LIVING HISTORY IN CULVER CITY: 2005

“THE BOYS OF SUMMER” ~ CULVER CITY STYLE

by Steve Newton

“HERE TODAY—GONE TOMORROW?”

In celebration of Historical Society’s 25th Anniversary, we all should applaud the small group of Culver City-ians who had the insight to create an organization to protect and preserve our City’s rich History. How many “here today - gone tomorrows” would there be if not for this organization’s persistence and dedication?

L-R: Rafer Johnson, Syd Kronenthal & Alan Idhe on “Opening Day.”

Too often we celebrate the “now” and not the “yesterday” which preceded and led to (cont’d on page 4)

STUDENTS BRING “LIVING HISTORY” ALIVE

by Julie Lugo Cerra

SOCIETY & CCUSD FORM PARTNERSHIP

Can the words “history” and “interesting” appear in the same sentence and not be a contradiction in terms? We thought so, and that was the intent as the Culver City Historical Society embarked on a “Living History Project” three years ago.

To this end, a partnership between the Society and the Culver City Unified School District was formed in an effort to make local history meaningful for students. For most of us, our remembrances of learning history probably included the words dull or dry, but with direction from CCHS President Steve Rose to work with our local schools, Society members set to work on a plan to change that.

The partnership idea was well received by Supt. Dr. Laura McGaughhey and then Assistant Supt./Educational Services, Dr. Tom Dase. Two obvious opportunities were in third grade, where the students first study community, and fourth grade, when state-mandated curriculum covers California and the Missions.

At the April CCHS General Membership Meeting, President Steve Rose enjoyed presenting a copy of Julie Lugo Cerra’s new book, Images of America: Culver City, as a “thank you” gift to four of the eight Culver High student volunteers who participated in this year’s Living History Project.

L-R: Ashley Guerrero, Rezwan Kabir, Alexandria Richardson, Pres. Rose and Andrea Santos. [Not shown: Jasmyne Gholar, Rhea Jenkins, Samantha Silberman and Ali Sieke.]

1ST SCRIPT: CULVER’S 1913 SPEECH

Scripts were crafted to make local historic characters come alive. The first revolved around Harry Culver’s speech in 1913 in which he announced his plans for his proposed new city. He gave it at the California Club in Downtown Los Angeles.

This speech, which I was able to unearth in its entirety, (cont’d on page 6)

CCHS “ANNUAL PICNIC”

· JULY 20TH ~ GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING ·

It’s Summer Time -- and the annual Culver City Historical Society’s Picnic! This year we’re going to have an old-fashion “Bar-B-Q,” so come out and enjoy delicious food and drink on a summer evening for a great community get-together!

We’ll be meeting at Veterans Park (NW corner of the park off Culver Blvd. at the B-B-Q pit area) on Wednesday, July 20, 2005 from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm with dinner served at 6:00 pm. The picnic is potluck and members are asked to bring a main dish, salad or dessert for six people plus themselves. Plates, utensils and soft drinks will be provided by the Society.

The public is invited and members are encouraged to bring family and friends. For more information and to let us know what you’ll be bringing, or if you would like to help with the picnic planning, please call Anita Shapiro at (310) 837-7853.
It's Summertime and the Society has a lot of activities planned for your enjoyment! Our annual potluck dinner will be "Bar-B-Q-style" and is scheduled for July 20th, the traditional third Thursday in July. Just come on down and bring some of your finest cooking to share with six other friends. The friendship along with our wonderful Potluck offerings will be enjoyable. Stroll over to the ocean breeze makes the summer potluck picnic a fun evening for everyone. The Society will also have a booth at the Fiesta La Ballona, selling many different Culver City items that you want to buy as gifts for friends and families – birthday or anniversary gifts. Please stop by and consider doing your holiday shopping early!

With "we're making the whole of 2005 our 25th Anniversary, this Fall, we will be officially celebrating with a special event soon to be announced. Twenty-five years of preserving and teaching our community history is OUR history! Help us to celebrate and to continue our work to preserve the uniquely fascinating history of our town so that new generations will know how Culver City evolved over the years. Knowing and understanding our history is one of the great legacies we can leave for our future citizens to help guide them into making Culver City an even better place for all to live and work. Get involved and become a Society member!

Best regards,

Notes from Your City Historian
by Julie Lugo Cerru

A "25TH BIRTHDAY" GIFT

It hardly seems possible that our Society is "25" this year! As a gift, I produced a free self-guided walking tour of Downtown Culver City with the delight of help of Geoff Maleman of Maleman Ink. It is available at several locations, including the Chamber of Commerce, CC Library, Culver Hotel, IV Substation, Stellar Hardware, summer. Sunroom Series (Downtown Business Association table), the Jackson Market and I reached the Society for their review.

We will be using it for the walking tour during the Fiesta la Ballona on Tuesday night, August 23rd, starting at 6:00 p.m. The tour begins in front of the Culver Hotel.

President's Message
by Steven J. Rose

REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

by Ross Hawkins

WILL ROGERS – A FORGOTTEN AMERICAN ICON

As the Historical Society marks its 25th Anniversary, another anniversary comes to mind. 2005 also marks the 75th anniversary of the death of humorist - actor - cowboy - philosopher and an American icon, Will Rogers. Rogers was almost all forgotten now, but his untimely death in an airplane crash in Alaska in 1935 with aviator Wiley Post had a devastating impact on the American public as the death of Franklin Roosevelt and the advent of World War II.

On Saturday morning August 27th, the CCHS will be participating in the "Culver City Store" booth, offering items of interest. Julie Lugo Cerru of the "grief-stricken nation mourned as Charles Lindbergh. "the Lone Eagle," flew to Alaska to bring back Rogers remains. It was the only time I ever saw my father cry," recalled Peggy Ahern, who Rogers discovered in the early 1920s and talked Hal Roach into putting her and her sister, Lassie Lu Ahern, into films.

on the southwest corner of Overland Ave. and Jefferson Blvd.

GOLDWYN BRINGS HIM OUT WEST

Having found fame in the Ziegfeld Follies after WWI, doing rope tricks and reciting limericks about current events, Rogers was brought to Culver City by producer Samuel Goldwyn in 1919. He starred in 13 films just two years. Goldwyn even had a barn built on the studio lot so that Rogers could ride his beloved horse, Whitey. He did so each day. Benatti, the father of Carl and Paul "Pitt in The Culver City Cowboys," worked on "cling Roses" and "her Home in Pacific Palisades and Pitt boys learned to ride and rope there. When Goldwyn wouldn't give him a raise in 1921, Rogers left the studio and started in radio for Hal Roach. Pitt said he was silent films weren't that popular, when sound was ushered in, he became the "voice of the people." He had the voice of "people."

ROGERS' SELF-WRITTEN OBITUARY:

"When I die my epitaph or whatever you call those signs on gravestones is going to read, 'I played both sides of the fence for Hal Roach. I wrote many silent films they weren't that popular, when sound was ushered in, I became the greatest speaker on earth, I was the voice of the people.'

Editor's Column

Steve Nevala's personal childhood memory of wonderful baseball games provided inspiration as an amazing exploration of the early days of the CC Little League & Pony League. With the help of Jerry Klein, Paul Klein, Bob Padgett and Barbara Rand, more and more information was uncovered, though deadlines didn't allow us to fully cover it in this issue.

I encourage everyone to look into their old scrapbooks, etc. and maybe we can do a fuller piece on this very special period in our collective history.

Our new "Remembering" column is generating some great responses and we encourage the whole community to share their special memories for future issues as well.

Remember, IT'S YOUR Historical Society - we can't succeed without YOU!

Special Thanks

Don Galloway: A selection of a Nov. 12, 1922 Christmas postcard sent from Japan to the "Culvers" [Mary & Lillian] to "Mr. & Mrs. W.P. Roberts, Culver City, Calif." (all the address that was needed)
The Culver Boys of Summer ….

The Malone Family

It was in 1955 that the Malone family donated a large piece of land to be used for Little League and Pony League fields on Overland Ave., across the street from the old Mischado farm. All the Who’s Who in Culver City at the time got involved in the construction of two Little League fields and one Pony League field. And the local businesses bought advertisement fence panels in the outfield fences to help with the cost of material for construction.

While the fields were being finished, the kids were going through sign-ups, try-outs, and then chosen to form teams. Managers and coaches helped to find businesses to sponsor and pay for uniforms and equipment.

“Opening Day”

It started with the complete shutdown of Overland Ave. for a community parade. Most of the car dealerships in town donated convertibles for celebrities and dignitaries to ride in. The new baseball teams marched in their new uniforms. The Culver City Police, Fire, and most of the city’s service clubs joined in, even the tank and jeeps from the National Guard Armory rolled down Overland Ave. to the ball fields.

When we reached the fields, the color guards raised our first flag and we proceeded with the fields’ first flag salute. Then came the speeches, one after another and another. There were a lot of people to thank and then the teams were introduced, and finally, those famous words we kids thought would never come, “PLAY-BALL!” What a great time we had!!!

The “Guys” are still around

Some of the players of those days are still involved “up on the hill” today – Rick Hudson, Gene Tilman, Dwight Oiler and John Bishop are just a few. I was given an old copy of the Culver City Youth Baseball Association’s 1959 program. All the long-ago names of all the managers, coaches, sponsors, players, league officer and officials, etc. show the commitment of almost all the Culver City’s Who’s Who in support of youth baseball.

I’ve found that a good many of the “Boys of Summer” of Culver City are still around and their memories are as crisp and happy as if it all happened just last summer.

[Jayde Stangl contributed to this article.]

The 1959 CCYBA Official Baseball Program

The Screenland A’s of Culver City

Hey, have you noticed a lot of Model A Fords around Culver City lately? That’s because there is a new club, based in our famous movie-making town, but this is not just a car club. The following letter to the City Council may serve as an introduction and explains what we are all about:

Jan. 2005
Mr. Mayor & Council Members:
The "MODEL A FORD CLUB OF AMERICA" (MAFCA) is 50 years old and has over 16,000 current members in 24 countries.
The "SCREENLAND A's of CULVER CITY" is the 78th Chapter in California. We are the Historical Society for the preservation of the Model A Ford, which was produced from 1928 through 1931. This automobile carried our nation through the Great Depression and WWII. Known as the car that almost anyone could afford and the fact that they where made to last a lifetime, is why there are so many Model A's still on the road today. 74 to 77 years old and they are still getting around pretty good!!

One of MAFCA’s main goals is youth participation. There are Scholarship Programs, Youth Restoration Awards, and the X-Cup Program, which sponsors high school auto shop teams to build and compete in the “Great American Race” (this year’s race is from Washington, D.C. to Tacoma, WA, from June 25 - July 9. GOOD LUCK KIDS!!
The SCREENLAND A’s of CULVER CITY supports these goals while extending an invitation not only to Model A owners, but to anyone that is still in love with “Henry’s Lady,” the Model A Ford!! We are proud to use the name Screenland A’s and, in doing so, we hope to enhance the public’s knowledge of our city’s great movie history throughout our nation and the other 23 countries involved in our hobby.

Wish us luck!
Steve Newton
Secretary, SCREENLAND A’s of CULVER CITY

Clockwise from above:
1) Taken in front of the Culver Studios, which was built in 1919, these great vintage cars fit right in! Member Bill Hahn's classic is the first car.
2) The members of the “Screenland A’s of Culver City.”
3) One of the founders of the club, our own CGMS member, Steve Newton, with his 1930 Model A Ford Coupe.

(Photos courtesy of Jim Green)
Museum Notes
by Robin Turner, Museum Chair

THE WOODCARVINGS OF ROBERT GRAGG
Further to my column in the last issue, here is more information on artist Robert Gragg and our exhibit in the CCHS display case at the east end of the new downtown Pacific Culver Stadium 12 cinema theatre.

In 1926, Robert Gragg began working at the Hal Roach Studios on Washington Blvd. in Culver City. He worked as a carpenter and a layout man. During these studio years, Gragg and his wife raised their five children in their home on Lincoln Avenue.

Beginning in 1926, AR in 1936, Gragg was raised in Minnesota, and lived in Virginia during his later years. However, he never forgot his early years in Culver City, and, upon his death in 1984, his charming woodcarvings were donated to the Culver City Museum.

These carvings, known as the Robert Ferenley Gragg Collection, include a broad spectrum of life, with such titles as "Cutting a Down a Tree" and "Saturday Night Bath," along with many movie-relateo themes.

He had built life-size sets for the movies, and became an offer his interest in artistry for carving, even in his spare time, Gragg was rarely far from a piece of wood. He characterized himself as a "carver of memories."

More About P-O-N-Y League
The following are excerpts from the "Culver CIty P-O-N-Y League News," Season 1958.

P-O-N-Y (Protect Our Nation’s Youth) League in Culver City was organized in the fall of 1958.

As in Little League, P-O-N-Y League team members are selected strictly on the basis of age and skill. The season begins at the beginning of each season for boys at which team managers observe their players in various phases of ball playing maneuvers.

Materone Field, home of Culver City P-O-N-Y League, was built and financed entirely by volunteer workers during the first few months of 1957. Grateful acknowledgement is given to those who participated in the labor of the team who made the diamond possible. Special thanks is given to the Materones who are providing the field for the season at no cost to the League.

President Allan Curr said, "We are proud of the parents who are working for the League and the fine boys who make up our Culver City P-O-N-Y League."

BASIC PLAYING RULES
P-O-N-Y League playing rules are identical with regulation baseball except that the players are not required to keep score, and the game is only an inning duration. 2. Field as described elsewhere, except that the pitcher must not weigh less than 5 or more than 5 1/2 ounces and measure not less than 9 and not more than 9 1/2 inches in circumference. Therefore, the bat shall be round and made entirely of wood, not less than 34 inches in length and not more than 2 1/2 inches in diameter at its largest part.

As this is a baseball batter a runner may take a lead off base and steal at his own risk of being "called out," provided he is not tagged in any other way.

Balls will be counted on the pitcher as in regulation baseball.

COOE OF CONTACT FOR SPACTATORS:
The P-O-N-Y league ages are 13 and 14, and can and will manage errors. Managers and coaches are asked to report any errors.

We sincerely hope that spectators will not resort to betting on misplays or bad calls by umpires and players.

Let’s learn the boys good sportsmanship by letting them give good example as parents and spectators.

(We thank Barbara Hand for providing us a tear this wonderful piece of history.)

Living History (cont’d)
Insuring insight into Culver’s ‘living history’ and what he was like in Culver City.

He made it clear that his city would be situated on main transportation routes, halfway between Los Angeles and Abbot Kinney’s resort of Venice, with the benefit of a temperate climate. I was located, location, location!!!

Community Service Credit Given
The first year, CCVS principal Franca Dell’Olio not only embraced the program, but offered Community Service Credit to the students. There were so many volunteers that the following year the number suggested students dress as Culver and they rotated throughout the speech, each had a different role. Dell’Olio was an active participant, and the Society paid for the clothes that Susan Deem and I found at a local Goodwill Store, along with farming handmade collars typical of the period for each “Harry.” The students performed at each of the five elementary schools.

The speech is still so relevant that when Steve Rose drove to do the part for the Fiesta Queen, he had to weigh less than 5 ounces and measure less than 9 inches in circumference. Therefore, the bat shall be round and made entirely of wood, not less than 34 inches in length and not more than 2 1/2 inches in diameter at its largest part.

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Researching information on film director Victor Fleming. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

WEBSITE UPDATE:
Please help us to offer this changing exhibit in honor of the Robert Gragg legacy in wood, appropriately beginning with Historical Preservation Month, May 2005.

~ Robin

A Win-Win Proposition
As the scriptwriters, we tried to make脱离 students of today, but the best test clearly lies in the presentations. Not one of the volunteers this year were energetic tenth graders, most of them students in the Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, and only not presented to all of the third and fourth graders in the district, some also took the bus up the road in May to both the CCHS General Membership meeting and the Board of Education meeting. The Society also provided information brochures for the younger students to view what these characters really looked like, it was a win-win proposition. Everyone learned about life in “the old days,” and the educators could use the community service can be fun. Was there a way to measure the effectiveness of the educational professional and acting then the little ones ask for their high school mentors’ autographs!!!

Next year, we will be looking for more volunteers to help. Joan Jakubowski is already working on another script. Think about being a part of the “Living History Project.”

DO SOMETHING HISTORIC IN 2005!
Would you like to be part of our walking tours? Docent? Living History presenter? Organizer? Please call Julio Cerra. Tel: (310) 558-3181.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
July 20: CCHS ANNUAL PICNIC
Aug. 22-28: FIESTA LA BALLONA
Aug. 23: CCHS FESTA DOWNTOWN WALKING TOURS
Oct. 20: CCHS General Meeting
**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!

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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) 287-3850 or email: cchistorical@pacbell.com. 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.

**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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