this month, we focus on a major Albert Einstein retrospective which opened in New York last November.

Brilliant physicist, amateur violinist, draft-dodging bohemian, Nobel Prize winner, security risk, and outspoken humanitarian, the man and his life are honored in an exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History. Einstein's work laid the foundation for much of the research into the evolution of the universe, as well as the foundation for modern technological advances including lasers and computer chips.

According to a December 2nd story from the Los Angeles Times, the exhibit is the result of three years of work, a "clever science lesson that encompasses 7,000 square feet of gallery space, sugar-coated with scandal and seasoned with controversy. It combines interactive exhibits with intriguing personal documents culled from the

The Inside Back Page

Of Faces and Places and Place Names

by Judy Garrett, *Heritage* Editor

"When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

Samuel Johnson, 18th century English writer

An opinion many would cheerfully support, now more than two hundred years after Johnson's observation! Other people, equally passionate about their own cities and towns, treasure the stories of their ancestors' bold journeys as they left friends and familiar locales to head for new homes. What drew twenty-three year old Amaziah Knox to California from the state of Maine in 1856? A nineteen year old Danish artist named Olaf Wieghorst to the American Southwest in 1918? Our large Chaldean population to the El Cajon valley from Iraq during the late 20th century?

A recent holiday in Florida took me to two small communities on that state's west coast, each with a fascinating history of its own. Scots from Edinburgh helped settle the community of Dunedin, a town of approximately forty thousand people which once had the largest fleet of sailing vessels in Florida. The town boasts of a number of historical highlights including the first frozen orange juice concentrate, the first home of the Professional Golfers Association (the PGA), and current home of the A.C. Nielsen Company, source of television's Nielsen ratings. Dunedin honors its Scottish heritage every Spring with the Highland Games and Festival. Downtown shops carry Scottish foods and clothing, and the Historical Society includes a sketch of a piper on its membership brochure.

A few miles north, the town of Tarpon Springs reflects the influence of Greek immigrants drawn there to work in the thriving sponge industry. The town is a worldwide leader in natural sponge production and the Sponge Docks, with dozens of shops and Greek restaurants, has become a popular tourist destination. The community celebrates its heritage every year with a Greek Fest, a Greek Independence Day Parade, and the largest Epiphany Celebration outside of Greece.

But, before Tarpon Springs became known for sponges, it was known for the plentiful game fish in the local waters and was advertised as a beautiful, affordable residential community, a promotion which attracted the wealthy northerners who built many of the city's well preserved Victorian mansions. An early resident was Anson P.K. Safford, ex-governor of the Arizona Territory, who moved to Tarpon Springs in the 1880s to sell land for one of the newly formed real estate enterprises. His sister, Mary, moved with him and became the first female physician in Florida.

Each of us, each of our families, each of our communities has an equally engrossing and unique story to tell. Those stories enrich us, empower us, enlighten us, entertain us. They contribute to the fabric of our societies. We're all richer because of them.

Did You Know.....?

..... More than 59 million people in this country did volunteer work between September 2001 and September 2002. Women volunteer more often than men. Working people are more likely to volunteer than those who are unemployed or not in the work force. Sixty-nine percent devote their time to a single organization.

..... America's museums commit more than 18 million instructional hours every year to programs for kindergarten through 12th grade students. Nearly 70 percent say the number of schools, students, and teachers they serve has grown in the past five years.

..... PBS plans a Summer 2003 "American Attic" series focusing on homes and artifacts that tell something new about the nation's history.

Knox House Museum hours:

12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Saturdays
or by appointment.

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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— for MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION, please visit the museum or call us at (619) 444-3800 —

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Quarterly Meeting
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— details inside —