

Culver Historical Highlights

VOLUME 24 No1

Published by the Culver City Historical Society

WINTER 2003

"HAPPY NEW YEAR 2003!"

First Motion Picture Unit Reunion

FIRST MOTION PICTURE UNIT REVISITS CULVER CITY

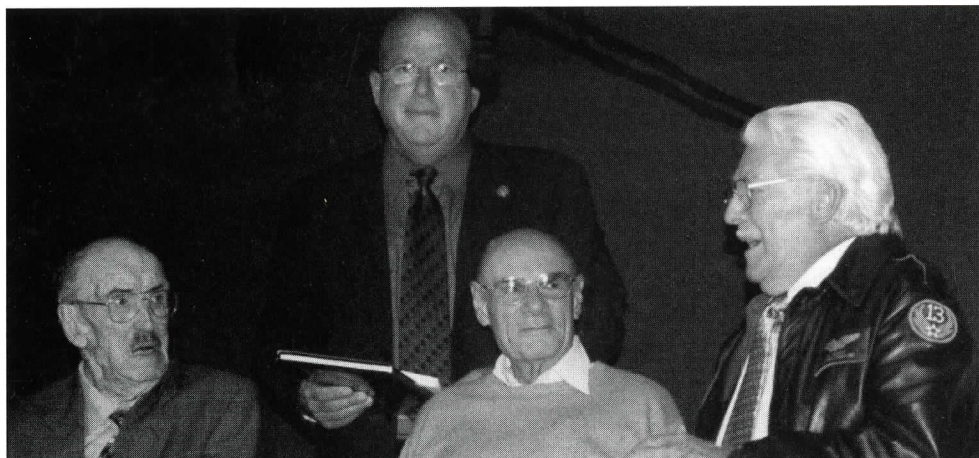
by Julie Lugo Cerra

In the past 60 years, the First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU) that served at "Fort Roach" (Hal Roach Studios) during World War II, has only had three reunions. The CCHS was privileged to co-host three retired photographers who came for the October, 2002 reunion events: **Robert Elliott, Daniel McGovern** and **William Rogister**.

The Society held a "pre-event" on Wednesday, October 30, by hosting our guests for lunch at the Cerra home before transporting them to West Los Angeles College (our co-host) to hear them talk about their experiences in Culver City. Steven Rose acted as the emcee, presenting them with gifts while wearing three hats: CC Historical Society president, CC Councilmember and president of the CC Chamber of Commerce.

WLAC president, Frank Quiambao, stopped by with supportive comments. His office arranged for the video taping of the event which was held in the Fine Arts Theatre gratis to the Society.

After a short slide presentation by the City Historian, Julie Lugo Cerra, to welcome the men back to Culver City, Program Vice-president Ross Hawkins moderated their discussion, while Mark



L-R: FMPU photographers Dan McGovern, Robert Elliott and William Rogister; CCHS Pres. Steven Rose standing.

Morris video-taped the retired servicemen's remarks. We now have priceless memories from these three gentlemen in our archives for posterity.

THREE DELIGHTFUL GENTLEMEN

Robert Elliott, who served as a Staff Sgt., flew in from Florida for the events. He has been our most helpful source of information about Fort Roach in recent years. The City Historian flew to their last reunion to interview him two years ago.

Mr. Elliott, a noted still photographer, brought some humor to the mix when he told about the saluting dilemma at the studio.

(cont'd on page 6)

THE "LIVING HISTORY" PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

by Julie Lugo Cerra

Living History is alive and well in Culver City! The first four scripts are complete and they are in the hands of the Culver City Unified School District. They will be previewed at the January General Membership meeting (see box below).

The first actors will be volunteers from Culver High, who will receive community service credit for their time. The scripts were written by Joan Jakubowski

(cont'd on page 6)

JANUARY 23rd GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

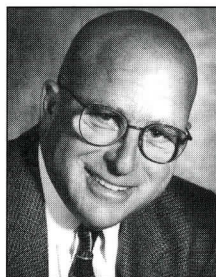
• "LIVING HISTORY PROJECT" PREVIEW •

The next General Membership Meeting of the Culver City Historical Society will be held on Thursday, January 23, 2003 at 7:00 pm at the Sony Black Box Theatre at the Culver City High School, 4401 Elenda Street, Culver City. [Please note special date and venue for the Winter General Membership Meeting.]

Our planned program for the January General Meeting will be a preview of the Society's new "Living History Project" with enactments from the first four scripts which will be used by the Culver City Unified School District (see story above).

This promises to be a fascinating and entertaining evening and the public is invited to enjoy the free program. Students are encouraged to attend. For more information, please call Ross Hawkins at (310) 287-4558.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Steven Rose



HAPPY 2003! As another year passes into history, we in the Culver City Historical Society are very proud of this past year's accomplishments and look forward to the events and programs planned for 2003. Many folks have given hours of dedicated time and deserve our thanks for all their hard work.

On Thursday, January 23, 2003, we will premiere our "Living History" Project chaired by Julie Lugo Cerra and Joan Jakubowski (until Joan's recent resignation due to health issues). Both have worked on vignettes of historic people and moments in the formation of Culver City and the area that is now Culver City. Julie is

working with Culver City High School students to present this as an ongoing program that will hopefully grow into a Culver City tradition.

Ways & Means Vice President, Martha Gunther, has chaired the production of our new Historic Note Cards program which is in it's first printing and proving to be another successful fundraiser for the Society. The proceeds from these cards, along with the extremely successful historic throws chaired by Reba Yudess, are helping to move us closer to our dream of having a Culver City Heritage Museum.

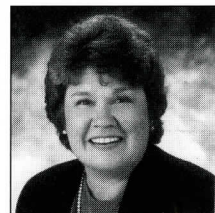
Thanks also go to Susan Berg, Marc Wanamaker, Ross Hawkins and Scott Malsin for all the behind-the-scenes work they have given to organize and archive the Society's collection of memorabilia and artifacts and for computerizing this collection.

Become a part of history – attend the premiere of the Society's "Living History" at the Sony Black Box Theater at Culver City High School on January 23rd. See you there!



Notes from Your City Historian

by Julie Lugo Cerra



CULVER CITY WEBSITE:
www.culvercity.org

Culver City's website offers a great deal of information on the history of the city (go to "City Information," then "History"). New to the website is an opportunity to "Ask the Historian" questions. One of the first inquiries came from someone doing research on a small studio, the Romayne Studios. I was lucky to find a 1920 Culver City Call newspaper that even carried a photo of the Romayne Studios. It is now posted on the website with the answer. In the last week alone, I have received 29 inquiries!

THE EXCHANGE CLUB

Speaking at the Exchange Club is always fun, and it's a bonus to see old friends like George Newhouse, Earl Eskridge and Red Gallman. In the last quarter, I have spoken on Rancho Life, where I even taught them to milk a Spanish cow! (For the record, it's best accomplished by tying her back legs together with her tail!)

In December, I shared some of Harry Culver's own words with the club. After finding Culver's California Club speech reprinted in a 1914 Culver City Call newspaper, it has become a terrific tool for learning about our founder and his thinking.

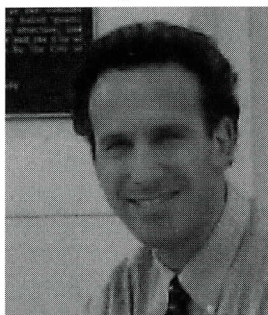


Newly restored Beacon Laundry.

BEACON LAUNDRY ARTWORK

It was a pleasure to see the Beacon Laundry Artwork "unveiled." It has certain historic references and I encourage everyone to visit and take a look. The mural includes local landmarks and there is a fountain below with the fabrication of the back of a Helms Coach.

For three generations, the Marks family has been well-known for producing quality projects, but this adds a new component. I think Wally Marks might have used yet another historic building and we could coin a new phrase to describe it: "adaptive reuse with a sense of humor!"



Wally Marks

I get a lot of questions as City Historian

(cont'd on page 6)

Culver Historical Highlights

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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.

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EDITOR'S COLUMN

A very "Happy 2003" to everyone!

While we can look back on our accomplishments of 2002, we have much to look forward to in the coming months. More individual events are planned and greater access will be available to our growing memorabilia collection and archives thanks to Museum Chair Marc Wanamaker and Museum Cataloging Chair Susan Berg among so many other dedicated volunteers. We hope many of you will come by our office at the West Los Angeles College starting in April to see our treasures! Watch for more details in our next issue.

Preserving and presenting our City's heritage is the paramount goal of the Culver City Historical Society. More in-depth articles on various civic notables and cultural events will be spotlighted in Culver Historical Highlights in the coming months. We encourage your ideas on possible subjects to cover and welcome articles on appropriate topics.

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



REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

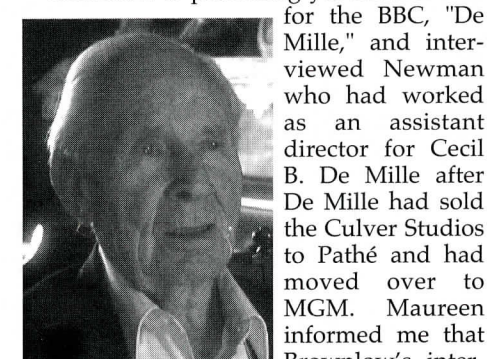
by Ross Hawkins

JOSEPH NEWMAN: A LINK TO THE PAST

Just when I thought that the last people who were around during the pioneer days of the motion picture industry had passed away, I received a call from writer and film historian Maureen Solomon to tell me that I had to meet and interview former director, Joseph Newman.

Maureen – a friend and colleague of our Editor, Judy Stangler, from Judy's days at the American Cinematheque – advised me that Mr. Newman had recently been interviewed by the noted film historian, Kevin Brownlow, produced the fantastic series on Hollywood's silent era for the BBC and the author of *The Parade's Gone By*, a book of interviews with the giants of the silent era.

Brownlow is producing yet another film



Joseph Newman

for the BBC, "De Mille," and interviewed Newman who had worked as an assistant director for Cecil B. De Mille after De Mille had sold the Culver Studios to Pathé and had moved over to MGM. Maureen informed me that Brownlow's interview covered only a fraction of Newman's history and that he was a valued figure in motion picture history that hadn't been mined for the information he had.

ATTENDED VENICE HIGH SCHOOL

Newman came to California from Utah with his parents in the early 1920s and attended Venice High School when Myrna Loy was completing her senior year there. Tragedy struck the family when his father died suddenly from a heart attack. At sixteen, Newman dropped out of school and went to work as an office boy at MGM.

In the two-hour interview I conducted with him, Newman recalled that he worked at the studio almost from the beginning. He remembered the day Greta Garbo arrived at the studio with her mentor, Maurice Stiller. "Nobody dreamed that she would become the international star that she became when she first showed up at the studio," he remarked. He also told of handing out box lunches to the spectators at the chariot race for the 1925 version of *Ben Hur* and working as an assistant director on several Jeanette MacDonald films including *San Francisco*, *Rose Marie* and *The Firefly*.



It was on *The Firefly* that Newman had his first directing chore. The director, was Robert Z. Leonard who became too sick to work, giving Newman the chance to direct the sequence where Allen Jones sings the famous "The Donkey Serenade" song to MacDonald while riding in a stagecoach.

After *The Firefly*, Newman began directing short subjects for Metro where up-and-coming directors like George Sidney and Gordon Douglas were learning their trade on such projects as the "Crime Doesn't Pay" series and the Pete Smith Specialties.

DIRECTED ARMY WAR FILMS

During the war, Newman directed several films for the Army. One that he was particularly proud of was *Diary of A Sergeant* starring Harold Russell, who had lost both of his hands. According to Newman, William Wyler and Samuel Goldwyn saw the film and hired Russell for a key role in *Best Years of Our Lives*, for which Russell won an Academy Award for Supporting Actor.

After the war, Newman continued directing at several other studios including Universal, Columbia and Twentieth Century Fox. He directed a minor gangster film with George Raft called *Lucky Nick Cain* which gained bad publicity when Raft was accused of laundering money for gangster Lucky Luciano. Newman laughed and recalled that he was sure Raft was innocent and considered him really to be "a very gentle person," not at all like his screen persona.

Newman returned to MGM and Culver City in the late 1950s to direct four segments of Rod Serling's popular "Twilight Zone" series, and in 1961, he directed a tight little western with Richard Boone and George Hamilton called *Thunder of Drums*.

We hope to have Joseph Newman as our guest speaker in April. Look for more details in our next edition.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 29 for a special lecture with Major Ralph Ramirez, Deputy Commander of the California Center for Military History, who will show a short video about the center's goals and share techniques for documenting oral history at 10 AM at W. L.A. College.



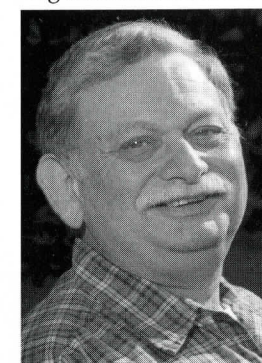
CCHS Past Pres. Lu Herrera (at left) with friends. (from Lu Herrera Collection)

A "THANK YOU" To Our DONORS

by Susan Berg

Our museum space, courtesy of West Los Angeles College (thank you, Frank Quiambo!), is being organized and our Museum Committee hopes to open our doors for scheduled use beginning in April.

Together with Museum Chairman Marc Wanamaker, Program Director Ross Hawkins and computer consultant Scott Malsin, I've begun cataloging our photographs, maps, documents, scrapbooks and miscellaneous memorabilia. The exciting result is that as we catalogue and file our



Neil Rubenstein

wonderful possessions, more memorabilia comes to the door!

Neil Rubenstein, long-time Culver City resident, retired military officer and retired aerospace employee, has donated significant artifacts from



Julian Dixon (far right) with CC High School Students on steps of U.S. Capitol. (from Julian Dixon Collection)

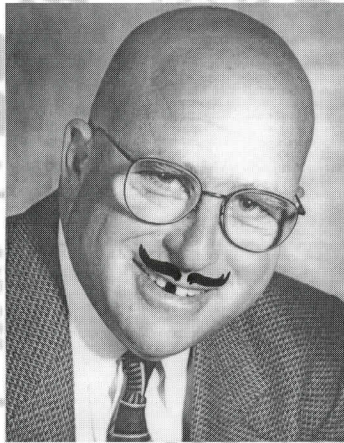
boxes of books from the Congressman's personal collection.

Acting as the guardian of the Congressman's materials, Neil decided that the best home for these precious materials would be the Society's museum space at West Los Angeles Community College. This will allow the materials to "travel" for display at special events and then return to the museum for safe-keeping.

Thank you, Neil and Toby Rubenstein!

(cont'd on page 6)

2002: A YEAR IN REVIEW!



Jan. 15: Installation of new CCHS Board; Steven Rose becomes Society's 10th Pres. (who has such a great sense of humor!)

"HAPPY NEW YEAR" AROUND THE WORLD!

Shubho Nobobosho (Benghali)

Gung Hay Fat Choy (Chinese)

Godt Nytar (Danish)

Gelukkige Nieuwjaar (Dutch)

Shoma Mobarak Bashad (Farsi)

Hyuää Uutta Vuotta (Finnish)

Bonne Année (French)

Aith-bhliain Fe Nhaise Dhuit (Gaelic)

Gutes Neues Jahr (German)

Eutychismenos Ho (Greek)

Hauoli Makahiki Hou (Hawaiian)

Shanah Tovah (Hebrew)

Naya Saal Mubaarak (Hindi)

Boldog Ujévet (Hungarian)

Buon Capo d'Anno (Italian)

Akemashite Omedetou Kainourgios Chronos (Japanese)

Sehe Bokmanee Bateuseyo (Korean)

Godt Nytt Ar (Norwegian)

Szczesliwego Nowego Roku (Polish)

Feliz Ano Novo (Portugese)

S Novym Godom (Russian)

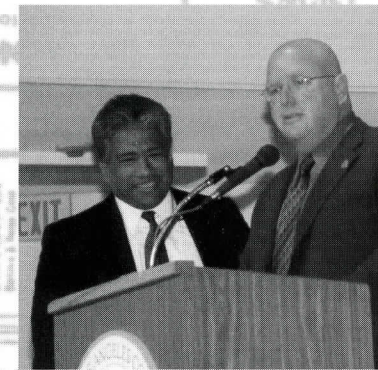
Feliz Ano Nuevo (Spanish)

Nakutakia Heri Ya Mwaka Mpya (Swahili)

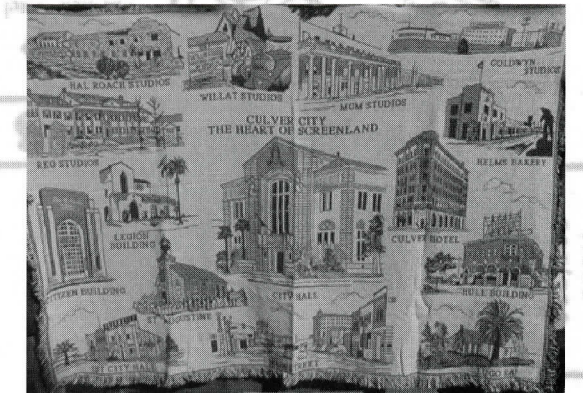
Gott Nytt Ar (Swedish)

Mutlu (or Hos) Yilbasi (Turkish)

Ngikufisela Unyaka Omusha Omuhle (Zulu)



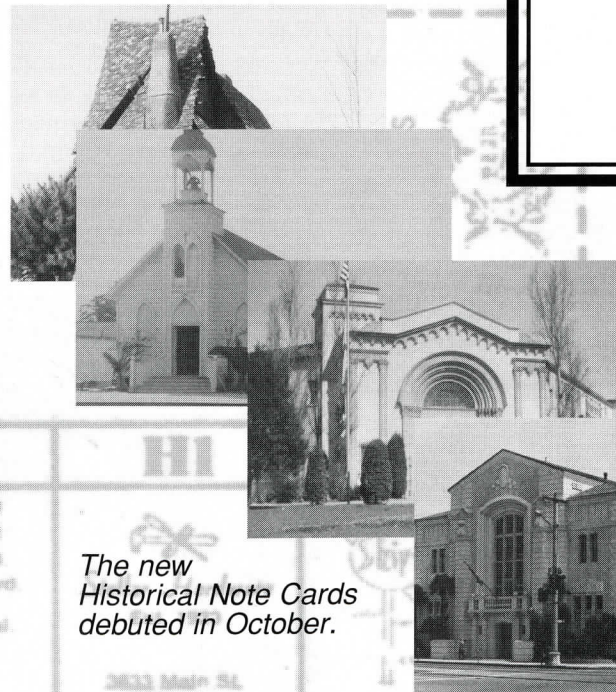
L-R: WLAC Pres. Frank Quiambao and CCHS Pres. Steven Rose at the FMPU event on Oct. 30.



The CCHS "Heart of Screenland" custom "throw" blanket commemorating our City's heritage continues to be a best-seller with proceeds going to the Culver City Heritage Museum fund.



May 18-19: For the Fiesta La Ballona, Woodie & Martha Tolkien donated a miniature store for the CCHS raffle drawing.



The new Historical Note Cards debuted in October.



Sep. 21: At the first Appraisal Fair, Julie Lugo Cerra emceed with Marc Wanamaker who shared his expertise on the value of collectibles and the art of collecting.



Maxine Mytar was special guest speaker at Oct. 15 General Membership Meeting.

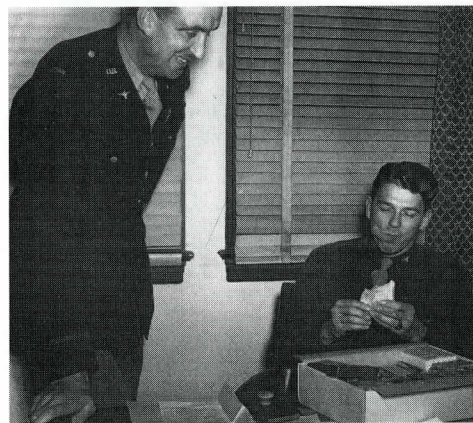


Dec 17: Sean Hawkins' first public photo with dad, Lee Hawkins, and Grandma Jackie McCandless (proud grandpa, CCHS Program VP Ross Hawkins, is behind the camera!).



"FMPU" (cont'd from page 1)

Elliot pointed out that there were commissioned officers, enlisted men and actors all working at the Hal Roach Studios together to make training films. Some actors were privates dressed as generals, which made it difficult to know the "real rank" of many of the uniformed men!



L-R: Daniel McGovern with "Adjutant" Ronald Reagan at "Fort Roach."

The leadership trained the servicemen in protocol, which included saluting. Apparently there was a studio coffee kiosk just inside the studio's main gate. With hands full of coffee cups and snacks, there was a lot of coffee spilled as the men felt compelled to salute. Elliott said, "It got to be a mess, literally and figuratively, with the coffee spilled." The leadership finally drew a yellow circle around the coffee kiosk where no one had to salute!

Daniel McGovern, Lt. Col. (Ret.) came to Culver City in 1942 on the Red Car. The very spry McGovern, who retains a bit of an Irish brogue and looked like he might do an Irish jig onstage, provided the Society with a set of stills from his personal collection, which includes photos of Ronald Reagan.

McGovern, who takes great pleasure in saying FMPU, (pronounced "FUM



Actor Bob Hope (first row center) at "Fort Roach."

Poo"), organized the training of still photographers for combat. Although he claimed he did not know Ron Reagan as well as others, McGovern called Reagan "a wonderful adjutant, a good officer and a wonderful leader."

One of McGovern's motion picture hallmarks was his photography in legendary director William Wyler's Academy Award-winning documentary film, *The Memphis Belle*, which told the story of the aircraft's 25th mission over Germany. His son, Tim, accompanied the amazing 93-year-old retired serviceman.

William Rogister, a Tech Sgt. who was born in Liberty, Massachusetts, referred to himself as "always a flag waver." Rogister, who lives in nearby Hollywood, was one of the two octogenarians who offered first-hand accounts of their service to our country. Not only a still photographer on the ground, he shared that he had flown 72 combat missions as a motion picture cameraman and served as an actor in a number of training films with Ronald Reagan. Rogister also brought a number of "props" to assist in his remarks.

MORE FMPU EVENTS

After our event, the three gentlemen left to attend a dinner hosted by Warner Brothers. Jack Warner was the first commander of the First Motion Picture Unit. The next day, the retired still photographers were hosted at the Ronald Reagan Library.

Special thanks to Susan Berg, who was of major help throughout the day

"NOTES" (cont'd from page 2)

and some are of a personal nature. One young woman is trying to find her father, Leland Leek, who attended Venice High in the 1960s. If anyone knows of him or his family, please call me so we can help her. I am looking for a 1967 Venice High Yearbook, where his photo might appear as a Junior.

As a Cultural Affairs Commissioner, let me remind you that the Cultural Plan for Culver City, which includes Public Art and Historic Preservation, comes to the commission in its final draft form in January, 2003. Please join us in support. You can see it on the city website or check with the Cultural Affairs office in Parks, Recreation and Community Services. The next step will be to go to City Council. This will be an amazing accomplishment, and just another validation of the importance of HISTORY.

"LIVING HISTORY" (cont'd from page 1)

and Julie Lugo Cerra. They include Harry Culver at age 33, giving the famous speech at the California Club in Los Angeles; his daughter, Pat Culver Battle, in her 80s, talking about her father; two students talking about the local Native Americans, the Gabrielinos; and dialogues from the early settlers, the Machado brothers, Agustín and Ygnacio.

Please join us for an enjoyable evening of living history in January!



HARRY CULVER, founder of Culver City, was 33 in this picture when he gave his famous speech at the California Club in Los Angeles to announce his plans for the new city.



PAT CULVER BATTLE, daughter of founder Harry Culver, will be portrayed in the new Living History Project.

HISTORIC SIGHTINGS THE LUGO RANCH HISTORIC SITE #8

by Sandy Burton

Continuing our occasional series highlighting the sites the Culver City Historical Society has deemed worthy of historic designation, we look at Historic Site #8 – the Lugo Ranch.

The Lugo Ranch was the last of the old ranches to be subdivided on property that was originally claimed as Rancho La Ballona by the Machado and Talamantes families. Francisco Salvador Lugo arrived in California as a soldier of Spain in 1774, and was present at the founding of the Pueblo de Nuestra Señora La Reina de Los Angeles in 1781. The most famous of his sons, Don Antonio Maria Lugo, held landgrants primarily in Southern California. One of his descendants, Francisco Lugo, married Agustín Machado's daughter, Vicenta. This ranch was a wedding gift to their son, Mercurial Lugo.



Mercurial Lugo, father of Charles Lugo, on the Lugo Ranch (c. 1930)

Mercurial Lugo and his wife, Rita Reyes Lugo, raised eight children; the youngest of whom was the active community member, Police Captain Charles Reyes Lugo (one of the founding members of the CC Historical Society and father of Julie Lugo Cerra). Mercurial was the *Sanjero* (water overseer) of the area who regulated the irrigation water for local farming. The family also had a corn stand as well as growing beans, barley and a multitude of vegetables. He was also the unofficial "lawman" of the community.

The property was developed by R.J. Blanco in the mid-1950s. Today, where there once was a 9-hole golf course and



The Lugo Ranch House in 1940

ranch house in the '50s, now stands an extended shopping area with such major chain stores as Pavilions, Rite Aid and Pier One. The longest tenant is the Roll 'n' Rye delicatessen which dates from the 1960s.

The Society designated the Lugo Ranch as Historic Site #8 in January, 1988. The placing of the marker on the southeast corner of Jefferson Blvd. and Cota St. in Culver City was financed in part by donations in memory of Charles Lugo.

*Time you enjoy wasting,
was not wasted.*
~John Lennon

RENEW YOUR CCHS MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Remember that all CCHS memberships are due for renewal as of January, 2003. If you haven't already renewed, please send payment today.

Please support your Historical Society.



Do you know who these boys are on horseback? (answer in next newsletter).

CALENDAR

JAN. 23:	WINTER GEN. MEM. MEETING: 7 PM: "Living History"
Mar. 29:	Major Ralph Ramirez Lecture (<i>time tba</i>)
March:	CCHS Board Meetings change to 3rd Wednesdays
Apr. 16:	Spring Gen. Mem. Meeting: 7 PM: Joseph Newman

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

☐ Benefactor (\$1000)
☐ Family Lifetime Member (\$500)
☐ Patron Member (\$100)
☐ Family Member (\$25)
☐ Individual Member (\$15)

☐ Corporate Sponsor (\$500)
☐ Individual Lifetime Member (\$250)
☐ Business Member (\$50)
☐ Organization (\$15)
☐ Student Member (\$5)

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Contact Person: _____

Fax: _____

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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.

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.

Agnes Huff Communications Group	Agnes Huff (310) 641-2525	Freeman Properties	Stuart Freeman (310) 839-7593
Albertson Oldsmobile	Bruce Albertson (310) 398-5721	Ken Harada, DDS	Ken Harada (310) 837-5121
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Culver City Historical Society

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