

The Southern CALIFORNIAN

PUBLISHED BY THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

WINTER 1990 VOL. 2, NO. 4



PHOTO: Margaret Dickerson

Elna Bakker.

Meet HSSC Director Elna Bakker

Elna Bakker's background as a distinguished naturalist, lecturer and author led her to the Lummis Home Garden in 1985.

Her advice was sought in writing a grant proposal to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a water-conserving garden. She then wrote another proposal to the Stanley Smith Horticultural Society to support an educational component to the garden. Both grants were approved.

Author of the classic, *An Island Called California*, now in its second edition, she is currently writing three forest service guides.

Elna firmly believes that history is important because "understanding the past remains the key to unlocking the future."

A resident of Mt. Washington, Elna has served HSSC as a board member for the past five years.

HSSC Announces First Local History Award Winners

Five historians will receive the DONALD H. PFLUEGER LOCAL HISTORY AWARD at a luncheon to be held at Caltech's Athenaeum on Saturday, February 9, 1991.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Southern California is pleased to confer this inaugural award on Jane Apostol, Judson Grenier, Sheldon Jackson, Ellen Lee and Thomas Patterson.

The PFLUEGER AWARD is the Society's highest honor for distinguished research and writing on the local history of Southern California.

"The Society's and the committee's criteria for selecting individual works of local history are rigorous and based on the standard set by Don Pflueger, Professor Emeritus, Cal Poly Pomona," notes HSSC Executive Director Tom Andrews.

"Don's histories of Glendora and Covina are the measure for this field of research and writing, which is why the award is named for him." Andrews is pleased that this year's winners main-

tain those high standards.

Unlike the HSSC Fellows Award which recognizes lifetime achievements in history, the DONALD H. PFLUEGER LOCAL HISTORY AWARD honors historians for a specific, original work.

The story of South Pasadena, a "small town" in the best sense, is brought to life by Jane Apostol in her *South Pasadena, 1888-1988: A Centennial History* (1987).

California Legacy: The Watson Family (1987), by Judson Grenier, impressively chronicles the story of five generations of one of the great pioneering families of Southern California—the Dominguez-Watsons of Rancho San Pedro.

Hispanic California is also the setting for Sheldon Jackson's *A British Ranchero in Old California: The Life and Times of Henry Dalton and Rancho Azusa* (1977), the story of one man's search for fame and fortune during the mid-nineteenth century.

In *A Colony for California* (1971),

(Continued on page 2)



PHOTO: Sue Huddleson



GENTLE READER:

I want you to know that it is a rich tradition we honor in 1991 when we celebrate the Centennial of our Incorporation.

I say this because the Historical Society of Southern California was founded (1883) and incorporated (1891) in Los Angeles at a very auspicious moment in the growth and development of History.

Did you know, for example, that in 1883, when HSSC was founded:

- there was no national historical organization,
- no historical society in operation in California,
- and no department of history in any school or college in the United States?

That's correct! The American Historical Association was founded a year later in 1884, and a "third" California Historical Society was organized in 1886. (It would operate until 1893.)

And it was not until 1892 that the National Education Association recommended that *all* students take four years of history at the secondary level.

For the next 30 years, history would play the largest role ever in the American secondary school curriculum and the number of historical societies would grow like "gourds in the night!"

Consequently, although HSSC is one of more than a thousand historical societies today, it is one that was present at the creation of a national historical consciousness.

Moreover, it contributed to the development of this historical awareness with an unbroken record of annual, scholarly publications beginning in 1884. That is cause for celebration—and celebrate we will!

Tom Andrews

(Continued from page 1)

Tom Patterson surveys one hundred years of growth and change at the very heart of the Inland Empire—Riverside.

From inland empires to the sea, the historians of Southern California have found inspiration and fruitful fields for research. For Ellen Lee it was a land-locked lagoon, once the Santa Ana River estuary, that captured her attention.

Lee begins her regional history of the Newport Harbor area, *Newport Bay: A Pioneer History* (1973), during the Spanish mission era and carries it through the end of World War II.

Invitations to the Local History Award Luncheon will be mailed to all HSSC members in early January. "We are eager to have wide participation in this event," states Tom Andrews, "especially among local historical societies, teachers and students of history."



El Alisal T-Shirts and Tote Bags... Order Now!

History never goes out of style. And our El Alisal T-shirts and tote bags will keep you stylish as you support HSSC's exciting programs and publications. The high quality, multi-colored shirt is perfect for gardening or curling up with a good history book. Using the tote bag will save trees and tell others you care about our environment. Order yours today.



Jean Stone.

PHOTO: Sue Huddleson

Jean Stone to Speak at First President's Circle Event

"The Integrity of Research: My Adventure With History" is a subject dear to Jean Stone's heart. The HSSC FELLOW looks forward to sharing her insights about the important role that research has played in her life at a program for President's Circle Members in May, 1991.

"Our Fifteen FELLOWS and their lifetime achievements are a great source of pride and a great resource for the Society," comments Executive Director Tom Andrews. "An intimate evening with Jean Stone, hearing first hand about her personal experiences and views of history, is an exceptional opportunity not to be missed."

The President's Circle comprises Members whose annual support of \$1,000 or more is vital to Society programs and publications. For more information about joining President's Circle contact the HSSC office at (213) 222-0546.

PHOTO: Harry Chamberlain

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PHOTO: Henk Friezer

Bill Huston.

Thanks To Two Special Friends

It's always a pleasure to thank special friends particularly when they have also acted as mentors and generous supporters.

Bill Huston and the Watson Land Company have pioneered corporate leadership for HSSC since 1987, when the Society first sought underwriting for the *Southern California Quarterly*. Bill and Watson were pleased to lead the way. Since that issue, 12 issues have been underwritten by corporate and individual sponsors.

Watson Land Company also led the way as a founding member of the Historic 100. Bill Huston and his firm then set the pace for membership in our new Century II Founders category.

He saw the need for an expanded members' newsletter and made the commitment of sponsoring the past four issues of *The Southern Californian*.

Throughout the years, Bill Huston has taken a personal interest in HSSC, its staff and membership. He has advised on fiscal and organizational matters and demonstrated a real love for the subject of Southern California history.

Please join us in saluting two special friends, Bill Huston and the Watson Land Company.

Century II Founders

CENTURY II FOUNDERS are individuals, businesses and foundations who contribute \$10,000 or more in unrestricted support during the Society's Centennial of Incorporation Year, 1990-91. Gifts and grants may be paid over two years.

The Ahmanson Foundation
Associated Foundations, Inc.

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
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THE HISTORIC ONE HUNDRED

The HISTORIC 100 is a group of Southern California businesses committed to the preservation, interpretation and promotion of local history through their investment in the Historical Society of Southern California.

The Ahmanson Foundation	Los Angeles Dodgers, Inc.
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HSSC Thanks New Quarterly Sponsors

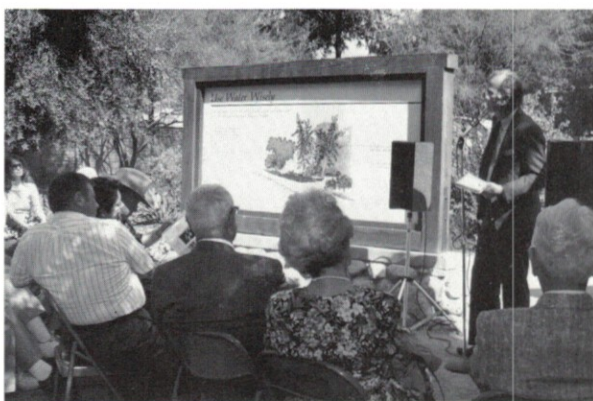
HSSC is pleased to acknowledge the Honorable Eduardo Garrigues, Consul General of Spain in Los Angeles, for partial sponsorship of the Fall, 1990 issue of the *Southern California Quarterly*. The issue features important research by Ms. Salome Hernandez on the role of women in the Spanish settlement plans for California.

The Historical Society is also pleased to thank the Automobile Club of Southern California for its upcoming sponsorship of the Winter, 1990 issue of the *Quarterly*. The Club's underwriting coincides with the celebration of its 90th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Pasadena Freeway. The Historical Society congratulates the Automobile Club on reaching this significant milestone in its history.

EVENTS

This Way To The Garden Celebration

HSSC members, generous donors, garden volunteers and numerous friends joined Tom Andrews and members of the Board for a festive unveiling of new signs and educational panels at the Lummis Home and Water-Conserving Garden on September 30, 1990.



Left: HSSC Executive Director Tom Andrews tells history of garden panels.



Far left: Mike Sanchez and Marjorie Kamps of Sanchez Kamps Associates designers of garden panels.

Left: John Robinson, Glen Dawson and Robert Cowan.

Right: Virginia Whitney, Dennis Kuntz of SignDesigners (fabricators of the garden panels) and Bonnie Walsh of Wildwood Nursery.



Far right: Margaret Dickerson, HSSC staff and Cheryl Cooper, bookshop manager.



Tom and Jane Apostol.



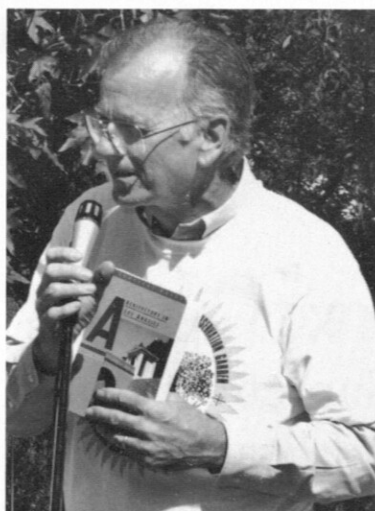
Rachel Bernstein, prize winner.



Bob Perry, landscape architect of Lummis Garden, and Carole Stevens, Chairperson Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.



Patricia Trenton.



Tom Andrews.



Cistus

Welcome New Members

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Handful of History

By James Kingman

James Kingman has taught history at Pasadena City College for the past 25 years.

Books enrich, they stir curiosity, they get one into the world. From the age of five I've alternated between having my nose in a book and my feet tramping Southern California.

But when Tom Andrews asked me to name five favorites, he might as well have asked for 500. What criteria can possibly reduce all the good books on Southern California to just five? Still, there are a treasured five that have moved me either to feverish action or deepest contemplation, that have reached my viscera.

Serious searching for books probably began for me when as a UCLA student I attended two of Lawrence Clark Powell's lectures, yet of all the titles he mentioned the one that stuck most solidly in my memory was Harry Leon Wilson's classic dissection of Hollywood as land of illusion, *Merton of the Movies*. Unfortunately it took fifteen years to find a copy—in a thrift shop.

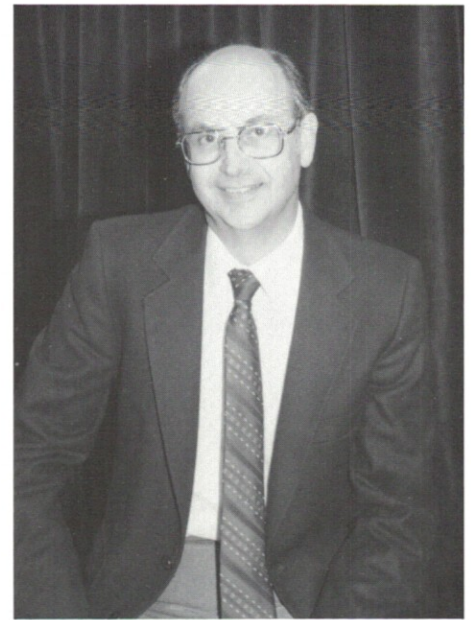
But behind the tinsel is always the land, a land highlighted both literally and figuratively by the mountains John W. Robinson wrote of in his *The San Gabriels: Southern California Mountain Country*. The book seems to exude the smell of bay and pine inhaled along trails up the slope of Mount Lowe or to the tangle of wandering jew that marks the long-abandoned site of Orchard Camp.

My wanderlust of high school days was satisfied by all-day rides on the Pacific Electric Railway whose lingering death is my most poignant memory of mid-century Los Angeles. That memory lives in Ira Swett's *Lines of Pacific Electric*, a volume whose detail was meant for avid railfans but which can be relished by all who remember the big red cars.

Present day wanderings are likely to be in the gardens built with the profits of the Pacific Electric. *The Huntington Botanical Gardens 1905-1949* is the personal recollection of William Hertrich, a longtime superintendent of the gardens who with taste and flair put most of the world's notable plants within a mile and a half of my home.

Book nuts whose affliction has reached the serious phase show it by reading books about books, and there is no better example of the genre than Gertrude K. Stoughton's *The Books of California*.

Though it is nominally a study of the California collection in the Pasadena Public Library, it is really a spring board to a world of books, perhaps in part because it was published by Ward Ritchie, no stranger himself to Southern California literature. A book that leads one to other good books is truly the best of all books.



James Kingman.

MWD Sponsors Garden Publication

The Historical Society is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of Kevin Connelly's book, *MONTH BY MONTH IN A WATERWISE GARDEN*.

A \$5,000 grant from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, an early supporter of the Water Conserving Garden at the Lummis Home, has made this publication possible.

Four consecutive dry winters have made this publication necessary. Kevin begins with October, the planting month, and continues through September with information on water-wise plants, irrigation techniques and planting tips.

Highly readable and entertaining, as well as practical and reasonably priced, Kevin's book is a must for Southern Californians. It is tentatively scheduled for publication in February. Watch for the announcement.

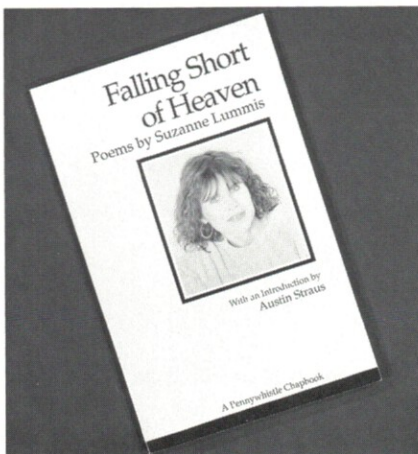


PHOTO: Marc Bernier

Poet Suzanne Lummis, granddaughter of Charles Lummis, will read selections from her work on January 27th from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Lummis Home. This special evening is co-sponsored by HSSC and the Arroyo Arts Collective. For additional information, call HSSC 213/222-0546.

Stairs of the Stars in LA's Past

By Virginia L. Comer

Virginia Comer is author of Los Angeles: A View from Crown Hill and In Victorian Los Angeles: the Witmers of Crown Hill.

In the 1920s when most of LA's public steps were built, the movie industry was flourishing and film stars chose to live on view hillsites in the Hollywood area. Terraced Mediterranean style on the highland slopes, many of the homes were approachable only by stairway. Most of those stairs are still there numbered among the City's hundreds of stairways threading through hillsides. More than aesthetics, the steps of Los Angeles have served a pedestrian-specific function. Many of these walkways are important arterial connections.

Whitley Heights Stairways

Historically, stairways in Whitley Heights are linked with the magic of Hollywood's nostalgic golden age. The hills of Whitley Heights were alive with names of silent screen heros and sweethearts and later talking favorites. Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, Francis X. Bushman, Chester Morris, Marie Dressler, William Powell and Carole Lombard are a few of the famous who called Whitley Heights home. By the late '30s Beverly Hills had become the accepted star address. Then in the '50s Whitley Heights was bisected by the Hollywood Freeway. At the end of the

twentieth century a Mediterranean charm still lingers in homes and landscaping. On both sides of Whitley Heights there are stairways compatible with these environs.

On the eastern portion of Whitley Heights the stairway at Iris Place is representative of the quiet atmosphere of the area. Two levels of steps lead to a



Stairway at Iris Place

long, horizontal walk which ends at another pair of wider steps fronting on Iris Circle. The pleasant walkway from Iris Place to Iris Circle passes attractive gardens and fences adorned with English Ivy and bursts of brilliant bougainvillea. As a resident, silent film star Harold Lloyd once bounded up *this short flight of stairs.*

Music Box Stairway

In the Silver Lake section of Sunset, where the famous Boulevard shows its age, there are steep hillsites on both sides of the street with occasional stairways taking strategic shortcuts over the hills. The elongated Micheltorena steps are well known and easily visible from Sunset, but none of the walkways has the enduring nostalgia of the steps known as "Music Box Stairway."

Leading directly from the sidewalk at Vendome where it intersects the loop of Del Monte, the venerable stairs begin. Lampposts and a plain pipe handrail on one side cramp the narrow stairway marching past apartment buildings to the top of Descanso. Safety dictated the addition of the handrail and lampposts; growth in the area brought the wedging of apartments on the sides of the walk. Bougainvillea, hibiscus and Italian Cypress landscape the narrow borders.

Today there is little to suggest the fame of the site of the Laurel and Hardy three-reeler which won an Academy Award in 1932. The music box in the title refers to a wooden-crated pianola

(mechanical piano). Stan and Ollie attempt to make a delivery to a home at the top of the stairs on Descanso. In their inimitable fashion, the boys wrestle with their awkward burden which jangles mindlessly as they struggle up the stairs. If you've seen the movie, just looking at the stairs will be worth the *trip to Vendome.*

PHOTO: Alma Carlisle

In Memoriam

The Historical Society has lost a long-time friend and member in EVERETT HAGER who died on December 9, 1990. Together with his wife, Anne Marie, a past president of HSSC, Everett compiled indexes to the *Southern California Quarterly* and to many other important works on the history of California and the West. Everett was 86.

FAY ELLEN POWELL (1911-1990), a resident of Tucson, Arizona, died after a courageous battle with cancer. Fay was involved in the life of the Historical Society on many a significant occasion. Together with her husband, Lawrence Clark Powell, she loved the history and literature of California and the Southwest. Together they encouraged and supported the publications program of HSSC.

HSSC member Huell Howser will present a series of monthly 30-minute programs on KCET beginning Sunday, January 6 at 7:30 p.m. Entitled "California's Gold," the series will explore the history, people, cultures and natural wonders of California.

SAVE THESE DATES:

- Jan. 19 Levering Centennial Lecture
- Jan. 27 Suzanne Lummis Poetry Reading
- Feb. 9 Local History Awards Luncheon
- Feb. 23 Levering Centennial Lecture
- Mar. 16 Levering Centennial Lecture
- Apr. 7 5th Annual Garden Open House

Volunteers Needed

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and
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HSSC wishes to thank the
WATSON LAND COMPANY
for underwriting the
1990 *Southern Californian*.

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN is published quarterly by the Historical Society of Southern California which is a California non-profit corporation [501(c)(3)]

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Printing & Mailing
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The offices of the Historical Society of Southern California are located in the Lummis Home, 200 East Avenue 43, Los Angeles, CA 90031.

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