

Culver Historical Highlights

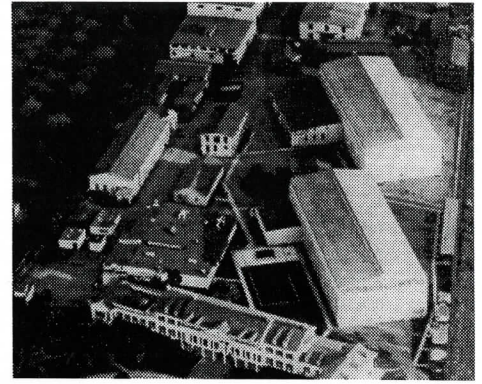
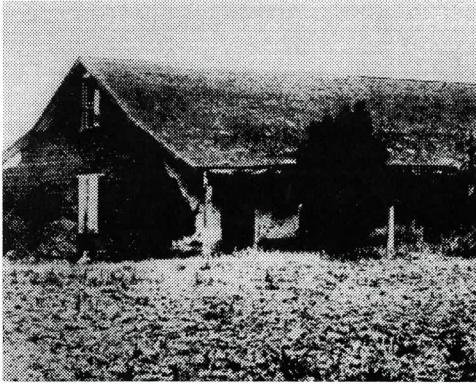
VOLUME 20 No. 1

Published by the Culver City Historical Society

WINTER 1999

“HAPPY 1999!”

ONLY ELEVEN MONTHS TO THE “MILLENNIUM”...



Photos L-R: the Machado Hacienda, built in 1828; First Ballona School, 1860s; second Ince Studio, c. 1920

From the Beginning.... A Culver City Timeline

With the new year comes a look back at the extraordinary history of our small, but unique town. We begin 1999 with a Timeline that will continue in future Historical Highlights' issues, revealing some of the major events of our community as well as many little known and some surprising facts. Stay tuned.....

CULVER CITY TIMELINE:

In the beginning:

- 1769 King Carlos of Spain mandates colonization of California
- 1779 Jose Manuel and Maria Machado come north to California from Sinaloa, Mexico
- 1849 The California Gold Rush begins
- 1850 California becomes a State
- 1865 La Ballona School constructed (a wood frame structure)
- 1869 The first trans-continental railroad completed & the isolation of the western U.S. ends
- 1874 Saenz family establishes a Dry Goods Store (at Overland Ave./Washington Blvd.); contains Machado Post office
- 1880 Harry Culver is born in Milford, Nebraska

- 1883 The Figueroa family donates land to build St. Augustine's, the first church (1887), in what becomes Culver City

The early 1900s:

- 1904 Abbot Kinney founds nearby Venice as a resort
- 1907 Ivy Substation constructed; which converted current for the electric cars on Venice Blvd.
- 1910 Harry Culver arrives in CA; works for land developer I. N. Van Nuys
- 1913 Harry Culver announces his plans at the California Club to establish a city; files for "Main St." with the County Recorder
- 1914 Residents of Palms chose to be part of LA; Culver City remains independent

- 1915 Thomas Ince builds the colonnade as the entry to the Ince/Triangle Studios on Washington Blvd.
- 1916 Culver City Grammar School PTA formed (Mrs. Dan Coombs is first president)
- 1917 Culver City is incorporated (On 8/13 Board of Supervisors order an election for 9/8; incorporation filed with the Sec. of State on 9/20/17)
- 1918 Ince/Triangle Studios becomes Goldwyn Studios
- 1919 Thomas Ince founds his second CC studio at 9336 Washington Blvd.
- 1919 Hal Roach builds his "laugh factory" studio (closes in 1963)

January 27th General Membership Meeting - and a walk down memory lane

The CCHS General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 27 at 7:00 pm in the Lethbridge Garden Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Avenue.

Were you at the 1948 Helms Bakery Picnic? If so, you may be a star and you'll want to come and hear our special guest, Lee Bixler, owner of The Antique Guild, who will screen a 1948 Helms Bakery Picnic video. Come and see how your neighbors and friends - and maybe yourself -- celebrated summertime fifty years ago! Mr. Bixler will also discuss the development of the Helms Museum, sharing with CCHS members some of the trials and gains of establishing a museum.

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Lu Herrera

Culver Historical Highlights

PO BOX 3428 • CULVER CITY, CA • 90231-3428
(310) 838-1073



A WONDERFUL AND PROSPEROUS 1999 TO EVERYONE!

The new year will bring many challenges and we all hope it will close with much accomplishment.

The last General Membership Meeting in November was a wonderful success and a strong kick-off for the Museum Capital Campaign. The panel discussion on "A Museum for Culver City" was most informative and provided honest insights into the trials and travails as well as the blessings of creating a museum from scratch.

I want to personally thank our outstanding panelists for coming and sharing their personal stories: Russell Davies of the Pacific Railroad Society, Louise Gabriel of the Santa Monica Historical Society, Walter Haskell of the Historical Society of Centinela Valley, and Marvin Paige of Marvin Paige Motion Picture & Television Archives. And, of course, our wonderful Julie Lugo Cerra who so ably moderated the discussion.

Edith Prager's passing this past Fall left a hole in our lives and on the CCHS Board. I would like to encourage one of our members to seriously consider giving one evening a month to your CCHS as our new Secretary. We're entering a very exciting period of growth for the Society and I invite you to be an integral part of it.

Also, I want you all to become actively involved with the Society and volunteer for one of the committees which need your support to make the CCHS strong and valuable to the community. Please take a moment and call (310) 838-1073 and tell us which committee fits your personal area of interest, then come out and have some fun!

My thanks go out to all those members who attended the December 7th Redevelopment Agency Meeting and spoke out on behalf of the CCHS and the need for a community museum. Your voice was heard.

As President of the CCHS, I'm dedicating my time and energies to making the Culver City Museum a reality and I hope you will join me in this mission. I believe the time is now and I believe that you all will pitch in and aid me in this crucial endeavor. Let's make 1999 truly a banner year!

Sincerely yours, *Lu Herrera*

Notes from Your City Historian

by Julie Lugo Cerra



• **BALLONA LANE:** Rancho La Ballona was the rancho established by Agustin Machado (with his brother, Ygnacio, and Felipe and Tomas Talamantes) in the early 1800s and is a very important part of the city's heritage. The City of Culver City is carved from portions of Rancho La Ballona and Rincon de los Bueyes (Higuera on the east). This piece of property is part of the original landgrant, claimed as rancho La Ballona.

I am personally pleased that the developer used names which were of significance to the city, rather than naming streets for the selves, which is often the norm (Cranks Rd, Stoneview, Blanco Way, etc.).

and.....

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: NEW YEAR, NEW STREETS

Four new streets will be carved out in the new development which is being constructed on what we remember as the old Studio Drive-In site. As a consultant on the project, I was asked to do some research to name the new residential streets. The following street names were unanimously approved by the City Council, on Dec. 14, 1998 for the following reasons:

• **HERITAGE PLACE:** The park within the development has been named Heritage Park, so it is in keeping with the development and the park. Heritage is intended to be a reminder of the importance of everyone's heritage, and honors all heritage.

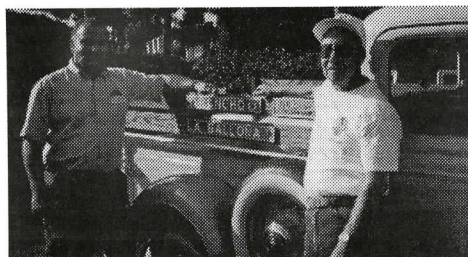
• **AGUSTIN LANE:** Agustin Machado was the ranchero who rode from dawn until dusk on his fastest steed to claim Rancho La Ballona, from which most of Culver City was carved. Agustin was a well known and respected ranchero, who owned this land through both the Spanish and Mexican periods and after California became a state. It is especially pertinent, since the development borders Machado Road.

• **LANTANA LANE:** Lantana is the official city flower.

• Congratulations to Jody Hall-Esser, Culver City's Chief Administrative Officer, for being honored by the American Heart Association on February 20.

• Reminder that the Sister City Committee will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Japanese Meditation Garden (in front of the Library) on April 17.

• As a follow-up to my last column, here is a photo of Freddie Machado illustrating what a great time was had by all at the recent Machado Family reunion!



L-R; Jim Job and Freddie Machado

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
Printed by.....B & B Printing

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

Feliz Año Nuevo! Bonne Annee!

As the new year begins, we are keeping our promise to bring new features and special interest columns to *Culver Historical Highlights*, with what we hope will be a regular series: "Spotlighting". This column will provide an opportunity to look back at the history of those businesses and people who have worked and served our city for a good long time.

Our City Historian Julie Lugo Cerra begins by spotlighting a family who, through four generations, has spread so much joy and happiness through their flower shops. Please let us know if you have ideas or suggestions for future columns.

We all look forward to the new year and to maximizing our efforts to bring about the founding of our long-awaited city museum, and we ask you all for your support in making this dream a reality. Watch for our future fundraising events throughout the year and come out with your family and friends. The first will be held in early Spring and promises to be a real winner! Remember it's *your* Culver City Historical Society.

To new beginnings!

CCHS Looking for Help

Do you have or know people who have film and memorabilia treasures which may be sitting in their garages or attics? The CCHS and "Reel Life in Culver City" are searching for film footage and background documents for this extraordinary film history. Please contact Ross Hawkins for more information or leads at (310) 839-5725.

REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

by Ross Hawkins



A Goodbye to Two Lovely Ladies

Soon *Culver City: The Reel Hollywood* will have its premiere screening. There were times when we thought it might never happen, but through the efforts of many, many wonderful people, we are currently in post-production with a premiere date in the very near future.

I would specifically like to mention two lovely ladies who contributed a great deal of information, insight and encouragement and who have recently left us.

I had the pleasure of meeting **Marcella Radwin**, personal secretary to the legendary David O. Selznick for many years, at the premiere of the new digitally re-mastered technicolor print of Selznick's masterpiece, *Gone With the Wind*, at its Academy screening last June. Of the people who worked behind the camera on the film, only Marcella was still alive and able to attend.

She had just written a book and was delighted to talk with me at length, kindly sharing behind-the-scene tales of personalities and film production as well as a good amount of Hollywood history that she experienced first hand. Her sense of humor was delightful and I'm so grateful for the time she spent with me.

Anne Carré was the widow of famed art director Ben Carré who first came to Culver City from France in 1919. For more than fifty years, Ben worked on some of the most memorable films ever made, including *The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *An American in Paris*.

Anne had a wonderful recollection of so many personal and professional stories and generously shared both her time and her treasures with me -- and her estate has donated a copy of Ben's memoirs which she translated from French to English to the CCHS' archives. She became a dear friend and I'll deeply miss her.

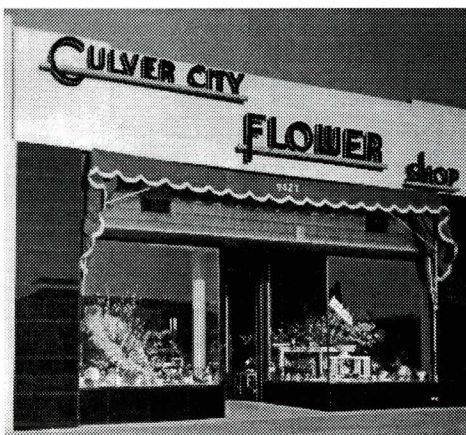
Both Marcella and Anne believed whole heartedly in our film and did all they could to bring interest and entertainment to the story. They brought so much to the project that mere thanks can never do justice to what they contributed. But I do thank them wholeheartedly and hope they're looking down, smiling and as proud of the film as I am.

SPOTLIGHTING...

by Julie Lugo Cerra,
City Historian, City of Culver City

Longtime residents have known the Ed Tinger family and their descendants, the Eskridges, for their wonderful flowers. Mr. Tinger, the father of our treasurer, Virgie Eskridge, established his first shop on March 17, 1934 at 9061 Washington Blvd. It was named Culver City Flower Shop.

By 1940, they moved west to 9545, to the historic Hull Building, owned by the family of our VP Ways and Means, Stu Freeman. According to Virgie, if you dine in San Gennaro's main room, you are sitting in the location of the old store.



Virgie remembers the sirens calling for a blackout during World War II while the family was eating dinner at the old King's Tropical Inn and her father ran all the way to the shop to turn the lights off! (The Fire Dept. got there first, though).

By 1950, they moved to their own building at 9572 Washington - now a paseo next to the Sagebrush Cantina. In 1951, Virgie and her husband Earl, opened up their own shop in Culver Center - that's the origin of the name, Culver Center Flowers.

Three years later, they completed the building they now occupy at 10801 Washington, and by the late 1960s, they also ran the Culver City Flower Shop, which had moved to 10119 Washington, near St. Augustine

Church, across from MGM Studios. So it should not be a surprise to learn that the flowers for *Gone With the Wind* were done by Culver City Flowers, or that Earl and Mike have delivered or arranged flowers for David Selznick's offices as well as for such stars as Marjorie Main, Sebastian Cabot, Myrna Loy, Wallace Beery, Rock Hudson, Robert Vaughn and Col. Tom Parker.

You might have noticed stars like Culver City-born Gwen Verdon and her mother (local citizens) in the shop, or watched Mike Eskridge arrange lots of zinnias for the *ET* set at The Culver Studios.

They also have done the flowers for a number of TV series, like "Dallas" (which also filmed in the shop), "Knots Landing," "Mad About You" and we could go on and on.

Culver Center Flowers does arrangements for The Culver Studios and Sony Pictures and Mike has done flowers for the "X Files" at Fox. Culver City/Culver Center Flowers also supplied flowers for floats in the Fiesta La Ballona parades in the 1950s, and now, Adam and Brian Eskridge, the 4th generation, can be seen delivering to weddings, another of their specialties.

What a history!

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

Own a Piece of CC History!

The CCHS has arranged for you to own a piece of Culver City history - part of the historic Studio Drive-In. A beautiful souvenir is being created which will have an actual piece of the drive-in's screen mounted with a photo of the screen as it was in its heyday. It will be authenticated with CCHS President Lu Herrera's signature and dated.

This wonderful memento of one of the city's most beloved landmarks will make a great gift or a necessary addition to any memorabilia collection. It will be available for purchase at the next CCHS General Meeting on **April 28th**, with funds earmarked the Museum Fund.

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.

Alliance Bank

Ames Company

Eye Care Center

Cavanaugh Realtors

Culver Center Flowers

Culver City Import Group

Robert L. Duitsman, Atty. at Law

Freeman Property Management

G & H Computers

JW Party Pictures/Photo Lab

Curtis S. Reis 410-9281

David Oliver 836-2637

Betsy E. Blechman MD 838-3834

Esther Tarn 837-7161

Earl Eskridge 839-2344

Larry E. Miller 559-4200

Robert L. Duitsman 645-6223

Stuart Freeman 839-7593

Leonard McDonald 836-8698

Jeff Wilson 915-1640

John Riordan Plumbing

Newton Plumbing

DDR OliverMcMillan

Park Place Escrow

Playa Vista

Robert E. Sapien & Associates

Spartan Supply Company

Sony Pictures Entertainment

The Antique Guild

John Riordan 838-4656

Jack Newton 839-1131

Paul Buss (619)457-0911

Patricia Parker 441-3755

Sibyl Buchanan 822-0074

Robert Sapien 836-3901

Rick Betts 837-5351

Lee Bixler 838-3131

Culver City Historical Society

Post office Box 3428 • Culver City, CA • 90231-3428

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 146
Culver City, CA