

# Culver Historical Highlights

VOLUME 22 No. 1

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WINTER 2001

## "HAPPY NEW YEAR 2001!" A MUSEUM ODYSSEY BEGINS . . .

### "SNEAK PREVIEW" SHOWS PUBLIC WHAT'S TO COME

On Saturday, November 18, 2000, the Culver City Historical Society was proud to present "Sneak Preview of the Culver City Heritage Museum" at the Veterans Memorial Building.

This was a one-day Expo/Performance event designed to introduce the public and potential supporters to the

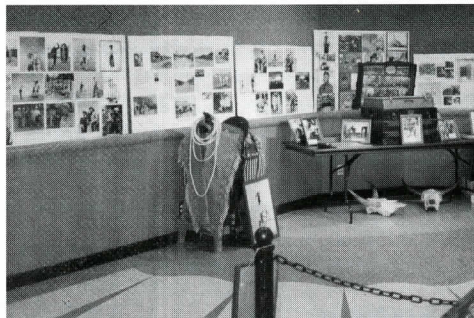
Capital Campaign of the Culver City Heritage Museum. Along with video screenings, panel discussions and the special evening event, "Nightlife in Culver City"

(see adjacent article), the focus of the event was the many displays and booths of a myriad of historic, social and cultural memorabilia of the history of Culver City.

The exhibit design layout was the work of Vince Carden of VC Studio. Vince also

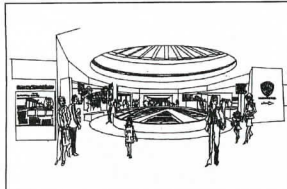
designed the "Sneak Preview" poster and oversaw the publication of the Souvenir Journal which was printed by B & B Printing.

Highlighting four major periods of the City's history – The History of the Native Indians, The History of the Early Settlers,



The History of the City of Culver City, and The History of the Entertainment Industry – the Rotunda at the Vets was filled with many wonderfully depictive photos and artifacts of our heritage.

The exhibits included the Gabrielino/Tongva Indians display, a panoramic photo display of the "Founding Fathers," and displays on the City's Rose Parade floats, the Ballona Creek Renaissance Program and the Helms Bakery Museum. Also included were displays of Culver City's Human Services, Parks & Recreation, and the Western Hemisphere Marathon. (Cont'd on page 6)



EXHIBITS AREA



GIFT SHOP AND THEATER

### "NIGHTLIFE IN CULVER CITY" A MUSICAL MEMORY TRIBUTE

Perhaps the highlight of the day-long "Sneak Preview" event was the evening segment, "Nightlife in Culver City," where guests entered a candle-lit room of rich reds and sparkle.

Actor/producer/writer Robert Sacchi was a perfect host for "Nightlife," a musical tribute to the nightclubs that held court in Culver City from the 1920s through the end of World War II, primarily along Washington Blvd., the "Sunset Strip" of Culver City.

Mr. Sacchi, best known for his portrayal of *The Man With Bogart's Face*, performed the lively emcee duties at the Society's "Café Culver." He interviewed special guests Chuck



L-R: Ross Hawkins, Robert Sacchi  
& Marc Wanamaker

Cecil of the popular, long-running radio program, *The Swingin' Years*, historian Marc Wanamaker and legendary drummer, Gordon "Specks" Powell, (Cont'd on page 6)

## JANUARY 16TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

### • Spotlight on the History of the Culver City Fire Department •

The next Annual Membership Meeting of the Culver City Historical Society will be held on Tuesday, January 16th at 7:00 pm in the Lethbridge Garden Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City. Important Society business will be discussed.

The Society is pleased to have as guest speaker, firefighter and paramedic, Bill Heins, who will present the history of the Culver City Fire Department. Bill has inherited the historic memorabilia collection of retired Assistant Fire Chief Charles Liedtke and has continued to add and augment this collection with his own personal research. He will speak on the development of the Fire Department since it was established in 1927 and discuss the changes and challenges it has faced through the years. Many historic photos will be displayed.

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 Cathy Zermeno at (310) 839-7688.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Don Rogers



As we reflect on the joy of the Holiday season and all that it means to us, it is also a reminder that a New Year is just around the corner.

Your Board has come up with a fundraising program that we think ties the Holiday season and the New Year together. Enclosed is a flyer describing the Society's new "Historical Throw" which depicts a number of historical buildings in Culver City. This will make a great gift to give for the holidays. It is not only very attractive, but each purchase will

raise funds for the Culver City Heritage Museum. We're very proud to make this offer, and I urge you all to consider giving one or more of these "throws" as gifts, and contribute to the Society's fundraising efforts.

We have had an exciting series of excellent programs this past year raising the awareness of the history of Culver City, and we have an equally exciting series planned for 2001. I call upon each member of the Society to support your Board of Directors as we continue to fulfill our goals of preserving and promoting the wonderful history of Culver City.

Happy Holidays to everyone!

*Don Rogers*

## Notes from Your City Historian

*by Julie Lugo Cerra*



### CULVER HIGH'S FIRST GRADUATES IN 1953

Did you know that 50 years ago, Culver High opened as a three-year high school? Next door, the Junior High accommodated students from 7th - 9th grades. Plans for the secondary schools began in 1949, when we became a "unified" school district. The Titans were the first graduates, the Class of 1953. Their graduation gift was a painting of the Centaur on the Gym. Where did students go to high school before Culver? (Answer: Hamilton or Venice).

### CITY NEWS

• There was a reunion of World War II Combat Photographers in December. I met Robert Elliott, now a Florida resident, who served as a Sergeant in the Army Air Corps, First Motion Picture Unit. Mr. Elliott was stationed at "Fort Roach" (Hal Roach Studios), from 1943-1945. He recalled riding into Culver City on the Venice Short Line, and then walking over to the studio to check in. He spent his first night sleeping on a soon-to-be "struck" movie set for *One Million BC*.

Mr. Elliott was a wealth of information about the war years and Culver City. Their barracks housing was the Pacific Military Academy (PMA), which had been established in 1922 by Harry Culver in honor of his late father, a volunteer colonel. The PMA sat on a hill just outside Culver city limits, on Cardiff and Cattaraugus. Mr. Elliott told me about one clever training film entitled "Learn and Live" whose purpose was to

reduce preventable deaths of flying cadets. In that film, a noted actor played St. Peter, who was shown conferring with a training officer. The officer was complaining about training the men, only to have St. Peter "call them." Special effects included swirling smoke looking up to the pearly gates. Mr. Elliott said they were also asked to compile their "bloopers" for entertainment.

• Sony Pictures Entertainment is in the process of creating a local history-related Art in Public Places project with school children in Culver City. Upon completion, a mural from each of the five elementary schools will be on permanent display at Sony Pictures Plaza, and a mural will be displayed at each school.

• On Monday, December 11, 2000, the Culver City Council observed a moment of silence for Congressman Julian Dixon, who passed away on December 8. Dixon had been a recognizable presence in Culver City since his days as an Assemblyman, more than 20 years ago. Historically a problem-solver with common sense and empathy, Dixon cut to the bottom line and quietly used his power to benefit all. Julian Dixon was a mentor legislator, whose support and respect crossed party lines. We will miss Julian Dixon, a great friend.



*Julian Dixon*

### COMING UP:

Look for "Historic Culver City" soon on California Senator Barbara Boxer's website (<http://www.senate.gov/~boxer/>).

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## Culver Historical Highlights

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

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 Writers..... Julie Lugo Cerra,  
Sandy Burton, Carolyn Cole,  
Lupe Smith, Ross Hawkins

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### EDITOR'S COLUMN

For many, 2001 is the true Millennium. For the Society, it's certainly the continuing of our "odyssey" to make the dream of a Culver City Heritage Museum a reality.

We were very pleased and heartened by the response of visitors to our November event, the "Sneak Preview of the Culver City Heritage Museum" Expo. The displays and exhibits were topnotch and many commented on our City's unique history, and the need to preserve and display such items in a permanent Museum.

Enclosed in this issue is a reprint of the full article on the Helms Bakery's "The Last Picnic" by Margaret Farnum (Fall 2000). We apologize for errors in the edited piece that was printed and hope that all of the "Helmsmen" will enjoy the full account of their "last picnic."

A note of sympathy goes out to the family and friends of actor Rick Jason who was to host "Nightlife in Culver City" until his untimely death in early November. We are very grateful to Robert Sacchi for taking the reins and doing such a terrific job of emceeing our "musical memory" evening.

Now is the time to recommit to YOUR Culver City Historical Society. Renew your membership now and encourage family, friends and colleagues to do the same - exciting things are ahead. And join a committee - there's lots to do!

A healthy and prosperous New Year to all!

## REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY



*by Ross Hawkins*

### AN APPRECIATION: THE PITTI FAMILY

Many thanks are owed to the Pitti Family for helping to assemble three exhibits at the Culver City Historical Society's benefit, "Sneak Preview of the Culver City Heritage Museum." We greatly appreciate their generosity and were rewarded by the rich and colorful history of two generations of Pittis.

Carl and Paul Pitti's father, Ben, traveled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and broke and trained horses for the U.S. Army during World War I. He met his wife, Ethel Debalto who was a trick rider with the Wild West show, while on tour. They settled in Culver City at 4191 Lincoln Avenue more than 70 years ago and the house is still owned by the family.



*L-R: Carl Pitti, Mickey Pitti & Paul Pitti*

Ben Pitti later worked for Pauline Fredrick, a major motion picture star of the 1920s, as chauffeur, wrangler and bodyguard. When Ms. Fredrick moved to Europe, Ben went to work for Will Rogers at his ranch in Pacific Palisades and remained there until Rogers' untimely death in 1935.

Carl and Paul were lifelong friends with Will Rogers' sons, Will Jr. and Jimmy Rogers. Will Rogers' uncle, Walter Cameron, got Carl his first job in films doubling for Charles Bickford in the Hal Roach classic, *Of Mice & Men*.

Walter Cameron was a real-life U.S. Marshal in the Oklahoma Territory before he became America's first film cowboy hero. In 1903, he played the Sheriff in Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* and was paid \$35 for his film debut. (Film buffs might be interested to learn that famed singer Al Jolson appeared as an extra in this historic film - the granddaddy of Westerns - and is listed in the credits.)

After appearing in more than 200 films, Cameron retired from acting and opened The Ben Hur Stables at the corner of Overland and Jefferson where Raintree Plaza now sits. There he provided horses, stagecoaches and wagons for such epics as *Gone With The Wind*, *Boombtown* and *San Francisco*. He also taught actors and actresses how to ride and drive a team of horses for film work. Cameron died in 1942, and Carl Pitti followed in Cameron's famous footsteps, teaching actors like Glen Ford, Joel McCrea and Robert Taylor how to



*Walter Cameron with Ingrid Bergman*

be "reel" cowboys.

In 1941, Carl first doubled for Robert Taylor in MGM's *Billy The Kid*. He continued to double for Taylor in several westerns of the 1940s and '50s, including *Ambushed*, *Westward The Women* and *The Law & Jake Wade*. Carl can be seen as the violin player in the closing sequence of *Westward The Women*.

Both Carl & Paul Pitti were musically inclined. While in high school, Carl played and sang at KFI Radio with Jack Dalton & The Riders of The Purple Sage. Carl, his wife Mickey and Paul toured as "The Westernaires" after World War II.

While Carl and Paul's father Ben was visiting Texas, he ran across a group called "The Texas Outlaws." He invited them to come to Culver City and appear in a wild west show he was producing at Mission Village. The Texas Outlaws made their debut at Mission Village in the mid-1930s along with singer Leonard Sly. The Texas Outlaws changed their name to The Sons of the Pioneers and Leonard Sly became Roy Rogers.

Living down the street from the Pittis were June and Edna Anderson and they all attended Hamilton High School together. June Anderson went to work at MGM in 1942, and, as June Caldwell, she is still working in the industry as President Roger Mayer's executive secretary at Turner Entertainment.

Both Carl and Paul served in the military during World War II - Paul was a radio operator in the Marine Corps in the Pacific and



*L-R: Paul Pitti, June (Anderson) Caldwell, Edna (Anderson) Hornauer & Carl Pitti*

Carl served in Europe with Railroad Transport. After the war, Carl continued working in films while Paul went to work at Benson Electric which was located on Washington Blvd., where Bank of America is today.

Carl purchased Will Rogers Jr.'s home in Blair Hills and helped train him for the role of

his famous father in *The Will Rogers Story*. He had a recurring role in the long-running TV series, "Little House On The Prairie," and retired after the show closed. He sold the ranch in Blair Hills and moved to Hemet with his wife Mickey where they currently raise horses.

Carl's daughter Karla is the ranch foreman at their spread in Hemet and her husband, John Dennis Johnson, is an actor and production manager. John and Karla helped put the "Cowboy Heroes of Culver City" display together, hauling much of the memorabilia from Hemet including Ben Pitti's saddle and a trunk that toured with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

### The Jewel of the Exhibit

"Cowboy Heroes of Culver City" was sponsored by Alliance Bank. Brother Paul helped piece together the fascinating story of the extraordinary Mexican saddle which was the jewel of the exhibit. Owned by John Meade of West Virginia, the saddle, which pictures the fantastic engraving of the Lord's Supper and



*"The Saddle"*

a folklore history of Mexico, was once owned by General Luis Terrazas, Governor of Chihuahua, Mexico, who gave it to Pancho Villa as part of a ransom for the safe return of Terrazas' son.

Movie producer Thomas Ince brought the saddle back to Culver City and, after his death, it was purchased by Walter Cameron. It was later auctioned off at Madison Square Gardens, and then the saddle disappeared. John Meade, owner of Southern Electric Machine Company in Narrows, Virginia, purchased the saddle from a man who had been keeping it in his basement for some fifteen years. Meade got in touch with Carl Pitti who told him some of the history and talked him into displaying it at the Culver City "Sneak Preview."

The saddle is currently being restored by High Noon Western Collectibles, located at 9929 Venice Boulevard and owned by Joseph Sherwood and Linda Kohn.

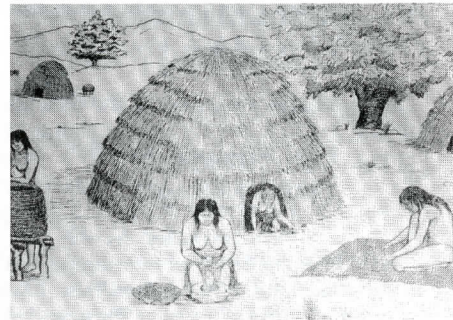
We are deeply indebted to the whole Pitti family for their assistance with the wonderful "Cowboy Heroes of Culver City" exhibit and for sharing the rich history of their wonderful family.



# A MUSEUM ODYSSEY BEGINS . . .

"SNEAK PREVIEW" OF THE  
CULVER CITY HERITAGE MUSEUM  
GIVES A GLIMPSE OF THINGS TO COME.

HISTORY OF THE NATIVE INDIANS



Gabrielino Village.

HISTORY OF THE EARLY SETTLERS



Fred Machado & Lupe Smith  
with "Founding Fathers" exhibit.

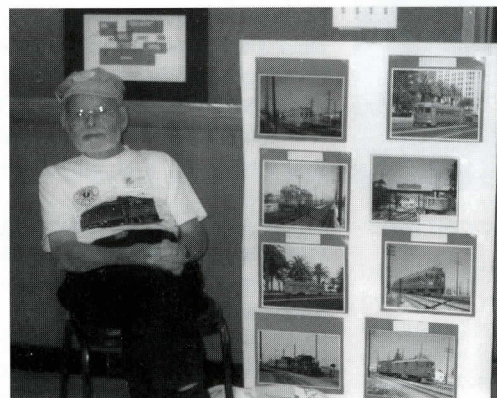


Realty Board of Culver City 1926



Cameras were everywhere!

HISTORY OF THE CITY OF CULVER CITY



Ralph Larkin & his  
Pacific Electric exhibit



Helms Bakery / Disneyland  
Rose Bowl float 1955



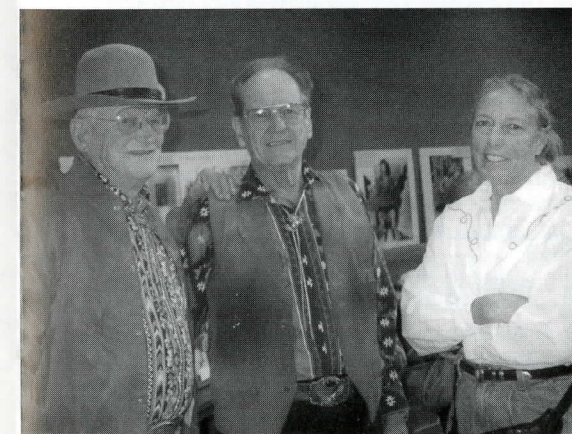
Ballona Creek murals



Marty Harris & Café Culver All-Stars band.



L-R: John Meade & Paul Pitti  
with the "Saddle"

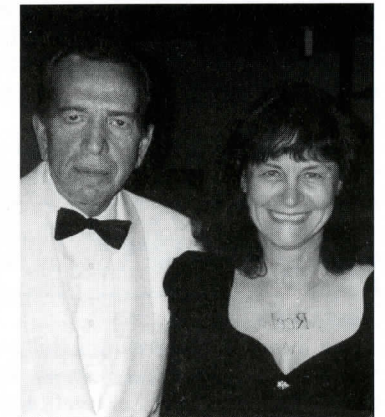


L-R: Carl Pitti, Paul Pitti  
& Karla Johnson

"NIGHTLIFE IN CULVER CITY"  
SCORES WITH MUSIC  
FROM YESTERDAY



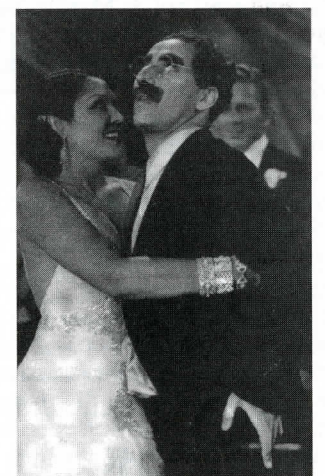
Judy Stangler  
& "Specks" Powell



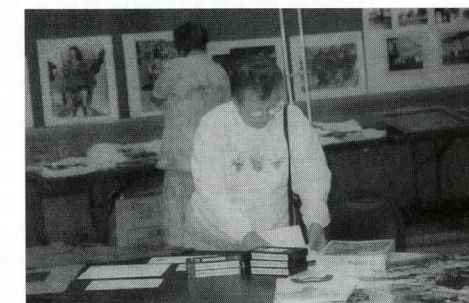
Bob Sacchi  
& Sandy Burton.



Mim & Hank Shapiro



We could have  
danced all night!



Virgie Eskridge helps sets up Expo

HISTORY OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY



**"SNEAK PREVIEW"** (Cont'd from page 1)

Augmenting the Pacific Electric Rail Line exhibit was the screening of *The Last Ride of The Red Cars*, a short film by Ralph Larkin about the demise of the PE. Mr. Larkin was on hand to discuss the film which was made possible by the generous support of Dennis Giroux.

We are very grateful to all the exhibitors who brought so many wonderful artifacts and memorabilia. These included Turner Entertainment Co. and its collection of MGM posters, The Antique Guild which houses the Helms Bakery Museum, the Fred Parrish *Gone With The Wind* photo collection, Bison Archives' The History of the Culver City Studios collection, and the estate of famed film art director, Ben Carre'.

Also exhibiting were The Marvin Paige Film & Television Archives and its *Wizard of Oz* collection, the Martha & Sol Sigall Animation collection, and Alliance Bank which sponsored the "Cowboy Heroes of Culver City" display (see related article in "Reel Culver City," pg. 3).

We thank the following exhibitors who worked to help make "Sneak Preview" such a success: June Caldwell, Lee Bixler, Sandy Burton, Julie Lugo Cerra, Rodney Gotlieb, Syd Kronenthal, Jim Lamm, Ralph & Edna Larkin, Fred Machado, Marvin Paige and Pam Robinson. Our thanks also go to Carl & Paul Pitti, Karla & John Johnson, Sol & Martha Sigall, Lupe Smith, Martha & Woody Tolkien, Marc Wanamaker, Kit Weber, Cathy Zermeno and John Meade.

The Society is indebted to the following Sponsors: *Platinum Circle*: John Felix and Pearla Staples; *Gold Circle*: Sagebrush Cantina; and *Silver Circle*: Gordon & Janet Cunningham, Linda Anderson/State Farm, The Wellness Spa, Freeman Property Management, Paul & Joy Jacobs and Kit Weber. A special thanks goes to George Feltenstein of Turner Entertainment Co. for his assistance with the "Animation" panel discussion/screening, to Sanjo Investments, Lu Herrera and Alandale's men's furnishings for their support.

As Vice President, Museum and Manager of the event, I especially want to thank my Event Chair Judy Stangler, Stu Freeman who oversaw the raffles and Souvenir Program ads, Rosemary Chiaverini of UCLA International & Overseas Programs for her continuing support, and Mark Morris who worked so tirelessly in all areas.

I also want to thank the committee members: Karen Coyle, Damian Gerald Curran, Virgie Eskridge, Charlie Halstead, Jay Handal, Hal Horne, Julie Lugo Cerra, Marvin Paige, Jozelle Smith, Efrem & Beverly Violin, Reba Yudess, Cathy Zermeno and Verely Collins.



Chuck Cecil (R) shares musical memories with Host Bob Sacchi



Chuck & Edna Cecil

**"NIGHTLIFE"** (Cont'd from page 1)

who shared personal anecdotes and participated in the evening's recreation of what the nightclub scene was like.

Adding to the ambience was the "Café Culver All-Stars" band. Popular jazz pianist Marty Harris led a group of internationally known jazz artists which included Terry Harrington on sax, Bill Berry on trumpet, Paul Kriebeck on drums and Paul Gormley on bass. No one could sit still listening to their fabulous music and many were out on the dance floor.

A wonderful photo display recounting the history of such well-known establishments as the infamous Frank Sebastian's Cotton Club, the Green Mill Café and film comic Fatty Arbuckle's The Plantation Café was presented by Marc Wanamaker whose internationally renowned Bison Archives has an extraordinary photo collection of these nightspots.

Adding to the evening was a terrific buffet provided by Charlie Halstead and the Sagebrush Cantina - especially his hamburgers that got great reviews!

**REMINDER:**

Come visit the  
Helms Bakery Museum at  
The Antique Guild  
in the historic  
Helms Building at  
3225 Helms Ave. between  
Venice & Washington Blvds.

**CCHS MEMBERS VIST  
GREYSTONE MANSION**

by Sandy Burton

On October 14, the Beverly Hills Historical Society hosted a tour of the famed Greystone Mansion for its sister historical societies. Over a buffet lunch, the groups told of their programs and future plans, and discussed the challenges of maintaining interest in preserving history and the constant concern of fundraising.

Built in 1927, the Gothic-styled mansion is located on 415 acres of land in the midst of Beverly Hills. Originally, the grounds surrounding the home included a lake, babbling brooks and a cascading waterfall. Now owned by the City of Beverly Hills, Greystone has been the locale for numerous film and television programs, and is often used for private weddings.

It was a delightful afternoon and we all appreciated the valuable opportunity to meet one another, and are encouraged to continue this type of interchange in the future.



L-R: Sandy Burton, Judy Stangler, Virgie Eskridge, Julie Lugo Cerra, Ross Hawkins & Mark Morris. (Not shown: Karen Coyle)

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
"THROW" AVAILABLE**

The Culver City Historical Society has designed a custom "throw" blanket which will surely become a treasured and collectible keepsake.

The design captures the spirit of Culver City, the "Heart of Screenland," with the depiction of various historical landmarks and elements unique to this area. It is created from a selection of historical photos chosen to highlight the City's heritage, and is woven in the color of the City flower, the blue lantana. Among the historic sites included are the City Hall, the Citizen Building, the Hull Building, the Culver Hotel, and Helms Bakery. Five historic film studios are represented including the famous MGM colonnade on Washington Blvd.

Created by Hudson & Co., these throws are made of 100% cotton, Jacquard woven in the U.S.A., preshrunk, color-fast and machine washable. Measuring approximately 48 x 67 inches and fringed on all four sides, these throws are beautiful, practical and affordable at \$40.00 each. Please use the enclosed order form or call Reba Yudess at (310) 391-7031 for additional information.

The Society is proud to offer these throws to commemorate our City's heritage and all surplus proceeds will go to the Culver City Heritage Museum Capital Campaign.

**ST. AUGUSTINE CHURCH  
HISTORY EXHIBITED**

by Ross Hawkins

Paul Pitti, who was so instrumental in setting up the "Cowboy Heroes of Culver City" exhibit at the "Sneak Preview" Expo, also put together a display commemorating St. Augustine Catholic Church (also see "Historic Sightings") and one of its most beloved priests, Msgr. John O'Donnell, pastor of the church from 1923 until 1938.



Msgr. O'Donnell with actress Maureen O'Sullivan

While he was at St. Augustine, Msgr. O'Donnell developed a close personal relationship with Louis B. Mayer, the mogul who ran MGM, and served as technical director on films made at the studio when the Catholic Church was involved. Many of the school children at St. Augustine worked as extras in MGM films.

Paul recalled, "MGM was extremely generous to the parish. When the church would hold its fundraising barbecues, the studio would help with the event, donating large tents and the food." Paul also remembers playing an altar boy along with Fred Machado in MGM's 1936 version of *Romeo & Juliette*. "We were altar boys for Norma Shearer's funeral procession which took three days to film and we were paid eleven dollars a day for the work which was good money in 1936," laughed Paul.

**BEQUEST BENEFITS  
MUSEUM ENDOWMENT**

Consider remembering the Historical Society in your will or trust with a bequest of monies and/or memorabilia. Your gifts will help us to build the Culver City Heritage Museum and secure its future and the legacy of our City's history for generations to come. For more information on how you can help, call the Society at (310) 838-1073

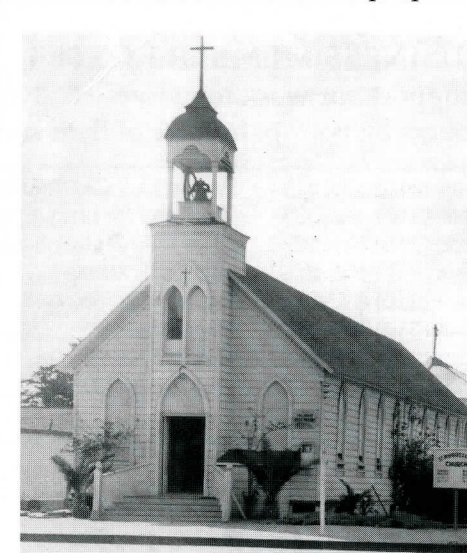
**"HISTORIC  
SIGHTINGS"**

by Sandy Burton

**Historic Site #3  
St. Augustine Church**  
(3850 Jasmine Avenue, Culver City)

As we continue our series on the work of the Historic Site Committee, we now look at St. Augustine Catholic Church, which became Historic Site #3 on December 4, 1983.

In 1883, Senor J. Francisco Figueroa donated acreage to the Roman Catholic Church of Los Angeles on which the first church was built in 1887. Built as a mission church to serve the people of



St. Augustine Church c. 1920s

the La Ballona Valley, it was a small wooden chapel, seating 200 people.

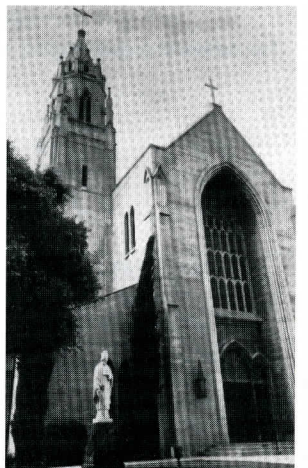
The locals traditionally attended services at the Old Soldier's Home on Sawtelle or St. Monica Church in Santa Monica, and the new church was named St. Augustine, for St. Monica's son. It was the first church in what was later to become Culver City.

The original title of this allotment of Rancho La Ballona was passed to Rita Botiller de Aguilar, widow of Macedonio Aguilar, in 1871. In 1883, when she made a gift of property to her grandson, Francisco Figueroa, he sold some of the property to E.H. Owen and Albert Rimpau. However, he kept a portion of the land and gave a portion to the Catholic Church.

In 1919, St. Augustine became an official parish of the Monterey-Los Angeles Diocese. In 1922, the chapel was enlarged to seat 500 people.

In 1936, a new church was constructed to seat 700 people. It was dedicated in 1937 and now serves as the parish hall.

The present Roman Catholic parish of St. Augustine is a Mediterranean-Gothic structure with seats for over 1,200 people. It has served Culver City and the Westside for over 75 years, with a parish community that includes more than 2,000 families.



St. Augustine Church today

\*\*\*

The Historic Site Committee has the important job of designating City landmarks as worthy of public recognition. Its criteria are twofold: the site must be at least 50 years old and it must be deemed to be of "historic significance." The second was specifically designed to allow a certain amount of leeway when making such selections as a myriad of considerations often come into play when considering a site for designation.

We encourage open dialogue with our readers and welcome recommendations of possible sites for consideration. To participate in researching historic backgrounds, please call Sandy Burton at (310) 641-0440.

**WARNER BROS.  
MUSEUM TOUR**

On October 18, Society members and their guests were treated to a private tour of the Warner Bros. Museum in Burbank. Wonderful film artifacts and memorabilia such as the piano from *Casablanca* and personal mementoes from the likes of Errol Flynn and Bette Davis are on display. We thank Sol and Martha Sigall, who are docents with the Museum, for arranging this special tour for the Society.

**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.



## ADDENDUM

*Due to editing errors in the printed article of "The Last Picnic" by Margaret Farnum (Fall 2000), we here present the article in its entirety. We apologize for this and hope that all of the "Helmsmen" will enjoy the full story of their "last picnic."*

### THE LAST PICNIC

by Margaret Farnum

Emotions have always been evident, but the tighter handshakes or longer hugs, the greater effort to greet EVERYONE, the stories that flowed throughout the gathering of the "family," and the final farewells were more poignant than in years past.

But then, there is only one last picnic!

The time was right. August 26, 2000 seemed the appropriate time: It was the 70th Anniversary of the founding of Helms Bakeries; it was the new millennium; and the Olympic Games were about to kick-off in Sydney, Australia. The Anniversary was acknowledged with Culver City Mayor David Hauptman and City Councilpersons Alan Corlin, Carol Gross and Steve Rose presenting a scroll to Paul Helms III, his wife Denise and daughters Kristin and Kimberly.

Wally Marks and son Wally, Jr., (present owners of Helms Bakery Property, the former Helms Athletic Foundation Bldg. and the old Beacon Laundry facilities) and Lee Bixler (owner of The Antique Guild which lies within the historic fabric

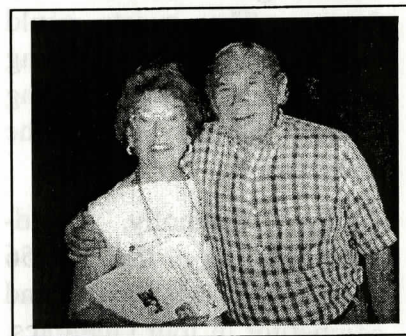
of the Helms Building) were greeting the guests while displaying renovation plans for the historic Beacons building which will incorporate the Helms legacy of baking and athletics. Film producer and Culver City Historical Society Vice President, Museum, Ross Hawkins, was on hand to record the occasion for posterity.

With the Sydney Games about to begin, we all felt it was appropriate that the "last picnic" should be held in an Olympic year as it was the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles that catapulted Paul H. Helms into the athletic limelight.

Helms was designated as Olympic Baker for the world's finest athletes. Recipes were secured from the various countries so their team members would have bread from home. And so Helms produced the "Bread of Champions."

Involvement with the Olympics increased Helms' love of athletics, and when Bill Schroeder approached him in 1936 with a vision of a Hall of Fame and awards program for athletes, he was very receptive. The Helms Athletic Foundation was born on October 16, 1936 – the year of the Xth Olympiad.

Approximately 135 attendees answered the Committee's final whistle. During the special ceremonies in tribute to the Helms Family, the long-established "Picnic Committee" was thanked, including Charlie Voss of the engineering department, who with Bill Schroeder, Buddy Dyer of the Helms Athletic Foundation and Syd Kronenthal, retired Superintendent of Culver City's Human Resources, served on the Committee since the bakery closed in 1968. Bill's daughter and son-in-law, Jan and Bruce Iversen, were also on hand.



Margaret Farnum & Syd Kronenthal

Having worked at the Helms Athletic Foundation for Bill Schroeder, I was talked into coming aboard the Committee by Buddy, Charlie and Syd in the 1980s, shortly after Bill's death, as did Thora Dyer after Buddy's passing. I

clearly remember when the bakery closed. The feeling of kinship among the employees was such that everyone wanted to continue the "company picnic" that had been initiated in the early years by Paul H. Helms, and continued by Paul H. Helms, Jr. Thereafter, the picnics became reunions, with Paul III and his wife and children continuing to help plan these annual events.

Held for many years at the Veteran's Memorial Park, details for the picnic's last hurrah were worked out with Lee Bixler and the Wally Marks family to hold the event within the old Bakery site itself. In the garage area adjoining The Antique Guild, the Santa Maria Barbecue Caterers cooked chicken and ribs in a chuckwagon outside the doors. The guests could visit, tour their old stomping grounds, and enjoy "breaking bread" together under the Helms roof.

Olga Connolly, gold-medalist in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne and competitor in four Olympics, was on hand with her son Mark and grandson to thank the Helms Family for the wonderful support the Athletic Foundation gave to struggling athletes through the years, 1936 through 1968. Bowen Stafforth, silver medalist in swimming at the Olympics in Helensinki, also expressed

his gratitude for his own Helms Award, remarking upon the generosity of Bill Schroeder and the Helms organization in underwriting the honors and programs for athletes here and around the world.

There was 94-year young Lillian Klohs, who met her husband Leonard while working for Helms. Lillian flew in from Oregon with her son and daughter to visit the "shrine" and once more greet co-workers. Other familiar Helms names among the guests were Grant Koch, Al Ondrovich, and J.C. Garrison from Arizona. Loyal co-workers Don Sperling, Lee Harwell, Marvin Riemath, Jim Williams, Doralee Durst and Jan Sturgeon came from closer to home.

When the speakers finished and the last hugs were shared, the final, bittersweet moment and all the moments of the past, entered our "Helms Memory Book" to be cherished always.

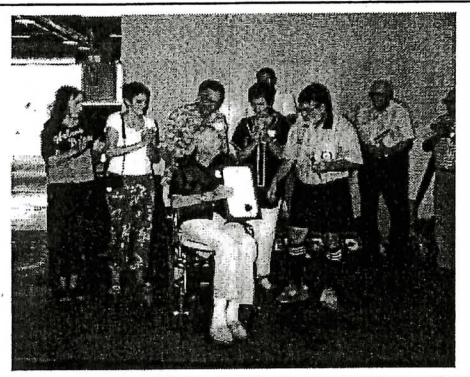
In a time of impersonal corporate takeovers with very little thought to the worker's well-being, the Helms Bakery is an amazing story of how one man's family started a business during the depression, and attained international success, not only through expertise and hard work, but through the genuine caring and compassion for its workers. An enduring loyalty, respect and gratitude

for a meaningful way of living has lasted and lived through its "company picnic."

As someone was heard to say, "The journey through life as a Helmsman, was a wonderful trip!"

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*Ms. Farnum is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Los Angeles Coliseum Commission.*



CC Mayor Hauptman presents certificate to Charlie Voss & "Helmsmen."



# Culver City

## "Heart of Screenland"

### Custom Throw

The Culver City Historical Society has designed a custom "throw" blanket which will surely become a treasured and collectible keepsake.

The design captures the spirit of Culver City – "The Heart of Screenland" – with the depiction of various historical landmarks and elements unique to this area. It is created from a selection of historical photos chosen to highlight the City's heritage, and is woven in blue and natural. The Society's nine designated Historic Sites are pictured, including the City Hall, the Citizen Building, the Hull Building and the Helms Bakery. Five historic film studios are represented including the famous MGM colonnade on Washington Blvd.

Created by Hudson & Co., these throws are made of 100% cotton, Jacquard woven in the U.S.A., preshrunk, color-fast and machine washable. Measuring approximately 48 x 67 inches and fringed on all four sides, these throws are beautiful, practical and affordable at \$40.00 each.

The Society is proud to offer these throws to commemorate our City's heritage and all surplus proceeds will go to the Culver City Heritage Museum Capital Campaign.

I would like to support the Culver City Historical Society and order \_\_\_\_\_  
CCHS Throws @ \$40.00 each for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please make checks payable to **The Culver City Historical Society** and mail to:  
The Culver City Historical Society - THROWS  
P.O. Box 3428  
Culver City, CA 90231-3428

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

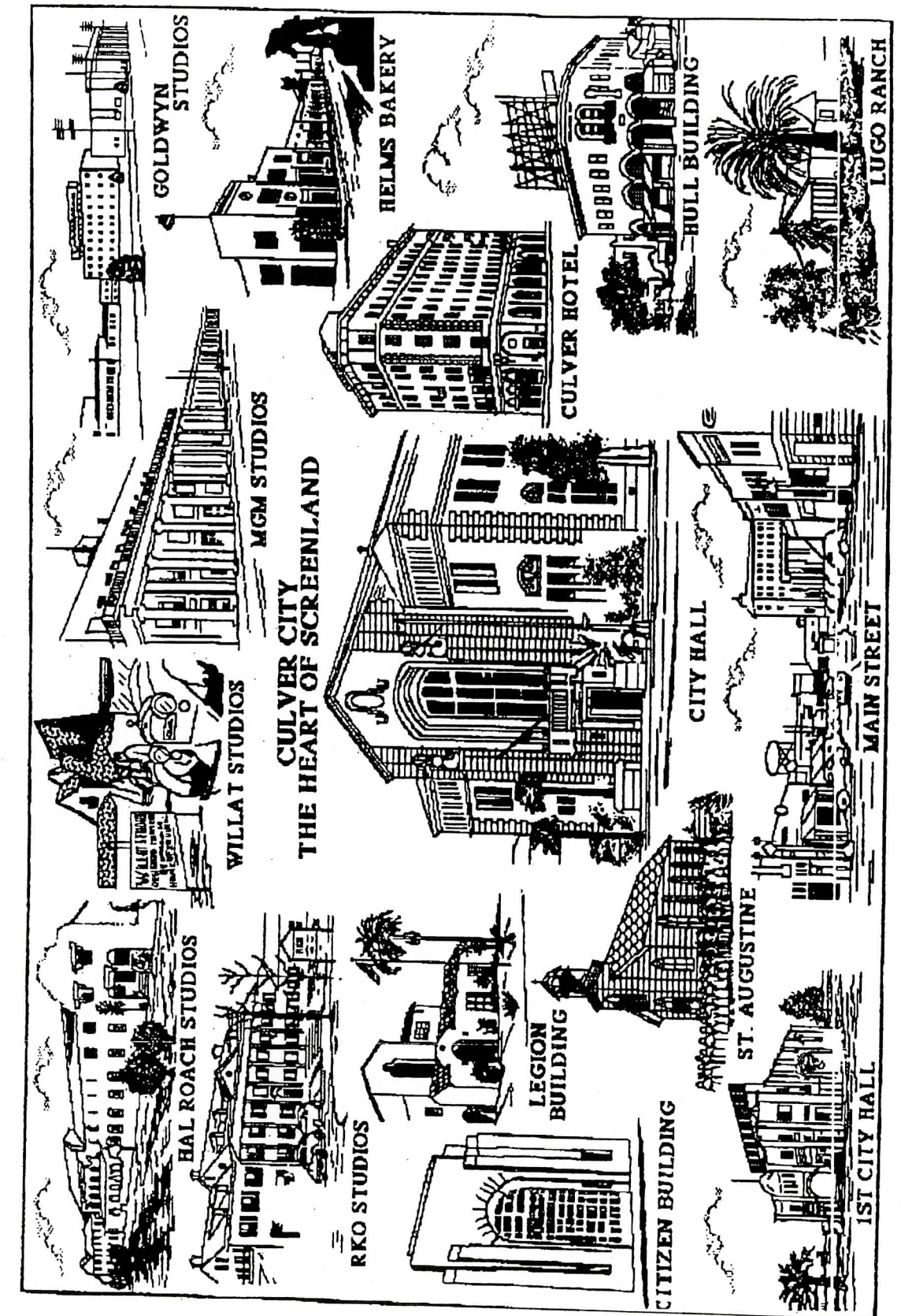
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

For further information, call Reba Yudess at (310) 391-7031.

*The Culver City Historical Society 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 for future generations.*





## 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

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor (\$1000)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Family Lifetime Member (\$500)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Patron Member (\$100)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Family Member (\$25)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Individual Member (\$15) | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor (\$500)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Individual Lifetime Member (\$250)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Business Member (\$50)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Organization (\$15)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Student Member (\$5) |
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Name/Company: _____	Telephone: _____
Contact Person: _____	Fax: _____
Mailing Address: _____	Email: _____

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) 838-1073.

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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## Culver City Historical Society

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