

# Culver Historical Highlights

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## New CCHS Board Initiates Interactive Venture: "The Living History Project"

### PRESIDENT STEVE ROSE ENCOURAGES NEW PROPOSAL

by Julie Lugo Cerra

When Steven Rose was installed as our new president in January, he offered some new ideas to broaden participation in the society and increase its visibility.

"The Living History Project" is the first of these new proposals we will pursue. In discussing this concept, the Board saw it as a wonderful opportunity to reach out to students in an interactive way, both as participants, and as learners. The project will aim to make history understandable, interesting and entertaining.

Steve appointed Joan Jakubowski and Julie Lugo Cerra, both former school board members, to explore the possibilities of a partnership with the CCUSD.

In March, they met with Supt. Laura McGaughey, Asst. Supt. Tom Dase and Acting CC High School principal Franca Dell'Olio. It was a very productive meeting and the Society looks forward to working with the school district on this exciting new venture.



What would you ask our early historic figures? Clockwise: A noble Gabriellino woman, early Mayor Dan Coombs, infamous Cotton Club owner Frank Sebastian -- or Leo?

### CITY FIGURES WILL "TELL" OUR HISTORY

From these preliminary discussions, plans are being made for CC High School students and interested adults to portray important historical figures taken from the timeline of our city's history. Society members will do the research to script their stories and we will be looking for volunteers to help scout appropriate

props and costumes, as well as those who can help with sewing and tailoring.

Once suitably outfitted, these historic figures will



(Cont'd on page 3)

## APRIL 16TH SPRING GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Special Guest Design Consultant Stan Abrams

The next General Membership Meeting of the Culver City Historical Society will be held on Tuesday, April 16, 2002 at 7:00 pm in the Lethbridge Garden Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City.

Our guest speaker for the Spring General Meeting will be Design Consultant Stan Abrams. Mr. Abrams moved to Culver City with his family in the late 1920s from his hometown of Fresno, CA. During the depression, his father, Myron Abrams, opened a produce market across from The Helms Bakery in Culver City. He will share memories of delivering produce from his father's store to the nightclubs along Washington Blvd. and his experiences with the Hal Roach Studios.

Slides will be shown from Mr. Abrams' photo collection and he will tell of the history of designing the kitchens for Ship's Café (Culver City's historic hangout for at least two generations), the FilmCorps Building, and the hanger where Howard Hughes' famed Spruce Goose was built.

This promises to be a very informative evening and the public is invited to enjoy the free program. Students are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served following the program.

For more information, please call the Historical Society at 310 287-4558.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Steve Rose



As we begin the new Culver City Historical Society year, I first wish to thank Don Rogers for his hard work as president for the last two years along with everyone else that has made the historical society what it is today. Our past 22 years leaves us with a lot of history and accomplishments that we can be proud of as an organization.

This year your Board has taken on some very exciting plans for the future. We will be continuing the sales of our Culver City throws which are a great hit with the public – and I especially wish to thank Reba Yudess for all her work with this wonderful project. Our museum task force, under the guidance of Marc Wannamaker, is organizing the information and historical items so that we will be able to identify the many pictures of sites and individuals for future reference and research.

The most exciting news is that your Board, under the leadership of Joan Jakubowski and Julie Lugo Cerra, is undertaking a new program: "Living Culver City History" (see story on Pg. 1). I look forward to having this project go forward and becoming a valuable tool for the Society to bring our city's history to the citizens of Culver City.

## Notes from Your City Historian

*by Julie Lugo Cerra*



### REMEMBERING PAT CULVER BATTLE

Many of us enjoyed the friendship of Pat Culver Battle and I am sure we all appreciated the time she took to act as the Culver family emissary to Culver City.

Pat's death in December, 2001, left a great void in our hearts. After a rain, we often see rainbows, and it felt like Pat was sending a rainbow when the Rev. Dr. John Battle, Pat's elder son, spent some time in Culver City with his family recently.



*Pat Culver Battle*

The Battles, who live in Washington state, arrived in Culver City on Thursday, March 7, 2002. John and his wife Tammie flew in with all four of their children, Becky, Robert, Amy and Eva. Amy and Eva are in college, Robert is studying for his PhD. and Becky is teaching. This was their first trip to the city founded by John's grandfather, Harry Culver.

The Battles stayed in the landmark

Culver Hotel, completed by Culver in 1924. They saw his restored office on the second floor, and toured the city. They walked the historic Sony Pictures lot, land that Harry Culver made available to Thomas Ince for our first major movie studio.

They also saw the Culver family home that was moved from Delmas Terrace to Club Drive in Cheviot Hills. We took pictures there and under a "Patricia Avenue" street sign (see photo). Culver named the street in honor of his "little darling" daughter.

*(Cont'd on page 3)*



*L-R: Amy, John, Becky, Robert, Tammie and Eva Battle under the street sign honoring Patricia Culver, John's mother*



*L-R: Longtime resident Ethel Ashby, Pat's granddaughter Becky with Hami High alum Dolly Balin at the piano in the lobby of the Culver Hotel.*

## Culver Historical Highlights

PO BOX 3428 • CULVER CITY, CA • 90231-3428  
(310) 287-4558

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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### EDITOR'S COLUMN

New beginnings are always exciting and with a new CCH President and Board, there is much to look forward to!

President Steve Rose has begun his term with a wonderful proposal: "The Living History Project." To bring our city's history "alive" (literally!) for students and residents alike is a great idea and we hope many of you will join us in this interactive venture (see story on pg. 1).

It's "Fiesta" time and your Society will have its annual booth and conduct its very popular city bus tours once again. Please take a moment and fill out the enclosed flyer to volunteer to man the booth for an hour or two on either Saturday and/or Sunday, May 18-19.

Remember, we can't do it without you – it's YOUR Culver City Historical Society!

### SUNSHINE COLUMN

Some of our good friends have been under the weather of late and we'd like to send our best get well wishes to: Eloise McNerney, Earl Eskridge, Lupe & Glenn Smith and Sam Cerra. We hope you're all feeling much better and we'll be seeing you soon.

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Our deepest heartfelt sympathy goes to our Madrina Clarita Young and her family on the passing of her beloved husband, Earl Young. We also send our condolences to the family of Bernardo Zermeno, brother of member George Zermeno.

*by Cathy Zermeno*



# REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

by Ross Hawkins



## WORLD WAR I SCRAPBOOK A TREASURE-TROVE OF MEMORIES: DONOR MISSING IN ACTION

While Museum Chair Marc Wanamaker and I were sorting files at our new office at West Los Angeles College, we came across a marvelous scrapbook about the Royal Flying Corps that set up a training school in Fort Worth, TX during World War I. Unfortunately, we have been unable to determine who the donor was.

Two memories: CCHS member Stu Freeman recalled that someone came to one of our general meetings when he was Ways and Means Chairman, left a scrapbook and disappeared. Former Museum Chair Cathy Zermeno recalled that when she was a volunteer with "Meals On Wheels," someone gave her a World War I Scrapbook that she added to the archives. Other recollections?

Inside the scrapbook is an article from



L-R: Rummel, "Jazz" and Hough

*Aeroplane Monthly* dated December, 1992, entitled "Royal Flying Corps in Texas" by Hugh Morgan which gives an account of the flight training schools set up by the British Royal Flying Corps in Texas during World War I. In those days, pilots took to the air flying solo with only two hours of training!

Also found with the scrapbook was a tattered 4-page list of American Aces of World War I and their respective outfits. On the list is one 1st Lt. Leslie J. Rummel from Newark, NJ who flew with the American Expeditionary Force and is credited with shooting down seven German planes. Rummel's picture appears in the scrapbook along with a Lt. Hough whose picture appears through-

out the scrapbook along with a Mrs. Hough and a dog named "Snookums."

The scrapbook contains pictures of Fort Worth taken from the air in 1918 along with grim battlefield scenes in Europe. Identified in the photos are General "Black Jack" Pershing taken at Dijon, France and the funeral train for Cpt. Vernon Castle, the internationally famous dancer who was killed on a training flight on November 15, 1918. Castle was portrayed by Fred Astaire in the 1939 film, *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*, made at RKO in Culver City and co-starring Ginger Rogers as Irene Castle.

If anyone has information about this scrapbook, please call the Culver City Historical Society at 310 287-4558.

## THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES ARE GROWING THANKS -

- To scenic artist and painter Robert Woolfe, who worked in the Scenic Design Shop at MGM from 1951 through 1966 and who was a good friend of art director and scenic designer Ben Carre (whose estate donated 40 black-&-white negatives of backdrops created for MGM movies including *Valley of Decision*, *Anchors Away*, *National Velvet*, and *Ziegfeld Follies*. Films that Woolfe recalled working on at MGM in a recent interview included *Quo Vadis*, *Lust For Life* and *Ben Hur* (1959 version).

- To Rodney Gottlieb of RJG Photo Retouching who donated prints of rare photos of the Barnes Circus' headquarters in Culver City, Willett Studios and Ince Studios under construction in 1915.

- To Nicholas Urmosy at PROLAB DIGITAL for re-producing and donating three pages of Harry Culver's 1929 scrapbook which was exhibited at the Culver Hotel during Pat Culver Battle's memorial service.

## "LIVING HISTORY" (Cont'd from page 1)

participate in a brief, ten-minute monologue or dialogue, which will bring the story of our city to life. You can look forward to "seeing" a family of Native Americans talk about their lifestyle, or Agustin and Ygnacio Machado relate the story of the founding of Rancho La Ballona. Perhaps early Mayor Dan Coombs will discuss the city's land development.

Volunteers are needed for all aspects of this project and input is welcomed. The target date for the first presentations of our historic figures is Fall, 2002.

## CCHS CELEBRATES THE FIESTA LA BALLONA

by Susan Berg

Culver City's annual Fiesta La Ballona will be held at Veterans Park (corner of Culver Blvd. and Overland Ave.) on Saturday and Sunday, May 18 and 19, 2002.

The CCHS will again celebrate the Fiesta with fascinating displays and its very popular bus tours of historic Culver City. Booth displays will include many familiar photographs, artifacts and other memorabilia. In addition, there will be several "first-time displays" of artifacts previously stored in attics and closets that have only recently come to light.

To make this the best Fiesta ever, we need your participation. At the April 16 General Meeting, you will have the opportunity to sign up as a volunteer for an hour of two at the CCHS booth. You may also fill out the enclosed flyer with your "booth hour(s)" and mail it in. For additional information, please call Susan Berg at (310) 839-2874.

## CALENDAR

April 16: General Membership Meeting  
MAY 18-19: FIESTA LA BALLONA

## "NOTES"

(Cont'd from page 2)

## MEMORIAL FOR THE "FIRST DAUGHTER OF CULVER CITY"

Kirk Judy arranged for a local memorial service at the Grace Lutheran Church on Saturday afternoon, March 9th. Dr. John Battle gave a remarkable eulogy. Mayor Ed Wolkowitz called Pat "the first daughter of Culver City." Others who shared memories included Pat's eldest grandchild, Becky, and locals Syd Kronenthal, Sam Cerra, Susan Gregory, Brian Bumpas, Kirk Judy, Cathy Zermeno and Lorraine Henderson.

Following the memorial, The Culver Hotel graciously hosted a reception with food provided by Historical Society members. The Hamilton High School Alumni Association, headed by Brian Bumpas, helped with many aspects of this trip. When Dolly Balin played the piano, she drew Ethel Ashby, Becky Battle and others to join in song (see photo). Special thanks to the many who helped make this a special trip for Pat's son and his family.

## RENEW YOUR CCHS MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Remember that all CCHS memberships were due for renewal as of January, 2002. If you haven't already renewed, please send payment today.

Please support your Historical Society.

## Become a member of the Culver City Historical Society Today!

Join others in preserving the history of the "Heart of Screenland" and the efforts to create the Culver City Heritage Museum. We can't do it without you!

### TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

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\_\_\_\_ Family Lifetime Member (\$500)  
\_\_\_\_ Patron Member (\$100)  
\_\_\_\_ Family Member (\$25)  
\_\_\_\_ Individual Member (\$15)

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Please make checks payable to **The Culver City Historical Society** and mail to  
P.O. Box 3428, Culver City, CA 90231-3428. For further information, call (310) 287-4558.

Contributions of both historic and social significance as well as monetary donations are encouraged, and the CCHS  
IRS tax exempt status may make such contributions tax deductible.

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

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