

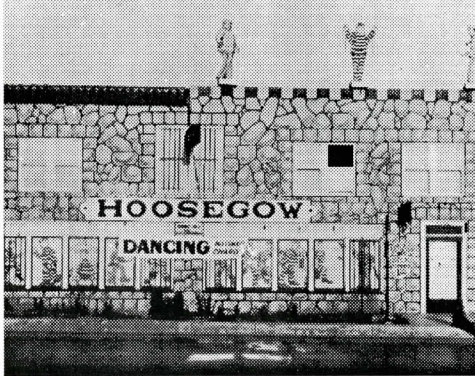
# Culver Historical Highlights

VOLUME 20 No. 2

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## THE CULVER CITY TIMELINE CONTINUES....



*The 1920s: Culver City was notorious for its nightlife: Where was the Hoosgow?*

### 1920:

- April election: 37 votes cast
- Council authorizes the city painter to paint "Culver City" on the roof of six buildings on Main Street
- City adopts a plan for numbering houses and buildings
- Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors changes Palms School District to Culver City School District

### 1921:

- Chamber of Commerce founded (incorporated in 1923)
- City authorizes a sewer system be constructed

### 1922:

- City Council changes meeting location to Van Buren Place
- Resolution #175: City Attorney authorized to petition the state for a permit to run a municipally-owned bus line between Culver City and the City of Los Angeles
- Resolution #246: Dancing prohibited in cafes & restaurants after 11:00 pm
- Resolution #250: City Attorney directed to take immediate legal steps because of City of Los Angeles' failure to abate nuisance in Ballona Creek

### 1923:

- Culver City Lions Club established



Clockwise; Hoosgow nightclub, Hull Bldg., Culver Hotel

- Steller and Skoog Hardware founded on Main Street
- ### 1924:
- Resolution #423: City authorizes a water works system, estimated cost: \$325,000
  - Thomas Ince dies; wife Elinor runs Ince Studios temporarily
  - Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (M-G-M) merger
  - Hotel Hunt (later the Culver Hotel) constructed by Culver; his offices occupy first two floors [on National Registry]
  - Special election authorizes a franchise to Speedway Corporation of Los Angeles to construct an auto race course in Culver

(Cont'd page 3)

## THE GABRIELINOS - PART III by Lupe Smith

### *The Legend of Juana Maria: The Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island*

In 1835, the Mission fathers of California felt that it was a sin to leave the Gabrielino Indians who lived on San Nicolas Island unbaptized. A supply ship was sent from San Pedro Bay to the island to find and bring back any remaining Gabrielinos -- eighteen Indians were rounded up.

As they were being boarded, a young woman suddenly realized she had left her little girl behind. With a storm fast approaching, the captain felt the need to set sail, thinking that he would return for the child at a later date.

Fifteen years passed. Rumors about the "lost woman" abounded, but she was soon forgotten. Everyone assumed she was dead.

A search was conducted in 1850, but she wasn't found. In 1852, a fur trapper, George Nidever, landed on the island to hunt sea-gull eggs. His crew discovered fresh footprints near a makeshift camp. Once again, a storm intervened and Nidever and his crew were forced to return to Santa Barbara.

Nine months later, in the winter of 1852-53, Nidever made another trip to San Nicolas Island, this time to hunt sea otter. He was urged to make a thorough search for the "lost woman" by Father Gonzales who had been trying for years to find someone to search the island for her with little luck.

On landing, they saw fresh footprints. They also found a basket containing tanned bird skins, abalone fishhooks and sewing equipment, as well as a rope about 8 meters long, likely used for snaring seals. Again, a storm forced them to leave, returning to Santa Barbara without making contact with the mysterious woman.

On a third trip, in June 1853, Nidever and his crew finally found the "lone woman."

Again they found footprints, but this time they were able to locate and follow a trail which led to the mysterious woman.  
(Cont'd page 2)

## April 28th General Membership Meeting: Local Site to be Preserved

The CCHS General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 28 at 7:00 pm in the Lethbridge Garden Room at the Veterans Building, 4117 Overland Avenue.

Walter Marks III, owner of the historic Helms Building and member of the board of directors of the Culver City Chamber of Commerce, will be the special guest speaker. Mr. Marks will discuss the redevelopment of the venerable Beacon Laundry building in Culver City which was in operation for over half a century, from 1931 until it closed its doors in December, 1998.

Located at 8695 W. Washington Blvd., the Beacon building will be refurbished as a retail center on the main floor with office space available on the second floor.

Refreshments will be served and the public is invited to enjoy the free program. For more information, please call Ross Hawkins at (310) 839-5725.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Lu Herrera



In my first message as your new President, I shared with you my dream of establishing an Historical Museum. This is the legacy I hope to leave with the Society, but progress has been slow, and, to date, the many leads and discussions has shown no tangible results. We need to rally our membership and the community to become more actively involved in this quest.

We have made some headway, however, with finding a work area for our volunteers. In addition to the storage we have been generously given by The Antique Guild, we have recently secured additional warehouse space from Ways & Means Committee Chairman Stu Freeman.

This is great, but we are still hopeful of having one space where all of our records, photos, newspapers and assorted memorabilia can be housed. I'm putting out the call for such a space and hope that our members will help us find it! If any of you have information or suggestions, please let me know.

Also, we need museum funds to accumulate for this purpose. We respectfully request donations from our membership, both individual and corporate. For your reference, we have an IRS tax exempt status so contributions may be tax deductible.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our next General Membership Meeting on April 28th and welcome your comments and participation. Remember, I'm always available and can be reached at (310) 838-1073.

*Lu Herrera*

## Notes from Your City Historian

by Julie Lugo Cerra



### CULVER CITY GOES INTERNATIONAL

• Culver City's Main Street was featured in the March, 1999 edition of *Eurore*, a magazine published in the Netherlands. The author, Piet Schreuders, used computer generated models to reconstruct Main Street over the years with clips from movies shot on location there as well. Copies are being sent to the Society and to those who contributed. It will be a great addition to our archives!

• Recent calls for historic information included a request from a Japanese TV station.

The reporter wanted to know if Culver City was ever a part of LA. Just to let you know: In 1914, Culver City residents voted not to become a part of LA, at the same time that Palms residents voted to join the ranks of LA. Culver City was incorporated in 1917 and, as they say, the rest is history. . .

• Historians are getting younger every day! Did you know that students at Lin

Howe School published their own book about the city? Key teachers Mrs. Kita and Mrs. Swartz took on this project last year. It's title: "Community Treasures™ Culver City's Heritage."

The view of the community from the perspective of second and third graders is refreshing with great insight. The students have illustrated it with wonderful photos and drawings.

While the young authors have "fudged" on a few facts, it is a real tribute to our fine local teachers and students.

I would like to encourage everyone to attend our April 28th General Membership Meeting to hear Wally Marks III. The Marks family has made positive inroads in historic preservation in our community and it is great news that they have added the Beacon Laundry structure to their Helms Business District.

Natural redevelopment at its best!

*(The Gabrielinos cont'd)*

She was not afraid of them and even spoke to the crewmen who were Chumash Indians. While they could not understand her and she could not understand them, she willingly returned with them to the mainland.

Upon their arrival in Santa Barbara, the news spread fast. Many people came to see her, but no one could communicate with her. This was Chumash country and no one thought to send for Gabrielinos. [Noted

## Culver Historical Highlights

PO BOX 3428 • CULVER CITY, CA • 90231-3428  
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The Culver City Historical Society, founded in 1980, is a non-profit membership organization created for the purpose of collecting, preserving and exhibiting the history of Culver City and its cultural and civic accomplishments.

The CCHS Newsletter is published quarterly.

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Contributing Editor.....Ross Hawkins  
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### OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Lu Herrera.....President  
Ross Hawkins.....1st VP, Program  
Cathy Zermeno.....2nd VP, Museum  
Stu Freeman.....3rd VP, Ways & Means  
(Currently vacant).....Secretary  
Virgie Eskridge.....Treasurer  
Edna Larkin.....Parliamentarian  
Linda Edell & Lupe Smith.....Membership  
Judy Stangler.....Pub. Rels./Newsletter  
Sam Cerra.....Sites  
Susan Berg.....Governmental Relations

### EDITOR'S BOX

We've received some fascinating comments on our "Culver City Timeline" - lots of memories and personal anecdotes.

Our new Culver City CAO, Mark Winogrand, brought to our attention that the timeline needs to be extended *backward* to include more of our pre-city history and we're working on that with Lupe Smith's ongoing series on the "The Gabrielinos." Part III appears in this issue and there's much more to come.

A special thank-you goes out to Stu Freeman, Ways & Means VP, who has generously offered additional space for our volunteers to work on archiving, researching and cataloging the CCHS files and memorabilia. We grateful to have a working area that will allow us to get our "stuff" in order in preparation for the Historical Museum we are working so hard to bring about.

And here's a reminder to mark your calendars for our upcoming museum fundraising events: "An Afternoon in Oz" on June 6th and the "Visions of Grandeur" Premiere on July 24th.

Together, we will make this dream a reality.

historian A.L. Kroeber believes she spoke the Shoshonean dialect of the original tribe of the area.]

She stayed with Nidever and his wife but became ill within two months, probably from the change in diet. She was baptized "Juana Maria" by the Mission priests on her deathbed. The clothes and possessions of the "Lone Woman" were reportedly sent to Rome by Father Gonzales. They have never been found.



# REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

by Ross Hawkins



## WILL ROGERS' FIRST FILM

One of America's icons, famed humorist / actor / cowboy / writer Will Rogers made his first motion picture right here in Culver City in 1919.

Producer Samuel Goldwyn moved here from Fort Lee, NJ in 1919 when the Goldwyn Company purchased Triangle Studios. He brought Rogers out from the Ziegfeld Follies and cast him in *Laughing Bill Hyde*, the first of thirteen films that Rogers would appear in for Goldwyn.



A garage on the Triangle lot (which later became M-G-M) was converted into a horse stable so that Rogers could go riding after a day's filming.

After a year, Rogers asked Goldwyn for a raise and when Goldwyn refused, Rogers saddled up and rode over to the Hal Roach Studio where he made several films before returning to the stage.

Retired stuntman Carl Pitti, who now lives with his wife Mickey in Hemet, recalled seeing Rogers at a picnic back when he was making films with Roach.

"I must have been only four years old," mused Pitti, "but I remember seeing him put sugar on cottage cheese and I started doing the same - I still do."

Carl's father Ben later worked for Rogers as a bodyguard, chauffeur, stuntman and ranch hand at his ranch in Pacific Palisades until Rogers' death in 1935.

## THE SCREEN'S "FIRST HERO"

Paul Pitti, Carl's brother, who still lives in Culver City, talked with Jimmy Rogers, Will's last living son, about a year ago. "He told me that Walter Cameron, who owned the Ben Hur Stables from 1922 until 1942, was Will's uncle.

The Ben Hur Stables was located at Jefferson and Overland, now the site of Denny's restaurant and Raintree Plaza. The stables became part of the M-G-M lot after Cameron's death.

In "real" life, Walter Cameron had been a deputy U.S. Marshal in the Oklahoma Territory. Later, in "reel" life, he earned the title of being the screen's first "hero," the sheriff in the first movie to tell a story - Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* - for which he got paid \$35.

It was Cameron who got Carl Pitti his first job in the movies, introducing him to Hal Roach in 1940. Roach hired Pitti to double for actor Charles Bickford in the production

of *Of Mice and Men*, beginning a 45-year career which ended with a re-occurring role on the hit TV series, "Little House on the Prairie."

## Coming Events

by Stu Freeman

Have you planned your calendar for the year? Well, here are dates that are a must:

May 22-23: Fiesta La Ballona

June 6: *The Wizard of Oz* 60th Anniversary Tribute

July: Gala Movie Premiere of "Visions of Grandeur"

### Fiesta La Ballona

The annual Fiesta La Ballona promises to be better than ever. Once again the CCHS will conduct its popular bus tours of the city's historical sites as well as hold screenings of the documentary, *Heart of Screenland*. We also need volunteers to help man the CCHS information booth and act as tour docents, so please come out, have some family fun and support your Historical Society. Call me at 310.839.7593.

### THE WIZARD OF OZ Tribute

1999 marks the 60th Anniversary of the release of the beloved film classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, and the year 2000 celebrates the 100th birthday of its author, L. Frank Baum. As it was filmed in our town, it is fitting that the CCHS will have a tribute to these milestones with "An Afternoon in Oz" on Sunday, June 6th at the Sagebrush Cantina in downtown Culver City.

From noon to 3pm, the whole family is invited to come out and party with "Dorothy" and the gang, to watch film clips, hear behind-the-scenes memories and interviews with the "Munchkins," and to dress up for a costume contest with great prizes! Watch for further details in your mail and local newspapers.

### "Visions of Grandeur" Gala Premiere

The CCHS has undertaken the important assignment of telling the 85-year history of Culver City and its relationship to the entertainment industry with its 4-part documentary, *Culver City: The Reel Hollywood*.

Part I, "Visions of Grandeur," has been completed and an old-time gala film premiere is planned for July (date to be announced), complete with stars, klieg lights and all the hoopla of old Hollywood. We'll have more information in the next newsletter.

So mark your calendars for these dates as proceeds from both *The Wizard of Oz* Tribute and the "Visions of Grandeur" Premiere will benefit the Historical Museum fund and may be tax deductible. Let's all support our Historical Society into the next millennium!

**NOTE:** Next scheduled Museum Committee's Work Group: Thursday, May 13 from 10am-Noon. Call Cathy Zermeno at 310.839.7688 for more information.

(Timeline cont'd.)

City (now Carlson Park area); 50,000 attendees on December 14

**1925:**

- Legion Building constructed as a meeting hall over the city's first swimming pool
- Hull Building constructed as first hospital
- De Mille Studios dedicated (formerly Ince Studios--9336 Washington Blvd.)
- Washington Building constructed [on National Registry]
- Washington School opened on McManus Street
- City executes a lease agreement with Camilo and Marie Louise Cereghino for a library building

**1927:**

- Cecil B. DeMille appointed "Special Police Officer"
- Council approves action of Parks Board & Art Commission to name the first park "Victory Park" (now Carlson Park)
- City accepts first park land for Lindberg Park (last acquisition in 1938)
- Bonded indebtedness passes for Propositions I (City Hall: \$126,000) and II (Fire Station: \$59,000)
- Ordinance #239 (third reading) changes Del Rey to Culver Blvd.
- U. Barnett appointed as first School Crossing Officer
- First Street changed to Overland Ave.

**1928:**

- City Hall at 9770 Culver Blvd. dedicated
- Culver City's municipal bus line founded
- City Planning Commission created
- City Council establishes a bus & transportation system
- City Council takes action to prohibit gambling
- DeMille Studios becomes Pathe Studios

**1929:**

- Citizen Building constructed by the Donovan family (pub. The Citizen Newspaper) [on National Registry]
- City Council (Board of Trustees) joins Lions Club, local citizens & state in effort to prevent the invasion of the Mediterranean Fruit Fly
- Chamber of Commerce supports notion of a municipal airport
- City moves Council meetings from Van Buren Place to new City Hall at 9770 Culver Blvd.
- City Council officially refuses Gypsies a business license at 7024 Washington Blvd.
- *Lantana* becomes the official city flower by Council action
- City Clerk notifies School Board that the City Council donates a room in City Hall for as a dental clinic for school children.

### CCHS Needs Your Help

To make the CCHS a vital, active organization, we need your help and involvement. Please call (310) 838-1073 and volunteer to help set future programs, catalogue our archives, plan fundraising events, assist with membership development, or research and recommend new historic sites to be designated. Come out and support your CCHS!

#### Committee Chairs:

Programming:	Ross Hawkins
Museum:	Cathy Zermeno
Fundraising:	Stu Freeman
Membership:	Linda Edell & Lupe Smith
Historic Sites:	Sam Cerra

### Look for the Red dot on your Address Label!

If you find a red dot on the address label of this newsletter, it means it's time to **RENEW** your membership in the Culver City Historical Society.

We've included a handy tear-off...Just fill it out and mail it along with your check and then we can keep you up-to-date!

**We can't do it without you!**

☐ I am a new member.

☐ I wish to renew my membership.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Type of membership, Check one:

☐ Patron Member \$100.00

☐ Business Member \$50.00

☐ Service Group \$20.00

☐ Individual Member \$15.00

☐ Individual Lifetime Member \$250.00

☐ Please contact me to work on a committee.

☐ Lifetime Family Membership \$500.00

Checks are payable to: **The Culver City Historical Society P.O. Box 3428 Culver City, California 90231-3428**

*Your contribution may be tax deductible. Please check with your tax advisor*

### BUSINESS MEMBER ROSTER

These fine Culver City area businesses support our work to preserve Culver City history for future generations.

Please show YOUR support by your patronage of their services and products.

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Eye Care Center

Cavanaugh Realtors

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