



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

August 2015 Newsletter

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Tour and Talk: Explore Backstage at the Sierra Madre Playhouse!

Story by Maggie Ellis, Photos courtesy Ward Calaway



This front-page spot is where we usually provide you with the history of a local home or other significant property, but this time our subject is the Sierra Madre Playhouse. The history of that downtown landmark will be presented in the form of a delightful talk by the Playhouse's own Ward Calaway on Wednesday evening, September 9. There will also be a backstage tour that you do not want to miss!

You know the Playhouse stages live theater now, and you may know it was a movie house in its past. But that's not all. Built in 1923, it has had other incarnations over its lifetime. And theater in Sierra Madre did not begin when the Playhouse was built. Sierra Madre has always attracted creative citizens who loved the arts, and they did not neglect the thespian arts, staging performances here and there around town. You will hear a bit about those too.

What will you see in the backstage tour? There's the fun and funky Green Room, the dressing room, and all the levers and wires and exciting bits that make it all possible. You will have the opportunity to stand on the stage and look out over the seats, seeing what the players see. You will also be surprised at what the players see in their peripheral vision, things hidden from the audience. If you want to declaim a few favorite lines while you're up there, or try a few bars of a song, this is your chance.

The backstage area, which leads to the stage, is accessible from a side door, so you don't have to clamber up on the stage to see everything. A play will be in the middle of its run (*Always...Patsy Cline* will be ending its run soon), so you will be standing in a real working set.

Our community contains a treasure trove of memories, kept in citizens' minds and photo albums, and the Playhouse is eager to gather all the memories it can. Perhaps you have a memory you could talk about at this event. Let us know! Your memories would enrich the evening. If you have old photos, please contact the Playhouse.

Backstage at the Sierra Madre Playhouse

- Wednesday, September 9, 7:00 pm
- 87 West Sierra Madre Blvd.
- \$ 5 members; \$10 non-members
- Reservations not required
- Questions? Contact Maggie Ellis at 355-7074 or email MaggieEllis04@msn.com



President's Message

I am very honored and pleased to become your new President for SMHPS. Under the leadership of our past President, Amy Putman, the board was able to reorganize, establish new goals, and start some worthy projects. I hope to continue that path and with the help of our new board, broaden the awareness throughout our community and the surrounding cities of who we are, and what we have to offer our members. I believe it is important to establish a network between the historical societies along our foothills and in so doing, build a way to share our thoughts, projects and ideas for keeping the history of these foothills alive.

I would like to see our museums, Lizzie's Trail Inn and Richardson House, become more of a focal point within our community. We are in the process of restoring them and at the same time having them be a learning center for our docents (teen and adult), the school children of our town, and the many visitors that come by each weekend.

Therefore it is important that we extend our hours to allow more people to visit our museums. We are looking for more adults to

be trained as docents. If you are interested please contact myself, or Maggie Ellis.

Please note the calendar of events for this coming year. We hope you will be able to participate in many of these "adventures"! We are starting off on September 9 with an historical backstage tour and talk at our Sierra Madre Playhouse. This building has been used for a variety of venues over the years. I am excited to be working on our "historic" cemetery tour, which will take place on October 17. You will be meeting some of our prominent past residents who helped make our city what it is today. We travel up to Adams Pack Station on November 8 to see the mules, watch a demonstration on how to pack a mule, and have an opportunity to have a great lunch around a roaring campfire. How fun is that!

I look forward to talking with you, and to our new members, I give you a warm "Welcome."

**Respectfully,
Leslie Ziff**



Membership Report

Look at all the wonderful people who have joined the Historical Society since the last newsletter came out: Joe & Teresa Tortomasi, Mary Carney & Dave Felt, Leslie Prescott, Dr. Ea Madrigal, Colleen McEvoy, Gordon & Mary Lou Caldwell, Patricia & Tim Karamitros (Pat is now on the Board), Stephen Saurenman, Janet Emery, Beverly Clifton, Sgt. Joe Ortiz SMPD, Steven & Denise Delmar, Catherine Evans & Edward Stanislawski, Laura & Ravinder Bhatia, Jennifer McClairin, Harland Heath, Shannon King, Fred & Margaret Krinke, Joseph Dossen DDS, Elaine Aguilar, Joe Feeny, Rachelle Arizmendi, Tony Tanacos, Marla Black, Jason Grohs, Antony Portantino, Marlene Roscher, Kimberly Buchanan, Matt Malley & Kathy Sanmartino (Matt is now on the Board), Hugh & Linda Saurenman, Laurie Beyer, Vanessa Withers, Bill & Sharon Ramsey, Kevin Kane & Sandy Snider, Andy & Julie Benscome, Mark & Kerri Abernathy, Carolyn Gravatte and Andrea Gayhart .

We are extremely grateful for - and heartened by - this outpouring of new support for the Historical Society and all we do. Our membership is our strength.

We are also proud to announce that the following members are now Lifetime Members: Barry & Leslie Ziff (Leslie is now your President); town historian and long-time Board member Phyllis Chapman; and Historical Society mainstay Maurice Orme, who as a child lived in Richardson House. His mother, Elsie Orme, worked with Lizzie of Lizzie's Trail Inn!

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Linda Lawyer, a Lifetime Member and major supporter of SMHPS; member Dorothy Murphy; longtime member Lillias Eubanks, whose father was a conductor on the Red Cars for 35 years and who made significant contributions of items to our museums; Ruth Pickett, who moved to Sierra Madre in 1923 and knew Lizzie; outstanding community figure Ann Durgerian; and Helen Obazawa, who was a Historical Society member since almost day one and was a pillar throughout, and whose recipe for our legendary Famous Lemonade we've been using all these years.

Maggie Ellis, *Membership Chair*
MaggieEllis04@msn.com

Teen Docents Finish Summer Training

By Leslie Ziff

The Sierra Madre Library and SMHPS have been training teen docents for the past several years. This summer the Children's Librarian, Christine Smart, and SMHPS President and Education Chair Leslie Ziff have finished an eight-week training program with eight teens from Sierra Madre Middle School, Gooden School, Judson High School, St. Monica's Academy, and New Horizons School.



These Teen Docents will now be available to help give tours for the Storyboard at the Library and Storyboard and Museum Tours at Lizzie's Trail Inn and the Richardson House. Great Job Kids!



2015-2016 Board of Directors



The new board being introduced by Nominating Committee Chair Judy Webb-Martin at our Lizzie's Famous Chicken & Ravioli Dinner event in June:

Front row (from left to right): Rod Spears, Archives Co-Chair; Maurice Orme, Director at Large; Delna Abernathy, Director at Large; Christel Chang, Ways & Means Chair; Louise Neiby, Oral History Chair; Joan Spears, Archives Co-Chair; Amy Putnam, Treasurer; and Norma Bachwansky, Vice President/ Museums Curator.

Back row: Pat Karamitros, Director at Large; Teresa Chaure, Director at Large; and Leslie Ziff, President. Not pictured: Maggie Ellis, Membership/Website Chair and Joe Catalano, Director at Large.

Officers:

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| President | Leslie Ziff |
| Vice President | Norma Bachwansky |
| Secretary | vacant |
| Treasurer | Amy Putnam |

Committee Chairs:

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Archives Co-Chairs | Joan and Rod Spears |
| Membership/Website | Maggie Ellis |
| Museums Curator | Norma Bachwansky |
| Oral History | Louise Neiby |
| Programs | vacant |
| Publicity | vacant |
| Ways & Means | Christel Chang |

Directors at Large:

| |
|-----------------|
| Delna Abernathy |
| Joe Catalano |
| Teresa Chaure |
| Pat Karamitros |
| Maurice Orme |

Non-Board Members:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Library Board of Trustees Liaison | ----- |
| Newsletter Design | Diane Sands |

www.smhps.org
SMHPS@outlook.com



Lizzie's 3rd Annual Chicken and Ravioli Dinner a Great Success!

By Leslie Ziff

On June 27, the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society held our third annual dinner at Lizzie's Trail Inn and Richardson House Museums. Our museums were open to view new exhibits focusing on Sierra Madre manufacturers, businesses and services from the 1930s through the 1950s. There were artifacts from various businesses around our town such as the Sierra Vista Paper, Roess' Market, E. Waldo Ward's, Hartman's Drug Store, Lee and Willard McCarty Figurines, and Suman's Petalware.

The Teen Docents were dressed in period costumes to greet visitors on the porch of Lizzie's and give tours in Richardson House. They also helped "Lizzie" hand out the wonderful dinners especially made by the Fresh Gourmet-Peacock Café at the Arboretum.

We want to give a special thanks to the St. Rita's Boy Scouts and all the many others that donated their time and energies to make this dinner a very special event!



Above: President Leslie Ziff with the costumed Teen Docents.
Below and Left: Everyone enjoys a wonderful dinner in the park.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

2015

- September 9** History and Tour of the Sierra Madre Playhouse, 7:00 pm
- September 17** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- October 15** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- October 17** Cemetery Tour
- November 8** Adams Pack Station Event
- November 19** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- November TBA** "Dickens Village"
- December 17** Holiday Party at Hart Park House with a speaker (Mt. Lowe topic)

2016

- January 21** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- February 18** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- February TBA** Authors Forum
- March 17** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- March TBA** Wisteria Festival (one-day booth)
- April 21** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- April TBA** Home Tour
- May 19** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- May 28** Mt. Wilson Trail Race (booth)
- May TBA** Art Fair (two-day booth)
- June 16** Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm
- June 25** Lizzie's Chicken & Ravioli and Annual Meeting Dinner
- June TBA** Sierra Madre Garage Sale (booth/antiques)
- July 4** Participate in Fourth of July Parade (ride in old cars or jitney?)

Up at the Museums

Story by Norma Bachwansky, Photos by Chris Bachwansky

We've had a busy summer! East Montecito Ave was the location of several pottery studios in the 1940's. This summer we were fortunate to be able to purchase 100 pieces of "Petalware," a unique flower designed dishware made by Suman Pottery. We had a large part of the collection on display during the Annual Chicken Dinner in the Park. Bud Switzer, who worked at Suman, was on hand to answer questions for visitors. He also shared some of his personal photos of the studio. Bud kindly allowed us to make copies of the photos for our files.

We also had a generous donation of 75 high quality ceramic pieces made by McCarty Brothers Studio, which was located near the Suman Studio. The collection showcases the multi-national figurines that McCarty was known for. These were also on display at the Annual Dinner. If you didn't get a chance to see them, a selection of pieces from both studios is currently on display in Richardson House.

We have been fortunate to receive donations of several other interesting items recently. A very unusual milk bottle, manufactured in 1941, has a neck with a "cream cup" at the top of the neck to collect the cream as it rose to the top of the bottle, separate from the milk. The bottle was excavated from a two-foot deep hole in Marlene and Harry Enmark's backyard.

Cristel Chang brought in a unique tabletop spinning wheel that goes well with our antique wool winder. Preliminary inquiries find that this pretty, carved wheel may have been used to spin on Sundays only.



At the museums this spring, SMHPS staged an extensive special exhibit that focused on Sierra Madre manufacturers, businesses and services from the 1930s through the 1950s. Shown: Petalware from the Suman Pottery.

Beth Rauch, Lillias Eubanks' niece was generous in seeing that the museum received Lillias' collection of Red Car memorabilia. Lillias' father was "Red" Dowding, the Red Car conductor that so many of us grew up with on the Sierra Madre line. Also included were many of Lillias' Sierra Madre School and Wilson High School lessons and grade cards. The Red Car material is on display in Lizzie's.

Also on display in Lizzie's are a vintage cash register from the early 1920s, similar to the sort they had when the restaurant was in operation, and a slot machine from the same era, like the ones Lizzie kept in the corner by the restroom door. The Historical Society has been working for over a year on finding the right machines to put in Lizzie's. Maurice Orme's guidance has been invaluable, and thanks go to Terry Terrell for finding them.

We're looking for ideas for this year's scarecrow, so put on your thinking caps and email us with your ideas! The contest will be here before you know it. Our theme is anything historical or pioneer and related to the town or museum.

Plans for the year –

- We want to complete the back of Richardson House
- New shelving is going into our storage shed
- Office space will be available for the museum's records
- Our garden will have a small fence
- New lighting and cooling will be available in the museums
- We will expand our docent program to include:
 - Exhibit set up and care
 - Catalog/document our collection
 - Meet and greet our visitors

Please volunteer – there is a spot for everyone! Come on by to say hello and see all that's new on display at the museums.

Annals of Sierra Madre re-publication update

By Maggie Ellis

As you probably know, your Historical Society is working on re-publishing our 1950 *Annals of Early Sierra Madre; The Pioneer History of Sierra Madre, California*, a delightful collection of memories of Sierra Madre's earliest days. Some are written by the people who experienced those times, some are as-told-to.

Our hard-working and enthusiastic members have nearly finished typing all the chapters into digital format, and report that they

really enjoyed reading the sections they were typing. Many asked for more chapters to type! Now we've begun the long and arduous task of finding the photographs that were in that original publication. It is possible that some were in private collections in the 1950s. We also hope to add more photographs and maybe even a few more histories that we've gathered in the meantime.

The Old North Church Event Enjoyed by All

By Maggie Ellis

More than 80 people came to the Old North Church in April to hear Congregational Church Historian Jim Constantian talk about the building's history. He showed us a video that he had created which included old photographs as well as footage that the late and beloved town figure Rudy Hartmann shot back in 1927 & 1928. That footage included narration by Rudy, and those who loved him were touched to hear his voice. Jim has copies of that video for sale: \$10 each, with all proceeds going to the church's children's programs. If you'd like a copy, contact the Congregational Church and leave a message for Jim.

After Jim's talk, everyone fell on the huge spread of cookies that Historical Society members had provided, and then went to tour the adjacent Caretaker Craftsman and Old Mortuary where docents were at the ready to tell them about the histories of those two downtown landmarks. The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society is grateful to the Congregational Church for opening the doors of these wonderful historic buildings to us, and we are also grateful for the outstanding support and assistance of Alvar Nelson, the facilities manager, and his son Mark.



Jim Constantian speaking to the attendees.



Attendees enjoying the event. Notice the beautiful architecture of the Church.

Capacity Crowd for Poncho Barnes, Aviatrix Extraordinaire!

In March, there was a delighted capacity crowd at Terry Terrell's humorous talk and slide show on aviatrix Poncho Barnes.



Above: Terry Terrell delights the audience with his show.

Left: The capacity crowd waiting for Terry's entertaining talk.

Right: then Vice-President Leslie Ziff introduces Terry.



A Huge Turnout for the Authors Forum

By Diane Sands and Jeff Lapidés

On Saturday, January 24, 300 visitors packed Pritchard Hall at Sierra Madre Congregational Church to see and hear the most renowned historians and authors specializing in our San Gabriel Mountains. There was a great demand to visit with, and buy signed books from, John Robinson and a dozen other notables.

In addition to Robinson (writer of the definitive books on the history and trails of the San Gabriels and our own Mount Wilson Trail), the authors were Michele Zack (our town's centennial book), Elizabeth Pomeroy (John Muir and San Marino), Nat Reed (Don Benito Wilson), Glen Owens (Big Santa Anita Canyon), Christopher Nyerges (whose weekly column graces the pages of the local *Mountain Views News*), Willis Osborne (Mount Baldy and San Antonio Canyon), Paul Rippens (Henninger Flats, Mount Lowe, Saint Francis Dam), Harrison Scott (historian and crusader for the Ridge Route), Chris Kasten (cartography and Sturtevant Camp), Norma Rowley (Forest Service personnel in the Angeles National Forest over the years), and Michael Patris and Steve Crise (writer and photographer respectively of Mount Lowe and local railways).

Many of these experts sold out of their volumes by the conclusion of the "Meet the Authors" sponsored by the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society and First Water Design (designer of books written by four of the authors).

The event that began at 1 p.m. paused for a lively hour-long panel discussion at two o'clock. Jeff Lapidés of First Water Design, the event's organizer, moderated and posed questions, some of which came from those in the audience.

Amy Putnam, then President of the Historical Society, thanked the authors and welcomed her special guest, Jan Reed, former editor and publisher of the *Sierra Madre News* from 1983 to 1997. The historical society sold many copies of the new edition of Reed's 1997 coloring book, *A Foothill Village*. Putnam presented the authors complimentary jams donated by E. Waldo Ward, and she offered cookies for the event that were baked by Poppy Cake Baking Company.

Alvar Nelson, facilities manager for the Church, and his son, Mark, helped with the logistics of the event, and we are very grateful to them.



Above, left to right: Jan Reed overseeing the sale of A "Foothill Village"; authors Nat Reed (with microphone), Christopher Nyerges, and John Robinson; Glenn Putnam, Amy Putnam, and Jeff Lapidés.

Right: Jeff Lapidés moderating the panel of authors.

(Photo of Jan Reed courtesy Diane Sands, all others courtesy Dr. William White).



Thank You to our volunteers!

By Maggie Ellis

Your Historical Society is an all-volunteer organization and we sure lived up to that designation over the past year thanks to all of you. Diane Sands designed the beautiful newsletter you're reading right now. And graphic artist and photographer Jeff Lapidés creates the stunning posters around town advertising our upcoming events. We've had excellent volunteer support in our booth at City festivals, and, if you attended some of our recent events, you have seen the magnificent and abundant array of baked goodies that members provided as refreshments. We are lucky to have a number of docents up at the museum - so many small-town museums count themselves lucky to have just one or two.

Come to the museums on Saturdays 10:00 - noon and sit a while on the porch of Lizzie's and hear colorful accounts of Sierra Madre's history. And our history was colorful!

This is just a short list of all the volunteers have done. Did you see our hardworking teen docents all dressed up in period costume at the Chicken & Ravioli dinner? And there was also the truly wonderful response to our request for people to type the 1950s *Annals* into digital format so we can re-publish it, and of course there is the dedicated board, and, and, and....

It's fun and fascinating to work on Historical Society projects - so say our volunteers. We thank you all for your hard work and cheerful enthusiasm.



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society
P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202
(626) 836-6709
www.smhps.org

*Explore Backstage at the
Sierra Madre Playhouse!*

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society
presents
A backstage tour and history talk
Wednesday, September 9
7 p.m.
87 West Sierra Madre Boulevard

\$5 members • \$10 non-members
 Reservations not required
 Questions? Contact Maggie Ellis 355-7074 or MaggieEllis04@msn.com

SIERRA MADRE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202
Membership / Donation Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Membership Level

- ___ \$20 Individual
- ___ \$25 Family
- ___ \$5 Student
- ___ \$30 Contributing
- ___ \$60 Patron
- ___ \$100 Supporting
- ___ \$500 Lifetime

Specific Donations

- \$ _____ Sierra Madre Historical Archives
- \$ _____ Oral History Program
- \$ _____ Museums
- \$ _____ Richardson House
- \$ _____ Lizzie's Trail Inn

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make check payable to SMHPS.

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society is a 501(c)(3).
 Your contributions are deductible within the limits of the law.
 Thank You.

Yes, I would like to be a volunteer for the SMHPS. _____