

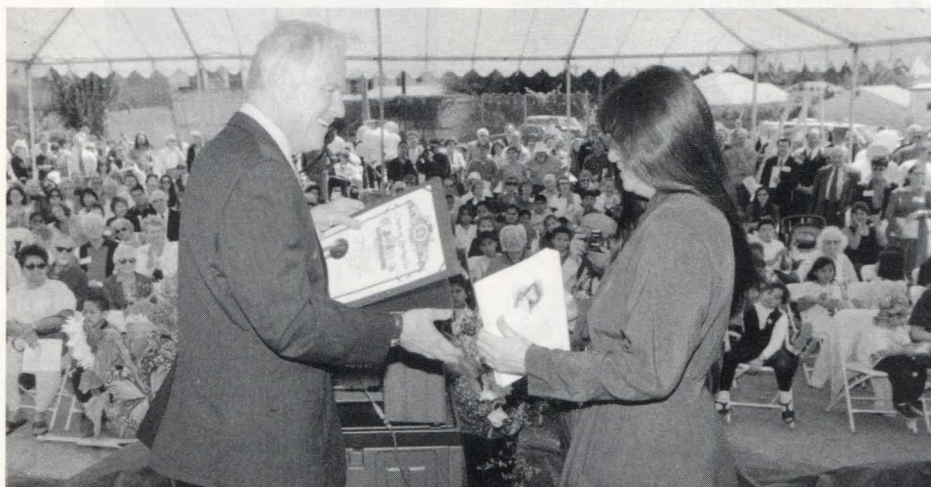


# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN

Published by the Historical Society of Southern California

Summer 1997 Volume 9 Number 2

Photo: Gary McCarthy



Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan presents HSSC's publication *Griffith Park: A Centennial History* to librarian Pearl Yamazawa at the groundbreaking of the Los Feliz branch library in April. Look for more news on books and Los Angeles on page 4.

## Haynes Grant For Research

The John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation has made a grant of \$10,000 to HSSC to provide funds to scholars researching and writing the history of Los Angeles and Southern California.

The grant will support scholars who have short-term financial needs and whose research is not limited to the resources of a single institution. According to Martin Ridge, HSSC president, "There is a genuine need for such a program."

The grant will target, for example, research oriented scholars in smaller local institutions, doctoral candidates and faculty from out-of-state institutions who must make brief visits, secondary school faculty who need summer awards to do research, retired scholars who no longer have ties to their former employers, and unaffiliated scholars who need modest financial support of their research so they can continue to publish.

Ridge, who also serves on a grants committee at the Huntington, recalls seeing younger scholars who needed three months of research time in L.A. libraries but only two at the Huntington. As a result a scholar would accept a two month award and try to make the money last an additional month.

Availability of short-term awards is so limited that Ridge believes HSSC has made a valuable contribution initiating the program so generously supported by the Haynes Foundation.

Applications from scholars will be reviewed by a committee of five. For information and application form, call (213) 222-0546 or 1 (800) HISTORY.

## Weingart Grant Adds \$150,000 to Campaign

Executive Director Tom Andrews received the exciting news that the Weingart Foundation approved a challenge grant of \$150,000 to help HSSC launch the public phase of its \$3 million multipurpose endowment campaign. The grant will be paid over three years.

"It is very satisfying to receive this grant," Andrews noted, "because it speaks to the confidence this important Los Angeles foundation has in the work the Historical Society is doing, and in the leadership of our board of directors who pledged \$300,000 before the campaign was publicly announced."

The Weingart grant raises the total amount pledged to the five-year campaign to \$635,000 and marks the total amount received to date at \$300,000. The \$3 million capital campaign includes an endowment portion of \$1.3 million and an operations fund of \$1.7 million.

Building the endowment will enable HSSC to expand many of its services, including publication of the *Southern California Quarterly* and other publications, outreach programs providing conferences and resource materials for elementary and secondary teachers, and continuing the popular HSSC awards programs.

The expansion fund for operations will support Society operations during the fund raising period and enable HSSC to improve its office situation, add one staff position and upgrade its computers and overall technology. By improving its offices and technology, and modestly expanding its staff, HSSC can meet its goals for enhanced service to more Southern Californians.

"This is a special moment in our 114 year history," says Andrews. "Hopefully, Weingart's expression of confidence in HSSC is a stimulus to others to follow their lead."



## GENTLE READER



I AM PLEASED to announce that the Historical Society has named its Community Enrichment Award in honor and in memory of Jack Smith. It is now known as the **JACK SMITH COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT AWARD**.

Jack Smith was an unassuming man who loved Los Angeles and was fascinated by its history and development. He shared his humanness with us in ways that helped us to better understand ourselves and our city. If we had a single voice interpreting our community, it was Jack's wry and insightful daily column in the *Los Angeles Times*.

He was truly the bard of Los Angeles even when he warned us that trying to describe and interpret our city was like the story of the seven blind men trying to describe an elephant. Jack did not hold Los Angeles at arm's length, he was an active and supportive participant in community affairs, a special friend of history and of our libraries and schools.

On Wednesday afternoon, September 24, HSSC will have the privilege of presenting the **JACK SMITH COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT AWARD** to four individuals who have been our memory, our history, and who have added an important historical dimension to our community: MaryAnn Bonino, Jim Murray, Myrtle Harris and Vin Scully.

I hope you will make plans to join us at the Biltmore Hotel for this special awards luncheon. Invitations will be mailed in August.

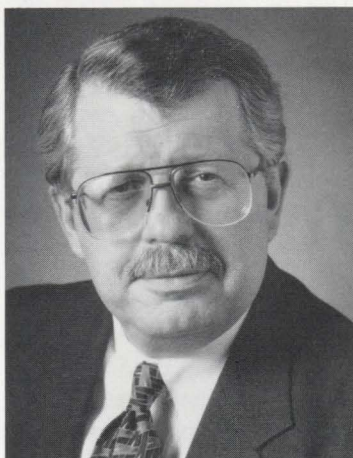
*Thomas*

## Meet Director John R. Suit Jr.

**J**ohn R. Suit, vice president of insurance underwriting for the Automobile Club of Southern California,—and better known as Rich—joins the HSSC board bringing with him a life-long interest in history.

Although Rich has a special interest in the old West, he became fascinated by the brass reliefs in church crypts while he was in the U.S. Air Force and living near Cambridge, England.

In his office today, Rich has a seven foot rubbing of the carved image of a 15th century English nobleman as well as several smaller rubbings. Appropriately, Rich also collects cast iron fire-marks—early insurance company plaques placed on dwellings as proof of being insured.



Photos: Suzanne Huddleson

This May, Rich was one of a select few appointed by Governor Pete Wilson to the newly formed advisory committee to the California Earthquake Authority. The committee is privately funded by insurance companies and demonstrates a partnership unlike anything in the state's history. Together the government and the insurance industry will address the growing problem of how to respond physically and financially to California's natural catastrophes.

HSSC welcomes Rich Suit on board and applauds his enthusiasm for Southern California's history.



## Larry Burgess Honored for 25 Years of Service

**R**edlands Country Club was the setting for a gathering of more than 250 people to honor Larry Burgess's twenty-five year association with the A.K Smiley Public Library.

Burgess began work at the Smiley in 1972 as archivist—a position he created. Burgess became library director in 1985. His tireless efforts to collect, save and promote Redlands' past has earned him the sobriquet of "Mr. Redlands."

The party, that rarity in which the subject was genuinely surprised, drew people from across the state and the nation to honor and roast him. Stunned and speechless upon his entrance, Burgess was immediately aided by his collaborator, Jim Sandos, who shepherded him and the program to a successful conclusion.

During the evening special remarks from HSSC Executive Director Tom Andrews were read. Burgess has served on the board of directors of HSSC since 1987. The event also produced contributions toward a fund named for Burgess to support the work of the Smiley.

Offered the last word of the evening, Burgess took it. "If you think I am enjoying this just for myself," he said, "you're right. I love it. These twenty-five years have made me a better man," he added, "and I salute you for making it possible."

*HSSC thanks Jim Sandos  
for contributing to this report.*



# Ridge Presents Presidential Address to American Historical Association at Pacific Coast Meeting

*Last August, Martin Ridge presented the presidential address to the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association during its 89th annual meeting at San Francisco State University. Following is an excerpt.*

Today many historians feel that they, as well as the discipline, face a crisis. Historians themselves must address questions within the discipline, some of which are perennial. For example, although most American historians feel secure in their methodology, perhaps they should pay heed to "the crisis" that Robert Berkhofer identifies in *Beyond the Great Story* when he points out "the implications of literary and rhetorical theory for the very practice of history itself."

The arguments regarding how historians seek truths—or if there is historical truth—and present their findings may always be with us, but unless we understand the current thinking, the challenges to history as a discipline will haunt us. Because literary and rhetorical theorists claim they see a stellar parallax, we ought at least to look

through the telescope.

Although questions regarding theory may be profound most historians are more immediately concerned about the current political climate—the so-called culture wars. The response to the exhibition of the *Enola Gay* at the Smithsonian Institution and the "West as America" show at the Museum of Art, and, perhaps, more pressing, the discussion of the history standards are certainly important. Historians may disagree among themselves about the exhibitions, but the division between the members of the profession and their critics is marked.

On one side are the historians, with a traditional understanding of how evidence is assembled and evaluated, and how materials are presented; and on the other side are congeries of activists and journalists who believe that historical evidence and interpretation are less important than their personal national agenda. There is a profound difference: historians believe that Clio, the muse of history, is to be wooed, not to be used or raped!

## Museums of the Arroyo Day Draws Crowd to the Lummis Home



Docent Barbara Corry welcomes visitors to the Lummis Home.

More than 1,000 Angelenos visited the Lummis Home on May 18, when HSSC joined four arroyo institutions to celebrate National Museums Day.

Each of the museums was open free of admission and provided special programs. In the Lummis garden, 15 artists displayed their work which ranged from oils and acrylics to wearable art and garden toys.

For many, touring the Lummis Home with our outstanding docents was a highlight.

### THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN

is published quarterly by the Historical Society of Southern California which is a California non-profit organization (501)(c)(3)

Tom Andrews  
*Executive Director*

Denise Martin  
*Consultant*

Carole Dougherty  
*Editor*

*Contributors*  
Robert Blew  
Michele Clark  
Margaret Dickerson

The offices of the Historical Society are located in the Lummis Home (El Alisal)  
200 East Avenue 43  
Los Angeles, CA 90031

phone: (213) 222-0546  
e-mail: hssc@idt.net

Watch for HSSC's Website coming soon

Office Hours  
Monday-Friday 9-5

The Lummis Home is open to the public  
Friday-Sunday 12-4pm

Group Tours  
Fridays by appointment





# Books and Los Angeles: A Great Team

by Tom Andrews

## Book Sale

Saturday  
August 9  
10 - 4

Lummis Home

History, Novels, Travel,  
Cooking, Sports and more

**L**os Angeles as subject is alive and flourishing in the number of fine histories being published.

No longer should it be said that the "basic unity of most Southern Californians stems from their common ignorance of their common past; and, consequently, anything which threatens that ignorance threatens the unity."

These books, including ones HSSC has recognized in its awards programs, are important because they respect the "pastness of the past" and demand that we go through the tough, hard reasoning process of separating fact from fiction about the past.

Books such as these help us avoid the trap of turning to the past for diversion rather than instruction. The danger in searching the past for curiosities rather

than patterns is that we become tourists instead of participants in our own heritage.

Without a past that we have taken the trouble to accurately define, evaluate and understand, we build the present in vain, groping to find our way through the complex problems facing us, impatient for instant results and susceptible to simple answers. At the same time, ignoring the past and focusing only on the future can be a most deceiving type of illusion.

These books not only prevent us from neglecting the past, but help us use the past to put the present in proper perspective. As such they contribute to a more informed action in tackling the complex problems of today's society.

Herein lies the relevance of history.

## Vroman's Presents HSSC Books at Festival

**A**pril 19 and 20 marked another milestone for books in Los Angeles. More than 75,000 people attended the LA Times Festival of Books at UCLA.

The fare included books of every type, lectures and book signings by renowned authors, and a chance to talk to other book enthusiasts. Whole families spent the day at the Festival.

Vroman's—Pasadena's venerable book shop—featured HSSC's publications under one of its six canopies.

The relationship between the 103-year-old book store and 114-year-old HSSC continues to be a rewarding one for both.



HSSC's Michele Clark and Vroman's Stan Hynds at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books.

Photo: Carole Dougherty





# Marion Kavanagh Wachtel

by Nancy Dustin Wall Moure



Marion Wachtel Private Collection

California native sycamores and eucalyptus dot a landscape focused on a stream at the base of the ever-present mountains in a 1944 Marion Wachtel painting.

One blizzardy day in February 1903, Chicago art teacher Marion Kavanagh, a plain-looking spinster in her mid 20s, stepped into the office of the vice president of the Santa Fe Railway and asked him to make good on his promise. Shortly before, he had seen one of her sketches of the mountains of North Carolina and said *en passant*, "Whenever you want to paint in California the Santa Fe will give you transportation [in exchange] for some of your sketches." Thus Marion became one more Midwesterner fleeing frozen winters and seeking fortune in the Edenic promise of California.

The decision changed her life and most probably resulted in her immortality. Marion was a product of her time—a late nineteenth century woman who, released from society's stigma of having to get married, pursued a career. Art was considered genteel and appropriate for women. Like many of her

studio-oriented female peers, she focused on figures and portraits and still lifes done in watercolor. In fact, she supplemented her family stipend to take classes at the Art Institute of Chicago by painting little portraits at \$10 each. However, before coming to California, she had painted in oil and had executed landscapes. In Southern California, after meeting and possibly studying with Elmer Wachtel, she fell, like other artistic arrivals, under the spell of the landscape.

Her association with the arroyo began even before her marriage to Elmer Wachtel in 1904. Southern California's pleasant weather encouraged outdoor sketching, and Elmer, with whom she reportedly fell in love at first sight, was a landscapist with whom she went sketching. Some of these trips must have been made into the Arroyo Seco since it was within an easy walk of the studio Wachtel maintained at 2814 North Sichel (1904-1906). Not only did

such picturesque areas act like magnets on sensitive artists, but the prevailing landscape mode of the time—the Barbizon style—necessitated subject matter such as woods and streams and clearings and meadows. These elements only existed in the area's river valleys, such as the Arroyo Seco that stretched between downtown Los Angeles and the suburb of Pasadena. By 1907 the couple moved deeper into the arroyo when Elmer built a new home on the wooded slopes of Mt. Washington. There, at 315 West Avenue 43, the couple remained through about 1921. Strategically situated between patrons on Bunker Hill in Los Angeles and along Orange Grove in Pasadena, they yet enjoyed a rustic existence. Built of redwood in a rustic style, their house boasted high ceilings, a studio for the artists, and views that mirrored the compositions created in many of their pictures—up the arroyo with a peek of the San Gabriel chain. The house still exists. Their third move, was to a studio-house far up the arroyo near the present day Rose Bowl.

Not many early works by Marion are currently known. Some still lifes of fruit and flowers from before 1900 appear nearly primitive. But a 1904 landscape, *Sunset Clouds #5* (Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Ann Steiner) shows a nearly fully-developed watercolor style

WACHTEL continued on page 6



NANCY MOURE is the author of *Loners, Mavericks and Dreamers*, a chronicle of art in Los Angeles before 1900. The book accompanied a recent exhibit at the Laguna Art Museum.



## TRIBUTES & MEMORIALS



### FOR LOVE OF HISTORY TRIBUTES

IN HONOR OF  
**Tom Andrews**  
Doyce Nunis Jr.  
E. Peter Mauk  
Michele Clark  
Margaret Dickerson  
Carole Dougherty

IN HONOR OF  
**Marion Holland**  
Elinor Ives  
Helen Molenaar  
Ruby Moore  
Eleanor Watson  
Tom Andrews  
Michele Clark  
Margaret Dickerson  
Carole Dougherty



WACHTEL *continued from page 5*

marked by a lyric poeticism, or as one reviewer expressed, "her voice in painting was ever soft and low."

Although the Arroyo no doubt provided subject matter for some of Marion's earliest local landscapes, the couple eventually ranged far and wide, lugging painting kits into the wilderness from the Sierra in the north to the Santa Luis Rey river in the south, up to Oregon, and, by 1908 they had even gone into the Southwest and visited the Hopi and Navajo territories. They traveled by foot, by horseback, by wagon, and finally by specially built automobile, camping in tents; they fought rattlesnakes and heat. Described as kindred souls, each with a great sense of humor, they were congenial partners for more than 25 years before Elmer died suddenly in 1929 while the two were on a sketching trip to Mexico. Marion continued to live in her home on Linda Vista until her death in 1954.

Marion Wachtel was not only one of the strongest painters in pre-1914 Los Angeles, but one of the best watercolor technicians of her era nationally. More than a mere copyist of the local landscape, she did what the best artists do, she *interpreted* the scene through choice of colors and composition. Her views present a gentle sunset land of peace and harmony, and they helped establish the personality believed by hundreds of more hopefuls who continued to ride West in search of the American dream.



## Meet Franklin High Intern Jenny Saldivar

**T**hree years ago Sandra Pope, career counselor for Benjamin Franklin High School's Perkins Academy, called HSSC to see if we would welcome an intern in the office. The answer was "Yes."

This year senior Jenny Saldivar has joined the HSSC staff, mastering the folding and the shrink-wrap equipment and putting her computer skills to work. All agree Jenny will be a fine employee someday.

Besides HSSC other local businesses and organizations participating in Franklin's intern program are the North-east Division of the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Superior Court, the law firm of Morrison and Forster, Century Cable Television and TCG-Marketing.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOUNDED 1883

For fast convenient renewing call 1 (800) 99 HISTORY  
Please enroll me as a member in the *Historical Society of Southern California*.

Check enclosed, payable to the *Historical Society of Southern California*.

Charge my credit card: Visa MasterCard

Credit card number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

NEW MEMBER RENEWAL GIFT MEMBERSHIP

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

### All Members Receive. . .

Annual subscription to the SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY  
Annual subscription *The Southern Californian*  
10% Discount in the El Alisal Book Shop  
Free Lummis Garden Fair and December Holiday Open House

### Additional Benefits for:

**\$50 Regular Members**  
Discounted program and event  
tickets for family members

**\$100 Contributing Members**  
All of the benefits above plus ...  
One special publication

**\$250 Patron Members**  
All of the above plus ...  
Two special publications

**\$500 Benefactors**  
All of the above plus ...  
A Docent-led tour of the Lummis  
Home and Garden for four

**\$1,000 President's Circle**  
All of the above plus ...  
Lectures and receptions for  
President's Circle members  
featuring noted Southern  
California historians

Membership contributions are tax-deductible within the limits allowed by law. For further information call HSSC at (213) 222-0546.



# Visitor Recalls Stay in the Lummis Home in 1934

**W**hen Ellen Beaumont Wilts was 9 years old, she, her mother and sister spent six months at the Lummis Home. Her mother, Amy Beaumont, and Jordan Lummis's first wife Betty met when both were in nurses' training at Hollywood's Children's Hospital. In 1934 after Amy had had surgery, Betty in-

vited her friend to come from her home in Tucson, Arizona to the Lummis Home to recover.

In March, Ellen, who now lives in Pasadena, returned to the Lummis Home with Agnes Dawson who organized this outing for a group of friends. Pat Lummis Walker, Jordan's daughter, and Glen and Muir Dawson were also on hand and shared their memories of El Alisal and Charles Fletcher Lummis.

Ellen remembers a bed was placed for her in the entry of El Alisal just outside the guest bedroom where her mother slept. Since the house was open to visitors, Ellen carefully put her bedding away each morning. She also remembers the fish pond filled with lilies and goldfish, playing house in the guest house built for Turbese Lummis and yearning to climb the old sycamore tree around which El Alisal was built.

At the time, Jordan's family lived in a house that was razed several years later to make way for the freeway.

One of the rooms Ellen always was curious to see but which was out-of-bounds was the tower room. Thanks to Margaret Dickerson, this time around Ellen finally got to see the room.



Colleen Wadsworth and Roz Newson

## Thursday Morning Irregulars Visit Regularly

**T**he Thursday Morning Irregulars are a group of painters who describe themselves as an

"unorganized, talented group of superb painters of the great outdoors." HSSC

member Florence Weismann finds historic locations for the group and has included the Lummis Home where this photo was taken. Members return several Thursdays to one site and then travel to another. For information: call (626) 799-6376



Ellen Beaumont Wilts, right, with Agnes Dawson. Agnes capitalized on her job as program planner for a group of friends when she arranged a reunion at the Lummis Home.

## Class of '53 Panorama: From North Hollywood to Encinitas to the Historical Society of Southern California



HSSC often receives donations of items with historical interest. The items are placed in collections or are offered in the fall rare book and art auction. This North Hollywood Junior High School panorama of the class of 1953 was donated by northern San Diego County resident Martha Rotramel



# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Pasadena, CA  
Permit #559

Historical Society of Southern California

200 East Avenue 43 Los Angeles CA 90031

## SAVE THIS DATE

SEPTEMBER 24

12-2

Luncheon

JACK SMITH

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT AWARD

Biltmore Hotel

## MORE EVENTS

JULY 26 10 - 12

Orientation for prospective  
Lummis Home docents  
Reservations (213) 222-0546

JULY 26 4:30-7:30

Conversation & Book Signing  
Toward a Simpler Way of Life  
Arts & Crafts Architects of California  
Moderated by Bob Winter  
The Gamble House  
Reservations: (818) 793-3334

AUGUST 9 10 - 4

Book Sale  
Lummis Home

SEPTEMBER 5 - 10

California by Rail & Sail  
Sponsored by  
Associated Historical Societies  
(818) 792-1048

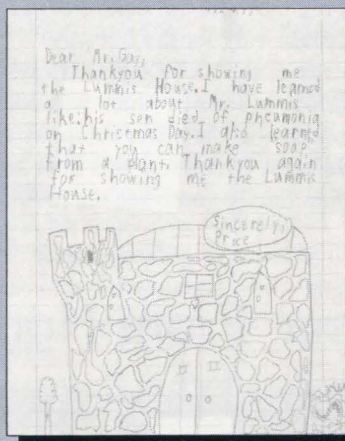
SEPTEMBER 6

Bicentennial Celebration  
San Fernando Mission  
Call (818) 361-0186 for details

OCTOBER 12 1-4

Book, Art & Photo Auction  
Lummis Home

Look for an announcement of a  
special 1997 FALL TOUR  
featuring Hollywood's archives  
Led by Nancy & Jon Wilkman



Ivanhoe  
Third  
Graders Say  
Thanks!

