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NEWSLETTER LAYOUT

The headquarters of the
Historical Society of
Southern California
is located at the historic
Lummis Home (El Alisal)
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www.socalhistory.org



Charles Lummis during construction of El Alisal, Los Angeles, CA

Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center

HSSC Bids Farewell to the Lummis Home

The Historical Society of Southern California will be leaving its headquarters in the Lummis Home within the year. Our landlord, the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, has decided that its needs would be better served by a different tenant; one that would focus on the Lummis Home as its sole activity and devote itself to fundraising. Recreation and Parks has accordingly issued a "Request For Proposals," hoping to attract a suitable concessionaire.

While HSSC is saddened at losing the house that has been our headquarters since 1965, we are also saddened at the potential loss to the city. The Lummis Home is a national treasure. No matter who controls it the first concern must be a comprehensive preservation plan followed by a major fundraising campaign to fulfill the plan. It must be preserved, not exploited.

The Lummis Home was acquired by the State of California and declared a historic landmark in 1943. It was recognized by the City of Los Angeles in 1970 and by the National Trust for Historic Preservation on May 6, 1971. It was in 1965 that the Historical Society of Southern California had the good fortune to lease the Lummis Home for its headquarters in exchange for routine maintenance work and being host for certain days every week to all who came to the door.

HSSC's original lease expired and in 1989 the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks issued a new 10-year lease continuing the obligation to maintain the house and open the site to the public. HSSC has been requesting a renewal of our lease since the last expiration in 1999, in order to have the leaseholder status needed to obtain grant funding for comprehensive preservation work. Without a lease HSSC could not seek the major grants necessary for proper preservation.

HSSC was founded 82 years before taking up headquarters at the Lummis Home, wandering from one temporary site to another for its meetings, publishing its historical papers, building its collections of artifacts and holding public events. From time to time it placed its collections with other institutions, notably the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.



Turbese & Amado Lummis outside Home during construction.

Braun Research Library Collection

Finally at the Lummis Home there was space for tables and typewriters and books and records as well as an historic setting in which the members and staff could fulfill the mission of preserving, promoting and publishing history. HSSC moved in with its remaining artifacts, two cannons, two swords and 82 years of publications.

We published more than thirty books from these offices. We continued an unbroken tradition of publishing a scholarly journal of local and western history and a quarterly newsletter of society happenings. In 2012, we formed a partnership with the University of California Press to add online publication of our Quarterly through JSTOR, making the entire archive of our publications back to 1884 available to scholars worldwide.

Over the years, HSSC found itself devoting ever more attention and money to the house. In 1960, before we began our tenancy, Recreation and Parks “made the house habitable,” in the words of the then General Manager, by clearing out the original lighting fixtures, putting in a bathtub with a pink tile backing over the concrete tub Lummis had modeled by hand, and giving the house a fresh coat of lead-based paint to cover the original plaster finish. HSSC found itself battling a condition Lummis would have called “rising damp.” The floors of the house, built before vapor barriers, soaked and held water after the rains. This problem was exacerbated by the lead-based paint which affected the permeability of the walls and held blisters of moisture after a rain. HSSC re-graded the perimeter, removed plant material and installed a decomposed granite buffer zone.

Sometime in the past earthquakes crashed down the top course of boulders on the great tower of the house. The integrity of the structure may have been compromised at that time, or it may have been affected more gradually by the subsidence of the soil at the bell tower corner of the dining room, an area where Lummis seems to have attempted to buttress the structure with his original masonry. At any rate deep cracks began to open in the wall of the dining room.

In 2010, HSSC welcomed two young preservation architects doing business as United Environment Architecture who volunteered to help with historic research for preservation of the structure. The architects prepared a laser-scanned

floor plan of the house and installed monitoring pins to measure movement in the masonry cracks. The cracks have worsened in the two years since we began monitoring. It is ever more obvious that the house is in need of a professional Historic Structures Survey in line with the recommendations of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Charles Lummis kept a diary for all the years he was constructing the house. The diary, along with his photographs and his vast correspondence, is in the Braun Library at the Southwest Museum and forms a rich and reliable source for understanding the techniques devised by Lummis for the house. Thanks to the efficient and courteous help of Braun Librarian Lisa Posas, the archives have been the guide for all preservation work.

On another level the Lummis landmark and HSSC have benefitted greatly from the research done by a very knowledgeable volunteer, Dennis Harbach, in the social history of the house. Working in the archives of the Braun Library, he has produced a searchable database of the approximately 7,000 entries in the great guest book Lummis kept for visitors to his famous dinner parties. Lummis and his brilliant literary salon formed a key element in the bohemian life of the Arroyo Seco that, with his creation of the Southwest Museum, fostered the early modern cultural blossoming of Los Angeles.

Being at the Lummis House has given us a rare opportunity to teach history through an evocative artifact -- the house itself. The old music in the old rooms, the old stories, the old politicking, puts us as close as we're ever going to get to the people who created the arts and the culture of modern California. We shall miss the music and the companionship. Certainly we shall all miss being here. To the house, peace and farewell.

By Patricia Adler-Ingram, Ph.D

A few of the contributions of the *Historical Society of Southern California* to the *Lummis Home*

- Beginning in 1965, HSSC brought the Home to life by opening it to the public free of charge with guided tours in Spanish and English
- Put El Alisal on the tourist map by publicizing the role of Charles F. Lummis in the history of the West. Lummis had become a member of HSSC in 1885.
- Secured grants to bring in school classes for history and art sessions. Provided materials and instructors.
- Secured grants to create the water-wise garden and showcased the plant materials best suited for water conservation gardening.
- Maintained a friendly presence in the neighborhood despite 17 break-ins in a single year during territorial disputes of rival street gangs.
- Restored original grade around the structure, removed leaking irrigation lines around foundation, installed roof drains, waterproofed tower and turret, and repointed masonry walls.
- Preserved garden door, window frames, and mission bell wall.
- With funding from National Trust for Historic Preservation and matching funds from community groups, preserved entry doors.
- Collaborated with other local museums to create annual "Museums of the Arroyo Day."
- Collaborated with community groups to create annual "Lummis Day Festival" and "Discovery Tour" of the Arroyo Arts Collective.



New Board Member: Paul Gray

Paul Bryan Gray was born in Los Angeles. He graduated from the University of California, Hastings College of Law in 1968. Immediately after graduation, he moved to Mexico City to work for a major law firm. Gray returned to Los Angeles in 1970, and has practiced law in Southern California ever since. He also serves as Judge Pro Tem for the Los Angeles Superior Court.

His first book, *Forster vs. Pico: The Struggle for the Rancho Margarita* was published by the Arthur H. Clark Company in 1998, and won the Historical Society of Southern California's Donald H. Pflueger Award for distinguished research and writing in 2001. It was reprinted in 2002. His most recent book is a biography of Francisco P. Ramirez entitled *A Clamor for Equality: Emergence and Exile of an Early Californio Activist*. It was printed in 2012, the same year he was the speaker at HSSC's annual George A.V. Dunning Lecture.

Gray has contributed articles to the *Southern California Quarterly*, *California History* and the *Journal of San Diego History* as well as other publications in both the United States and Mexico. He has participated as a speaker and commentator in numerous seminars, including appearances at the Western History Association in San Diego and Stanford. He has given lectures in Spanish to the organization, Seminario de Historia de Baja California, in Ensenada, where he is a member.

HSSC Celebrates Admission Day

Every year HSSC joins with the Old Mill Foundation to commemorate California's Admission to the Union with a gala celebration featuring a talk by an outstanding professional in the field of History. This year's speaker was Michael Duchemin, former Senior Curator at the Autry National Center Museum of the West and current Executive Director of the C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls, Montana.

The Admission Day celebration took place in the beautiful patio of the Old Mill in San Marino, where guests enjoyed drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and lively conversation. After dinner was served, Mr. Duchemin began his presentation, "New Deal Cowboy: Gene Autry and Public Diplomacy."

Mr. Duchemin's explained how Gene Autry used his popularity across multiple forms of media to make the New Deal policies of FDR more attractive to the American public. Autry's singing cowboy persona appealed to rural and newly-urban Americans in the Midwest, South, and Southwest, and gave him a platform to address political issues in song and through narrative analogies, without alienating the public. For instance, Autry addressed anxiety regarding modernization in his song "The West Ain't What It Used To Be," which appeared in the film *Public Cowboy No.1* (1937), in which Autry's character chases down modern rustlers using airplanes, shortwave radios, and refrigerated trucks to steal cattle.

A lively Q&A session following the presentation concluded the evening.



Guests enjoy a clip from one of Gene Autry's movies during the presentation.



Paivi Hoikkala, Old Mill Foundation President Warren Weber, HSSC Executive Director Patricia Adler-Ingram, and speaker Michael Duchemin.

USC / Annenberg School Visit El Alisal

HSSC was visited by Professor Josh Kun and his students from the USC/Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. The focus of this particular class was the integration of the history of local music to the narrative of Los Angeles. Since Charles F. Lummis had recorded the first known musical collection on over four hundred wax cylinders, Professor Kun wanted his students to experience the environment where these recordings were made. They were later joined by the fellows of the USC Annenberg/Getty Arts Journalism Program. Professor Kun invited Liza Posas, the head librarian of the Braun Library, to address his students and the fellows about the preservation work that was done by The Southwest Museum, the Braun Library and The Autry Museum of the Southwest on these wax cylinders.

Librarian Posas made a very thorough presentation on the different ways the music on the cylinders was preserved, first on vinyl records, then on magnetic tape, and finally in digital recordings. All the wax cylinders begin with a few seconds of silence followed by a presentation of the performer and his music. Most of the recordings were made at the Lummis Home without the benefit of a soundproof studio. Consequently, Professor Kun and his students discussed a project to sample and analyze the silences on the recordings in order to discover and identify any ambient sounds that may provide us with further information on the life of Los Angeles at the turn of the 20th century.

By Ariel van Zandweghe



21st Annual Discovery Tour

The Lummis Home served as a hub for the 21st Annual Arroyo Arts Collective Discovery Tour. Every year, the special art tour gives guests access to studios, galleries, homes and historic buildings throughout Northeast Los Angeles displaying a wide range of work from local artists and artisans.

The Discovery Tour is one of LA's oldest art tours and over 100 artists participate. Attendees begin the tour with registration and then use maps to plan their routes. While most choose to drive to the different sites, a free shuttle service is provided for guests.

Photos by Martha Benedict



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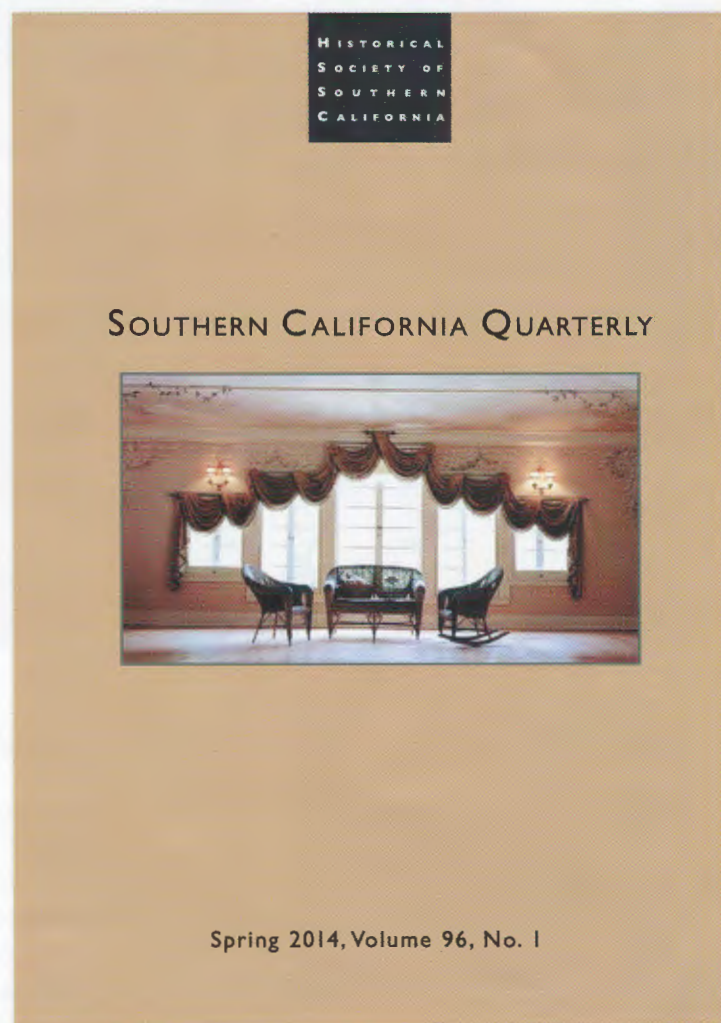
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CONTRIBUTORS

Mark W. Nelson is a member of the adjunct faculty at Pepperdine University. He was awarded a Ph.D. in history from Claremont Graduate University in 2012. He is currently completing a manuscript on the role played by Marriner S. Eccles during the New Deal.

James Tejani is Assistant Professor of History at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. He is currently working on a book project that examines the history of property, state power, economic development, borderlands, and environmental change at San Pedro Bay.

Greg Fischer is a member of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Southern California. He operates LA1781, Inc., which offers lectures/tours on Los Angeles history. He has been active in civic affairs for years, serving on a number of councils, associations, and boards concerned with land-use planning, urban quality, transportation, and adaptive re-use. From 2002 to 2011 he worked as Planning and Transportation deputy for Councilwoman Jan Perry



BOOK REVIEWS

Doody and Kikumi, *Losing Ground: The Displacement of San Geronio Pass Cahuilla People in the 19th Century*, by Lawrence Gross

Steiner, ed. *Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West*, by Thomas G. Andrews

Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front*, by Natalia Molina

Landau, *Mexico and American Modernism*, by Victoria H.F. Scott

Rosenfeld, *Subversives: The FBI's War on Student Radicals, and Reagan's Rise to Power*, by John T. Donovan

Miller, *On the Edge: Water, Immigration and Politics in the Southwest*, by Mike Sonksen

Save The Date

January 26, 2014

Afternoons @ El Alisal

February 23, 2014

Afternoons @ El Alisal

March 30, 2014

Afternoons @ El Alisal

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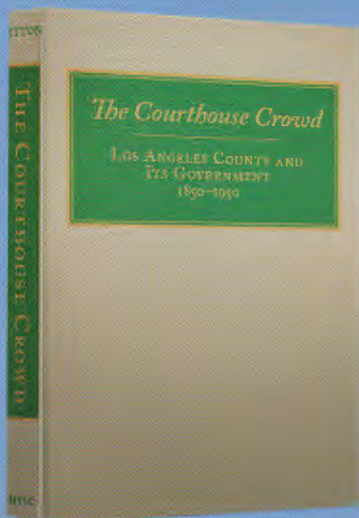
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