

# Culver Historical Highlights

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## HELMS BUILDING HISTORIC SITE #9

by Sam Cerra

The famed Helms Building has been approved as the CCHS's Historic site #9.

Constructed in 1930 in Zig-Zag Moderne style, the building housed the Helms Bakery until August of 1969. The family owned bakery, founded by PAUL HELMS, was known as "the home of Helms Olympic Bread" as it was a bread supplier for the 1932 Olympics held in Los Angeles.

The building remains an important commercial structure, and, although it is located both in the City of Culver City and the City of Los Angeles, it was awarded Landmark status by the City of Culver City.

Approval for the wording has been given, and the Marks family, the present owner of the structure, is delighted to have the building receive this recognition and is very supportive of the Society's work in architectural preservation.

Since there will be road construction on Helms Avenue throughout July, and as markers take about two months to prepare,



*The landmark Helms Bakery building at 8800 Venice Blvd.*

the Commemorative Plaque Ceremony is set for Saturday, September 20, 1997 -- the day of the 80th Anniversary of Culver City's incorporation. The event will begin at 10:00 am at the site with a reception following hosted by The Antique Guild. CCHS members are encouraged to attend and the public is welcome.

### Three National Register Sites in Culver City

Did you know that there are now three buildings in Culver City on the National Register of Historic Places? Joining the Citizen Building (now Fresh Paint) and the Washington Building (owned by Byco), the Culver Hotel won recognition this past April.

And while the Ivy Substation is technically in Los Angeles, we consider this our unofficial fourth site as we have it on a long term lease. Culver City can indeed be proud of its heritage and its growing national stature.



The Laurel & Hardy Sons of the Desert "Way Out West Tent" celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a tour through Culver City and sponsored the placing of a commemorative plaque on the Stellar Hardware building on Main Street in downtown Culver City. The complete history and story will be featured in the next "Historical Highlights." Watch for it!

by Lupe Smith

## PICNIC IN THE PARK



The CCHS annual picnic will be held at Lindberg Park, 5501 Rhoda Way, on Sunday August 17, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The picnic is potluck, and members are asked to bring a main dish, salad or dessert for six people plus themselves. Plates, utensils and drinks will be provided by the Society. Members are encouraged to bring family and friends.

Fred Machado and Jim Robertson will have a display of photographs marking the history of the

aircraft companies on the Westside which will be on display during the picnic.

Ross Hawkins will show "Historic Culver City" and excerpts from our latest video production, "The Machados Are Still In Culver City," featuring interviews with Fred Machado and Clarita Young.

For more information, or if you would like to help with the picnic planning, please call Lupe Smith at (310) 390-4798.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Hal Horne

Welcome to our new newsletter: You'll notice the change in format, style and we've added pictures too! My thanks to our new Editor, Judy Stangler, our new Publisher, Lee Bixler, and Contributing Editor, Ross Hawkins, for their efforts in putting together the brand new "Culver Historic Highlights," and for their plans for the future.

On a personal note, my deepest appreciation to our retiring Editor/Publisher Carolyn Cole who prepared this newsletter for the past four years. Her willingness, perseverance and counsel were invaluable and I'll always be grateful for her presence - and her cheerful nature, often under stressful circumstances.

As you'll read throughout the newsletter, your Culver City Historical Society has been very busy. "Reel Life in Culver City" is rapidly moving forward; future fundraising activities will be exciting and different; and, by the end of this year, the CCHS will have entered a new era of its existence.

But most of all, the CCHS is the Society of its members for the community. Private individuals and corporations, government and educational organizations have all sought our help and resources and we have responded. Culver City, "The Heart of Screenland," remains an attraction both for our ties to the entertainment industry and the rich heritage of those who have lived and worked here in the past. I urge all members to get involved and to encourage your neighbors to join the CCHS and do the same. Ours is a community effort and by working together we will ensure that Culver City's history past and present is preserved for the future generations.

## 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.

Publisher.....Lee Bixler  
Editor.....Judy Stangler  
Contributing Editor.....Ross Hawkins  
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Sam Cerra.....Sites

## Notes from Your City Historian

by Julie Lugo Cerra



### FIESTA BUS TOURS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our docents who toured the folks at the Fiesta La Ballona on the Historic Highlights Tour of Culver City. We always get some nice comments and we also use it as an opportunity to gather more historic information. While Hal Horne and I seem to be the "old seasoned tour guides," we were joined this year by EFREM VIOLIN, who is now a two year veteran, and SUSAN BERG, our newest voice on the mike, who knows the city like the back of her hand. Thanks, Hal, Efrem and Susan for jobs well done!

The tours are always a well received public service and a nice cooperative venture of the society, Sony Pictures and city. Our bus driver, EDDIE, was really sharp as that last turn through Sony Pictures Studios was really tight!

## "CULVER HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS" EDITOR CAROLYN COLE RETIRES

CCHS members owe an immense debt of gratitude to CAROLYN COLE, who for the last four years has acted as Editor and Publisher of the Culver Historical Highlights. Carolyn, who works at the Senior Citizens Center at Culver City's Department of Human Resources, has been a CCHS member for many years. She will continue to contribute articles and will act as editorial advisor.

JUDY STANGLER, who is the CCHS Public Relations Director, will take over the reins as Editor. Judy has a long career as a freelance writer and researcher, and currently works with the UCLA International Studies Department of Development.

LEE BIXLER, owner of The Antique Guild, becomes the newsletters new Publisher. He helped to create the new format and graphics, moving the newsletter further into the techno-age.

Plans are being made to publish the newsletter bi-monthly rather than quarterly. The Staff welcomes comments and suggestions from members regarding the newsletter and its new format, as well as story ideas and contributing articles. You can reach the Editorial Department by calling (310) 838-9639.

## First Lady Councilmember

We are receiving inquiries about the late MARY LOU RICHARDSON, the first woman elected to the Culver City Council. Mrs. Richardson served from 1956-60, holding the position of Mayor in 1958-59.

If anyone knew her or knows if her husband Ralph or son Riley still live locally, please call Julie Lugo Cerra at 558-3818. The University of California, Northridge is especially interested in her "papers."



# REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

by Ross Hawkins



## Rare Film Discovered

In 1940, a group of cartoonists at M.G.M. got together and made a bootleg movie using the studio's back lot and a number of other Culver City locations including a good deal of Jefferson Boulevard. It was filmed in black and white as a silent movie, because they couldn't afford sound or color stock!

The movie was titled "Rats and Spats" and was directed by the late IRVIN SPENCE who directed many of the "Tom and Jerry" cartoons. This spoof on old gangster movies was rescued by cartoon director TOM RAY when Irvin Spence died. Mr. Ray, who will soon be eighty years young, is still working as a cartoon director. With a 16mm print of the film which was about to deteriorate, we were able to save this little film for future film historians and film buffs.

Mr. Ray played a gangster in the film as did his friend GUS ARRIOLA who created the comic strip "Gordo." Also seen as tough guys were M.G.M. cartoonists BILL LITTLEJOHN, HARVEY ISENBERG, GORDY ADAMS and STOD HERBERT.

Mr. Ray confided that the movie was done as a lark with no commercial prospects in mind, but it does give us the unique opportunity of seeing the area as it was in a bygone era.

## "Reel Life" Update

As funds become available, the CCHS will next transfer several 16mm films donated by former stuntman CARI PITTI who doubled for actor Robert Taylor for more than eighteen years.

Mr. Pitti had a small ranch in the Fox Hills area where he taught movie stars how to be "cowboys" and "cow-girls." Mr. Pitti's brother Paul has family movies of the ranch and of their father BEN PITTI performing knife tricks. Ben broke horses for the legendary Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and worked for Will Rogers until Rogers' untimely death in 1935.

Among these personal films are tests made for the M.G.M. western, "Escape From Fort Bravo" which was shot in 3-D, and some trick riding shots taken in the 1940s and 1950s in the hills above Culver City.

## CCHS Looking for Help

The Society requests help from anyone who knows of people who have such treasures as the above mentioned films or home movies which may be sitting in their garages or attics. With the help of CCHS members and the community, we will make "Reel Life in Culver City" an extraordinary document on film history. Please contact Ross Hawkins for more information or leads at (310) 839-5725

## HAPPY 80th BIRTHDAY CULVER CITY 1917-1997

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Culver City. The actual date of incorporation is September 20th. As a point of information, one of our most supportive members, Pat Culver Battle, city founder Harry Culver's daughter, was born August 11, 1917, so you may want to wish her a happy healthy 80th birthday, too! The CCHS is working with Mayor Albert Vera and the city's new PIO, Randi Joseph, on some form of celebration. More later.

# WHM TROPHY IS 50 YEARS OLD!

On May 21, 1948, the first Western Hemisphere Marathon finished at The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Paul Helms commissioned the Southern California Trophy Company to create this handtooled trophy, fashioned out of solid silver to honor the winners.

Each year the names of the overall Mens' & Womens' Divisions are inscribed on the base of the trophy.

1997 Golden Anniversary winners will have their names too inscribed on this beautiful trophy that is currently on public display in the Western Hemisphere Marathon section of the Helms Museum.

The Helms Museum is housed in The Antique Guild at 3225 Helms Avenue between Venice and Washington Boulevards.

The WHM display also includes marathon photos, artifacts and a video that tells the history of this colorful event. For more information, call The Antique Guild at (310) 838-3131.

## CCHS SAYS GOODBYE TO FRIENDS

### Mildred Kearney

It is with much sadness that we report that Mildred Kearney, a good friend of this Society, died in El Segundo at the age of 97 (she would have been 98 in August) on April 19, 1997.

The Culver City Historical Society was "born" in Mildred's home when Frank McCann, feeling the need for such an organization, called a meeting of interested parties which met at Mildred's home in December 1979. Clarita Young, Cathy Zermeno, Dale Jones and John Kearney showed up. Three months later, with the help of Clarita and her friend Ann Wiedel, we were a full-fledged Historical Society. Since Frank died shortly after, we voted to name our library in his honor.

Mildred was the widow of John Kearney, Culver City Fire Chief from 1946 until his retirement in 1961, who died in 1982. She was a resident of Culver City from 1945 to 1991 and in the home on Garfield since 1950.

**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.

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

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☐ Please contact me to work on a committee.

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**Culver City Historical Society**

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